



#### **HERMES GIVES HIS WORD:**

“I will tell you the truth,  
for I am infallibly honest,  
and don’t know how to lie.”

#### **CAVEAT**

“The truth lies here. The conversation reproduced exactly is no longer what it was while we were living it. It lacks the presence of those who were speaking, the whole surplus of meaning yielded by the gestures and faces that especially give the impression of something happening, of a discovery and continuous innovation. The conversation no longer exists. It does not ramify in all directions – it is, flattened out in a single dimension of sound. Instead of summoning our whole being, it does no more than touch us lightly by the ear.”

– Signed, Maurice Merleau-Ponty

#### **A NOTE TO SAY**

– Nonetheless, do not be put off by my friend Maurice – for we hope that what we have enclosed here touches not with punch that is the “ballasting with Being,” but the very “lightness of Becoming.” The lightness that is only found the realm of myth. As such, here lies the true myth of a conversation in four parts.

–Signed, Edward S. Casey



**MANUSCRIPT / TRANSCRIPT / SCRIPT**

A visible and invisible conversation in four parts intertwining the following...

INTERLOCUTORS:

**THE READER  
THE TRANSLATOR  
MERLEAU-PONTY  
BACHELARD  
A MOTH**

INTERJECTOR:

**CASEY**

INTERJESTER:

**HERMES**

AND ALSO NUMEROUS PARA-LOCUTORS AND PERI-LOCUTORS, quietly appearing / making themselves known on the other side of the conversation as reversible.

AND ALSO PRESENT BUT UNABLE TO PROPERLY INTER-LOCUTE:

**REFLECTION**

The conversation herein is faithfully transcribed from speech to text, with the utmost transparency (for I am infallibly honest and do not know how to lie...) by yours truly, the **READER**.

**Note:**

This conversation doubles as a garment in four cuts, and doubles over again as a Homeric hymn in four stanzas. It coils itself on itself yet again as a walk with four stopping points - and numerous digression.



**1 - THE WEAVE**

“Where are the words?”

– *How to wear the word in a woven world.*

Dedicated to my lost copy of Poetics of Space taken by a trickster in the guise of a train, and to all the marginalised, red pen conversations between the pages that now no longer exist. And – here’s to new margins.  
- The Reader



## oo: Pre-teXt

Force of habit: How to find a word.

*The Outer Facing – “facing into a mirror with a voice”*

[HERMES sits in the morning silence of the **READER**'s house. He is carefully crafting a wardrobe. The wardrobe is not finished, even as the occupants daily use it, and every day the trickster [1] chips away, adding another little cupboard inside, another handle, changing the lock (one of his favourite pranks), altering the door or augmenting the interior with shelving – but always leaving something to be done another day, even in another dream – for this house was a house of poets, or at least poetry lovers, and thence he was to be sure that the object would continue to be crafted even when he, the master craftsman, was not there: for “beautiful objects created by skilful hands are quite naturally “carried on” by a poet's daydream.”[2] Thus there he sits, in the saw-dusty silence. Out of the wardrobe he takes a lyre, and, after summoning the right words with a deep and long and silent breath, he begins to sing out in the Ionian [3] mode:]

### HERMES

In this beginning, I give a word:  
a word from this god,  
a word of this god.  
All things that are made are made through this word,  
for without it nothing is crafted that can be made.

This word is a root,  
and from that root comes the life of the essayi.[4]

This root-word is **\*teks**;  
and here's what to expect:

Sprouting up from this root  
four more words shall be spoken,  
and intertwined all about it  
shall this teXt so be woven.

*[He finishes his song and departs, not a track of his feet left in the sawdust to trace. [5] The Reader, having just woken up and in a bleary eyed, still dreamy daze, approaches the wardrobe, opening it out in her habitual way. She faces the mirror on the inside of the wardrobe door. The other in the dialogue that follows, the Reflection, is a voice of the cryptic kind, always at once both plainly showing and and equally plainly veiling what is visible.]*

## THE READER REFLECTS

### READER

*What shall I wear today?*

### REFLECTION

That is a worn out question. And no, once again, I cannot show you what your hair looks like from the back!

### READER

What to wear, I wonder, while my reflection stares back, closing the loop of my vision, [6] but with no answer[7]. *What make-up? I ask. What guise? What cunning mask as a foundation for the day?*

### REFLECTION

You have a spot on your face dear. And that dress is so moth eaten it makes me want to break into seven.

### READER

Lacunae in my clothes again. And another little complexiTy added to my already complex face, on my complex and unfinished body. “I am not one and simple, but complex and many.”[8] Bernard said that, that lover of language, always trying to find the right words, find “some perfect phrase that fits this very moment exactly.”[9] It's a good question:

**where are the words?** Where can I find them? Where do they live? I call to



[1]

Lewis **HYDE** eXplores the trickster as a re-occurring character in mythologies of cultures throughout the world. **HERMES** is one of the most well known tricksters, and is himself a master craftsman in both the weave of words and of the weave of the material world, being a crafter of numerous objects including a lyre and sandals. See Lewis **HYDE**, *Trickster Makes This World: Mischief, Myth and Art* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010). See also **CASHFORD** (trans.) “Hymn to Hermes,” 55-84.

[2]

Gaston **BACHELARD**, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria **JOLAS** (New York: Penguin Books, 2014), 107.

[3]

The Ionian musical mode is an old and obsolete scale of music. The Ionians are also, however, an ancient people who were instrumental in the development of the phonetic alphabet, specifically in the development of the long e and o vowels, which were carried into the Greek alphabet. (See Rhys **CARPENTER**, “Early Ionian Writing,” *The American Journal of Philology* 56:4 (1935), 291-301.) [[**READER**] of course this man’s name is ‘carpenter.’] Since the emergence of the alphabet, we have moved increasingly from a language that sings the world to a language that signs the world. No longer a word which is embodied in the realm of speech, folded into our ‘vocal folds,’ an interrelation with a speaking world – but a word which is abstracted from its embodied nature and is purely visual – is disincarnate. As **PLATO** feared, what was first an aid to Memory, would become the means of forgetting – for a dis-incarnate word is dis-membered word and as such cannot re-member. Hence – the wielding of a musical scale that speaks of the instrumentalism of the visual wielded over the vocal, of sign over the song – is one of the tricks **HERMES** uses to continually ‘slay Argus,’ the giant covered in eyes, a panoptic trope, the proponent of vision in ancient Greek lore. The singer slays the seer; the oral realm triumphs over the merely-visual realm – doing so here wielding a weapon itself stolen from the very realm it conquers. Crafty indeed.

[4]

Adapted from **JOHN** 1:1-4 (NIV) [note to **GOD** or to The **MARKER**] –Strike me not, for Lord it was in jest, not in seriousness!

mind Woolf elsewhere: “words do not live in a dictionary, they live in the mind.”[10] – In the mind? *Where is the mind?* I cannot see it in this mirror. Can you dear reflection?

*[Squinting at herself in the mirror.]*

I see only my body, my reflection staring plainly back at me.

#### REFLECTION

I see only your body, staring back at you.

#### READER

If they are in the mind, do they have their own thickness? I reflect, *how thick is a word?*

#### REFLECTION

I repeat, I cannot show you yourself from the back! You’ll have to fold yourself over to find an answer to that[11].

#### READER

I see I’m not getting anywhere with *this* reflection! All is loop in the mirror, and not path – and I’ll at least need a spiral to get somewhere.

#### REFLECTION

Again, I cannot show you what I cannot see. I see only you – and a wardrobe too.

#### READER

What has *that* to do with things?

#### REFLECTION

Plenty![12] – It is a crafted realm of many crafted, folded things. Maybe they can teach you the trick of folding yourself up, of coiling yourself back on yourself?[13]

#### READER

*[One eyebrow raised in a questioning confusion.]*

#### REFLECTION

Go into the wardrobe a while; you’ll see. For where words are concerned, *reflection* is folly.[14] Where is the mind? The mind is in the midst, and the intellect is inter-lectual. In your search for the word, you need to speak with others – not a mirror with a voice[15]. Find voices without mirrors. Don’t mono-locute; inter-locute – and, while you inter-relate, you might just locate the words you seek. Debate. Converse. Get into the habit of conversation. You will get nowhere speaking to yourself in a force of habit with me. I thus answer your first question with a last reflection – *put on the word*.

#### READER

But I do not know how...

#### REFLECTION

Well then start by putting on something you know – a jacket will do the trick. Put on a thick thing and jump into the thick of things. Walk into the wardrobe[16] – walk into the weave.

#### READER

*[Eyebrow still raised, she considers herself and her wardrobe.]*

What shall I wear today? I wonder...

*[She stares a few moments longer, covers the spot with concealer, adds a subtle lipstick and puts on a tweed jacket.[17] Now decidedly turning away from the reflection –]*

I wander.

*[– she enters into the wardrobe.]*

[5]

“The tracks of my cows became invisible suddenly on the hard ground.” **CASHFORD** (trans.), “Hymn to **HERMES**,” 73.

[6]

Even in the look that looks back there is some reversibility, and similarly in speaking to oneself, there is a certain reversibility, “because no locator speaks without making himself in advance allocutary, be it only for himself; because with one sole gesture he closes the circuit of his relation to himself.” Maurice **MERLEAU-PONTY**, “The Intertwining–The Chiasm,” in *The Visible and the Invisible*, trans. Alphonso **LINGIS** (Paris: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 154.

[7]

[*digressing*]– [**REFLECTION**]  
– you never do listen to my advice anyway, dear – [Reader] –so now I make up my own mind – [Reflection] – or rather you are the make-up of your mind –  
[**READER**]  
– and now decide on the make-up.  
[Reflection] – and your mind is the make-up of you. For you are the midst of your mind, and your mind is the midst of you –

[8]

Virginia **WOOLF**, *The Waves* (London: Penguin Group, 2000), 56.

[9]

ibid., 51.

[10]

**WOOLF**, “Craftsmanship,” in *The Death of a Moth and Other Essays* (Orange County, California: Harcourt Childrens Books, 1974), 130-131.

[11]

Reversibility must be the means of finding the answer, not reflection. See note below.

[12]

For “does there exist a single dreamer of words who does not respond to the word wardrobe?...” (**BACHELARD**, *The Poetics of Space*, 99.)

[13]

In other words – the trick of being reversible. See **MERLEAU-PONTY**, *The Visible and the Invisible*, generally in 130-155, more specifically on 144-145, 152, 154.

## 01: Tekton

Getting into the Habit: how to craft a word.

*Jacket Buttons – “an opening”*

*[HERMES appears in the room again. He stands amidst the broken glass, pleased with the mischief he had already caused by his words. He sits himself amidst the mess of clothing and glass, and with the wardrobe door still ajar, takes up his lyre, and, summoning the right words with a deep and silent breath, he calls into the wardrobe:]*

### HERMES

\*teks! I spoke out,  
and spoke it in jest  
and then left to settle,  
let it it to rest.  
let it fall with a clatter,  
for the mirror it shattered  
when the strangely had left  
(that's the trick of the \*teks –  
for worlds can't be woven from glass –  
from an unthickness).

Broken glasses aside – shall I sing you the neXt–

But who am I? you'll soon interject,  
“to speak looms over you?  
A prophet? A saint? A god? Or a loon?

*[And, considering this, he makes his reply:]*

...I'm a crafter of lies, weaving words into wicker  
I crafted a lyre, turning tortoise to singer  
I plot and devise, thickening the thickness  
I take the tree with the aX[18], make it take on Poesis[19].

For every well crafted object, and well devised thing  
Is a word in the weave of the world, and it sings.  
And thus craft makes the silence cry out, so to speak  
giving voice to the world, making earth out to speak.

‘tekton’ I say, and craft thus it means  
and crafty, divisive and artful I'll be:  
To really speak out is to “sing out the world”[20]  
This is craft – and it's caught up in the word.

*[And with a swish of his cloak off he goes, into the wardrobe himself. He liked the wardrobe, these passing places from one world to the neXt. Meanwhile, the **READER** has met a **MOTH** in the folds of the things piled about in the wardrobe, and they enter into discussion.]*

## INTERLOCUTION WITH A MOTH

### READER

Oh dark little dusty old foe of my clothes – I come in search of a word.  
Where can I find one? Do you know where they live? Do you encounter them  
much on your travels in here?

### MOTH

I encounter many things, but all in here is “veiled in shadows,” [21]  
“shadows stuffed with organs,”[22] secrecy within secrecy. Words, it  
appears, like to wear a “disguise”[23], and as such my wingèd search  
for a word is in vain[24] – yet I know they hide deep “in the line,”[25]  
in the “lining”[26] of things piled about here. I wear away a few more  
pockets, unpick a few more stitches – but as I pick things apart, the  
invisible ebbs away. I “encroach”[27] upon it; it recesses itself into  
“more of the visible.”[28] It hides itself in plain sight. The invisible  
word hides itself in-the-visible. Attempts to un-obscure the essentially  
obscure only make it not-itself.[29] These invisible “interior  
armatures”[30] seem to give form to the visible in here – rather than

[14]

**MERLEAU-PONTY** adopts a method of interrogation over the method of reflection, being critical both of positivist reflection and the reflection of negation. Negative reflection claims scrutiny of the thing itself – it is vision abstracted, too much opposing the seer and the seen. Positivity on the other hand, claims to be dependant on looking at the “thing itself,” yet depends only on factual data – it is still a survey from above. See **MERLEAU-PONTY**, “Reflection and Interrogation,” in *The Visible and the Invisible*, 1-49. For a contracted explanation, see also the Alphonso **LINGIS**, “**TRANSLATOR**’s Preface” in *The Visible and the Invisible*, Xli-Xliiii.

[15]

*[digressing]* **[REFLECTION]** – you need voices without mirrors. For voices without mirrors, and an illuminating thought-picture on the various etymologies relating to our conception and language of the other – of which \*teks is a part, and parts of which emerge in my own ‘thought pictures’ around this essay, see Stephen A. **TYLER**, “Them Others: Voices Without Mirrors,” *Paideuma: Mitteilungen zur Kulturkunde*, (44) *Anthropology and the Question of the Other* (1998), 31-50.

[16]

That notorious place where the habits are at, that strange habitat of moth and dust and garment.

[17]

*[digressing]* – which she dislikes, but it seemed the appropriate woven thing for the adventure of midstness, and if **LEWIS** taught us anything about adventures, especially where wardrobes are concerned, it is that we must dress appropriately for the adventures we are going to take – so writing the Pevensie children into a realm swathed in snow, he first has them walk through a wardrobe appropriately filled with fur coats to get there. Similarly, because we intend to traverse a woven realm, this wardrobe provides appropriately tailored, complex and woven items for the Reader – in this case a tweed jacket with a thick weave, a complex inner structure and a hidden pocket. I almost titled this paper *The Lyre, the Weave and the Wardrobe* or perhaps *The Liar, the Stitch and the Wardrobe* in reference to the power of the wardrobe for constructing a woven world, however decided I did not want it was best not to be so quickly associated with what

visibles being structures to receive invisibles. Or even – both ways at once: meshing two meshes[31].

**READER**

I don't quite catch your meaning.

**MOTH**

Ah – you don't yet have the right "mesh." [32] Flit back to Woolf; the same text depositing on you the problem [33] also posits the beginnings of an answer. She puts words in the context of craft, opening out words with a word on 'craft' itself, speaking thus.

*[putting on the howl of a woolf:]*

"the word "craft" has two meanings; it means in the first place making useful objects out of solid matter – for example, a pot a chair, a table. In the second place, the word "craft" means cajolery, cunning, deceit." [34]

*[Now unfolding its wings[35] with a flutter and shifting to sit upon a different pocket.]*

– Now flit again. Merleau-Ponty indirectly examines this relationship between craft and language via the specific craft of painting, positing "painting as a language." [36]

**READER**

Well, what if craft – of which painting is one style – is language itself? The craft of painting as a language, *but ultimately craft as language, and language as craft.*

**MOTH**

It would certainly be a good trick if you could make that leap. Allow me to assist [37]. As Merleau-Ponty paints it, paintings are "found in each painter at work," [38] and in the same vein: "the painter's work is never complete, it is always in progress." [39] This puts craft not in the finished object, but in the midst of its making. [40] Hence, craft is operative; craft consists in the act of crafting. [41]

**READER**

And so if the cunning weave of language is craft, then language must be as operative as the making that is craft. So where is the word in all this?

**MOTH**

In the style of Merleau-Ponty: the word is to be found in each word at work – the craft of a word is in the actively crafting craft-as-language – that is, in "operative speech."

**READER**

Here I consult, not only Woolf's Everyday Dictionary, where craft is both cunning and making, but also my Etymological Dictionary–

*[turning pages]*

– going to the words 'crafter' and 'carpenter' –

*[carefully consulting]*

–the Greek for this is *tekton* –

*[running finger down the list of 'meanings']*

– and this itself comes from *\*teks*, meaning 'to weave.' So every act of language-as-craft is caught up in the notion of weave...

**MOTH**

Here it seems that craft has a double life, a reversibility which is part of its guise – craft has two faces, an invisible face (weaving well chosen words into well-sung lies) and a visible one (weaving the wood of the world into well-strung lyres.) And the craftiness of this double life

is oft (mistakenly) referred to as a ‘mere children’s tale’ (we know really that all the best fairy tales contain messages primarily for adults.)

[18]

\*teks as meaning to fashion, especially with the aX. See Online Etymology Dictionary, “\*teks,” last accessed 21st April, 2019, [https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=\\*teks](https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=*teks).

[19]

Poetry and craft have long been associated, for the Greek Poesis, from which the poetic sprouts, means making, means craft. Heidegger alludes to this link -- see Martin **HEIDEGGER**, “...poetically man dwells...” in Poetry, Language, Thought, trans. Albert **HOFSTADTER** (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 214.

[20]

David **ABRAM**, The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World (New York: Vintage Books, 1997), 76, 80, 89.

[21]

**Merleau-Ponty**, “The Intertwining–The Chiasm,” 150.

[22]

ibid., 138.

[23]

ibid., 150.

[24]

For it is not in flight that we find words; they are not lofty, not free-floating motes of dust that we capture – rather they catch us: “the things have us, and that it is not us who have the things [...] that language has us, and that it is not we who have language.” See **MERLEAU-PONTY**, “Working Notes,” The Visible and the Invisible, 194.

[25]

**MERLEAU-PONTY**, “Working Notes,” in The Visible and the Invisible, 215.

[26]

ibid., “The Intertwining–The Chiasm,” 149.

[27]

ibid., 134.

[28]

ibid., 138

[29]

[digressing] [**MOTH**] For instance, when I revealed the inner structure,

[42] becomes even trickier – *for the height of the operation of speech is to pull things into its very operation as speech*[43] –

**READER**

– to be caught up in the midst of speech is also to catch things into the midst of speech, into the tissue[44] of words at work –

**MOTH**

– in short: to speak[45] is to make things speak.

[lull]

But in this weave there is a further doubling: in the operation of speech-as-craft, as consisting of both visible and invisible weaves, visible craft does not only call forth more of the visible, and the invisible does not only speak forth more invisibilities – but rather the visible may call forth the invisible, and the invisible may call forth the visible. The operation itself is two-fold[46] – the word calls forth the thing, and the thing calls forth the word. The trickster knows this, “for Hermes was the first to make tortoise a singer.”[47]

**READER**

Oh that the word should cause the world to sing!

**MOTH**

This is the trick – the magic[48] – of language-as-craft. The two intertwinings, the visible as intertwining of the seer and the world, and the invisible intertwining of the signified and signifier,[49] are intertwined[50]. Language makes each weave speak in the language of the other weave – for they are all caught up in the weave itself. “They are two aspects of the reversibility which is the ultimate truth.”[51] This reversibility is the fate of the embodied word – whether embodied in speech or in physical making.[52]

**READER**

But what happens when the word is disembodied?

**MOTH**

Well, this is Abram’s gripe with the alphabet[53], and also Pallasmaa’s frustration with “ocularcentrism”[54]. The development of both these things are intertwined, both depending on a step away from the embodied, spoken, oral tradition, into a realm of disembodied vision – a step which is difficult to step back from.[55] Thus language is viewed today primarily as a system of rules and syntax[56] – “language as institution,”[57] as a code with “no non-arbitrary connections”[58] to the world – making it easily severable from the world.[59]

**READER**

But if language foregoes the embodied, oral realm that the signs in alphabets refer to, when the sign of the signified language forgets how to re-member the many-membered speaking body [60]– the sign signifies only to itself, ceasing to be a real sign – and paralysing meaning as a result.

**MOTH**

Thence language falls into disrepair – and craft crippled with it.[61] For if “sedimented” language as sign is not caught up in the weave of operative, living language as speech from which it evolved, then all that sedimented language will do is sediment and set, never fermenting into anything new.

**READER**

The disembodied word, in so forgetting how to speak, will not remember how to become; where *re-member* can be read in both senses of memory and becoming.

**MOTH**

It is the same “historicity of death”[62] paintings experience in the museum – for paintings do not live in the museum, but in the painter ‘at work’ –



the “interior armature” of that hole-filled, lacuna-packed jacket you’re wearing (deepest apologies), that inner structure ceased to be an invisible lining a visible, and was all-a-sudden a visible, a complex thing lined with more of its own complex invisibilities, it’s own interior armatures I could not get at. (See **MERLEAU-PONTY**, “The Indirect Language,” 113.)

[30]

[*digressing*] [**MOTH**] Here this “interior armature” IS the inner structure of a tweed jacket, its inner framework. [**READER**] It is also the ‘inner structure’ of this *essai*. Notice how we have to keep turning back on ourselves, back and forth between the words spoken, the visible words on the page, and the framework -- that is, the ‘invisible’ words behind the page, so reversed that when we flip the page to get to them, they are suddenly not reversed and not themselves! The conversation continues in reverse, but when we so reverse ourselves to get into it, we have reversed ourselves out of the ‘visible’ conversation and into another visible! A conundrum indeed.

[31]

“The bond between flesh and idea.” See **MERLEAU-PONTY**, “The Intertwining–The Chiasm,” 149.

[32]

*ibid.*, 153.

[33]

[**MOTH** *digressing*] – a book primarily concerning my own death, by the way. See **WOOLF**, “The Death of a Moth,” in *The Death of a Moth and Other Essays*, 9–11.

[34]

Virginia **WOOLF**, “Craftmanship,” in *The Death of a Moth and Other Essays*, 126.

[35]

It’s own little garment in this world of fray.

[36]

**MERLEAU-PONTY**, “The Indirect Language,” 47.

[37]

[**MOTH** *digressing*] I at least have wings

[38]

*ibid.*, 72.

[39]

**READER**

– and similarly, words do not live in the dictionary but in the word at work –

**MOTH**

– and this is “living historicity.”[63]

**READER**

...in speech we are re-membered, in speech we are transformed...

**MOTH**

– welcome to the wardrobe, the place of transformation.

[lull]

**READER**

[pausing, considering]

...but we cannot simply get rid of the alphabet; we cannot dispense with text.

**MOTH**

No.

**READER**

So: we must figure out how to make text speak.

**MOTH**

Here I can no longer help; I’ve never written a word in my life.[64] Best speak with those familiar with both text and speech. You can find them that way...

[flitting vaguely in the direction of the darkness at the back of the wardrobe]

– I wish you well friend, and await your return at the walk-about’s end.  
[65]

[The **READER** departs out of the back of the wardrobe according to the moth’s instructions, partly with a bemusement that can only come from merging from an interlocution with a moth, and partly with a purpose that only comes after a particularly good conversation – though in her dreamy daze she was unsure if she would remember the conversation once she had properly emerged from it. She vaguely remembered reading something about a similar occurrence in a book; a bear, a kitchen, some tea and the descent of the gods... [66] But that conversation she could also not presently remember with much precision. Through the many-folds of the many dresses and scarves and coats, she persists towards the back of the wardrobe. Meanwhile, **MERLEAU-PONTY** and **BACHELARD** are preparing a meal.]

ibid., 66.

[40]

[**MOTH digressing**] This was for **MERLEAU-PONTY** one of the greatest shifts that the moderns brought to painting over the classicists, who put the emphasis on the masterpiece. (**MERLEAU-PONTY**, “The Indirect Language,” 56.). Even if it was clear that there was a midstness to the work when one examines all the sketches and essais, attempts, leading up to the masterpiece. For still even the classicist is not to be found, or not to be found fully or only, in the finished work, in the masterpiece, but in the artists at work – in their studio, in every sketch and unfinished item along the way. Beauty, perhaps, is to be found in the final ‘masterpiece,’ but the craft of an object is in its process.

[41]

[**MOTH digressing**] - If you will pardon the seeming tautology.

[42]

[**MOTH digressing**] –this guise –

[43]

Hence **BACHELARD**’s noting that the poetic image – which is a spoken image, “sets in motion the entire linguistic mechanism.” See Gaston **BACHELARD**, *The Poetics of Space*, 8.

[44]

[**READER digressing**] - \*teks, weave, craft.

[45]

[**MOTH digressing**] - to craft, to make, to fashion -

[46]

[**MOTH digressing**] doubled, reversible. **MERLEAU-PONTY** utilises this notion of fold in *The Visible and the Invisible*, 152.

[47]

**CASHFORD** (trans.), “Hymn to Hermes,” 56.

[48]

**ABRAM**, “The Flesh of Language,” in *The Spell of the Sensuous*, 86-92. **ABRAM** traces linguistic connections between ‘magic’ and ‘song’ throughout ancient oral cultures, citing certain languages as having using words of the same derivation for the two meanings. This is significant for us because it gives the song the operative quality of essential speech. For the purpose

## 02: TeXt

Table Talk: how to make a teXt speak.

Sleeves – “elbows on the table”

[In a quiet country house, **HERMES**, the one who “passes through”[67] has come to do mischief. We find him, with his finely crafted tortoiseshell lyre, in the dining room. There is lavender hanging from the beams, and a fire burning in the Inglenook. Such evidence of staying in one place, of veritable rest, made him uncomfortable and restless, for he does not occupy such permanent places except to cause upset, to knock over pitchers of wine, to jest, joke, jibe, and generally to disrupt – especially to disrupt conversation[68]. For the trickster **HERMES** is of the road, not the house; a lord of “in-between.”[68] He can manage passing through a Dining Room, albeit briefly, only because it exists on the ground floor – the floor through which the world passes. Belonging neither in the attic of solitary invention nor the basement of memory, “he passes through each of these when there is a moment of silence, and he enlivens them with mischief.”[70] But perhaps he is both these things, both memory and imagination – only packed up into a rucksack; cellar and garret he packs into a room on his back – for **HERMES** must be on the move.

The room is silent and empty, but for trickster and tortoise. He examines the table before him, laid neatly for three. “A table is a horizontal plane of improvisation,”[71] he had heard them say. He laughs to himself – “and improvise I shall.” He adds one more place mat and one more cup, before seating himself at the head of the table and taking up his lyre. After summoning the right words with a deep and long and silent breath, he begins to sing a slow guttural song in the Mixolydian[72] mode:]

### **HERMES**

Tekton I gave you  
and so wove a spell  
of moth eaten words  
and of wood-worm as well.  
Now another I’ll tell  
another thing is the mix  
another trick of the \*teks...

“teXt” is the word, and all that surrounds –  
con-teXts, pre-teXts and sub-teXts abound!  
How to make this word speak,  
How to make the word sing  
How to pen a word spoken,  
how to write a word woven,  
How to speak while we write...?

These are the kinds of troubles this old trickster now incites.

[He bows to no-one and slips away via the back door into Bachelard’s garden, his thick, shadowy, textured cloak vanishing through the doorway just as Bachelard and Merleau-Ponty enter. They are caught up in discussions of the teXts they are working on. It is a Sunday, and, both firm believers in the Sunday walk, they intend to take a turn together after lunch, joined by the Reader, who is also a student of Bachelard’s, and also by Merleau-Ponty’s translator.[73]]

## TALKING WITH THE TEXT

### **BACHELARD**

... well I have always said – [pausing] do you hear that ringing?

### **MERLEAU-PONTY**

[sighing]

Not the resonances again.

### **BACHELARD**

No really, it is reverberating off the walls --  
[glancing about...]

of magic, really, is to close the gap between speaking and doing that every human is caught in the struggle between – for in magic, the thing is spoken, rather than spoken of: “a word spoken by chance might have strange consequences. It would suddenly come alive and what people wanted to happen could happen – all you had to do was say it” (**ABRAM**, 87.). This ‘word-magic’ would also, perhaps, be the same operative language that would exist in a garden of Eden, in which creation is so ‘spoken into being’ and humans have the capacity to instantly and precisely name what was seen with ‘true names.’ Since the ‘fall,’ naming has become problematic, and this is a problem that philosophers from **PLATO** to **DERRIDA** have been caught up in for hundreds of years.

[49]

**MERLEAU-PONTY**, “The Intertwining–The Chiasm,” 152–154.

[50]

[**MOTH digressing**] – Such is the nature of the \*teks of language, to so be able to weave together two \*teks – two tissues.

[51]

**MERLEAU-PONTY**, “The Intertwining–The Chiasm,” 155.

[52]

[**MOTH digressing**] We see this reversibility in the craft of every crafted thing. Take a musical instrument, like Herne’s lyre. The crafting of it allows the flesh-of-the-world, in quite a literal way, to sing; a tree is put into harmony and becomes sonorous. This singing of the world calls forth the singing of the human voice, which asks for lyrics, and calls forth the flesh of the word in a formation of more spoken words, which double back fold words in to the physical realm again. The visible asks the invisible to speak, and vice versa. The speaking thing asks the thing to speak. They are caught up in their own dialogue. [**READER**] “And just like that, Hermes devised craft and deed together.” (**CASHFORD** (Trans.) “Hymn to Hermes,” 57. [Moth] Hence – “language is everything, for it is the voice of no-one, it is the very voice of the things, the waves, and the forests.” (**MERLEAU-PONTY**, “The Intertwining–The Chiasm,” 155.)

[53]

David **ABRAM**, “Animism and the Alphabet,” in *The Spell of the Sensuous*, 93–135. In this intriguing

What was I saying... Ah yes! When speaking, "at times, our words think for us. But to write a book requires really serious reflection." [74] For it is one thing to speak about ideas among friends and quite another to pen them to paper.

**MERLEAU-PONTY**

Well when we speak, we get caught up, caught in the words, for they have us rather than us having them. [75] We surrender to the words, in a way, and this surrender is, paradoxically, quite freeing.

**BACHELARD**

Yes, well in the speaking there is an inherent freedom. An unpredictability, an "unforeseeability." [76] We put things in place, set out to traverse certain themes, start off examining certain words – but we cannot foresee where the words will take us, or even what words we will use. For the necessity of *dialogue* [77] is that ideas must rub up against the bare humanity of another unpredictable human. This frightens many people, I think, because it pertains to a certain a-causality which cultures of efficiency despise. They want to know one thing will neatly follow another in a most Bergsonian [78] fashion –

**MERLEAU-PONTY**

– that is, the fashion of the "ready made garment?" [79]

**BACHELARD**

Ha! Yes, "because, of course, a ready-made garment suffices to clothe a poor rationalist." [80] And this is the difficulty of writing, for the way texts have evolved means we must trap ourselves, and words, inside them putting ourselves and the words into succession, one after the other, left to right, top to bottom, like a row of prisoners. In texts, or at least in texts that have not yet learned how to speak, we fool ourselves into thinking that language abides by the rule of causal succession.

**MERLEAU-PONTY**

But rules are sometimes useful.

**BACHELARD**

To be sure, but sometimes they kill the words by that very instrumentalism [81] – at least texts do this when they use words in "ready made ways." [82] But essential language, being inherently unpredictable, does not abide by the rule of succession – but this unpredictability is a little dangerous. Hence people of a purely causal culture will not really speak because they want to know the precise effects of things before beginning, [83] and these people create safe little spaces in lieu of reveling in real conversation. But this 'safety' is not a freedom, but captivity. A people who have forgotten how to speak, even who fear speech, have forgotten how to live. [84] Hence, the freedom of speech is freedom itself. [85]

**MERLEAU-PONTY**

But can we capture this freedom that is speech in text?

**BACHELARD**

Such a question seems oxymoronic, don't you--

*[–the door-bell rings.]*

Was that a ringing?

**MERLEAU-PONTY**

Now really--

**BACHELARD**

No, not the resonances! [86] Just the doorbell. My friend the Reader must be here. [87]

**MERLEAU-PONTY**

Ah yes! Yes I am intrigued to meet the strange girl.

*[The READER enters. The lurid tweed jacket makes* **MERLEAU-PONTY**

chapter, which I shall have to devote further study to another time, **ABRAM** traces the trajectory of the human tendency to make traces – to write. He tracks the development of the alphabet first as pictorial signs with direct relationship to the world around it, then to more abstracted signs which signified the sounds of words – the phonetic alphabet. His most astonishing claim, and most intriguingly for the purposes of this *essai*, is the idea of the disembodied, **PLATONIC** idea could not have even developed without the development of the alphabet as a system of signs increasingly abstracted from the embodied realm of speech and sound. Prior to the alphabet, there was no real medium through which this abstraction could take place. Hence, in stepping away from the oral tradition, the alphabet took us into a more visual realm of signs and disembodied vision, which can be connected to the demise of operative speech and thus language itself.

[54]

**PALLASMAA**, *The Eyes of the Skin*, 15. Pallasmaa critiques the “primacy of sight,” tracking the rise of a merely-visual realm as a disembodied realm from the development of the perspectival technique through to modern techniques of representation as, largely, superficial, composed of thin images with little to no connection to the body.

[55]

“A literate person cannot fully recover a sense of what the word is to purely oral people.” – Walter **ONG**, *Orality and Literature*, cited in **PALLASMAA**, *The Eyes of the Skin*, 25.

[56]

**ABRAM**, *The Spell of The Sensuous*, 77.

[57]

**MERLEAU-PONTY**, “Science and the Experience of Expression,” in *The Prose of the World*, 10.

[58]

**ABRAM**, *The Spell of The Sensuous*, 77.

[59]

*ibid.*

[60]

And even, a more-than-human body; for **ABRAM**, it is not only humans that speak, but the whole of nature. (**ABRAM**, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, 73-86). We are complex weaves of expression caught up into a complex,

wince a little.]

**READER**

Hello! Good to see you old friend[88]. And this must be Monsieur Merleau-Ponty!

**BACHELARD**

Ah yes, we will need the Translator...

*[BACHELARD moves to open the trap-door to the cellar – for there was the TRANSLATOR to be found, traversing “the distant corridors of obscure etymologies.”[89]]*

– Alphonso! If you would so deign to come upstairs to the ground floor – we have a visitor!

**TRANSLATOR**

*[rather gruffly as he huffs and stomps up the stairs]*

I was just in the middle of trying to translate a particularly complex paragraph of Maurice’s manuscript. It is frustrating to be interrupted you know Gaston, in the middle of these pursuits! I lose my train of thought and am forced to add footnotes such as “I think this is the sense of the text here.”[90] And I do so hate sticking my foot into another author’s text like that.

**BACHELARD**

I understand, but I can assure you this is an equally worthy pursuit – Alphonso, meet the Reader. Dear Reader, this is our Translator.

*[Glances and greetings are exchanged and they sit at table. Napkins are unfolded. Elbows are placed on the table; this is not to be a formal meal and conversation ensues freely.]*

**TRANSLATOR [to the READER]**

You should be warned about Maurice; “he feigns ignorance of the world”[91] in order to ruthlessly interrogate it and your world. He is a little like Socrates in that way – though he will not appreciate the comparison, being so far removed from a philosophy of “reflection.”[92]

**MERLEAU-PONTY**

What was that Alphonso?

**TRANSLATOR**

Only that you enjoy a bit of verbal jousting – that it is your way of making things speak.[93]

**MERLEAU-PONTY**

Yes, it is a favourite past-time. Now where we we... ah yes, we were in the text. How to make texts speak? Let us interrogate text a moment.

**TRANSLATOR [to the READER]**

He wants to put text into conversation, or conversation into text.

*[The READER appears equal parts delighted and perplexed – for this was the very problem she had intended to discuss.]*

**READER**

This seems a difficult thing to do, given the rift between the vocal word and the visual sign...

**BACHELARD**

– Just to catch you up, we just saying before you arrived that in speech, there is a kind of freedom and unpredictability that isn’t found in purely instrumental texts.

**READER**

I suppose because speech must be active – it cannot be “sedimented” into rules for rules sake.

**BACHELARD**



expressive world. Our ‘song’ is caught up in The Song that is the dialogue between the Word and the World. **MERLEAU-PONTY** would call this the “sonorous reversibility of the flesh.” (**MERLEAU-PONTY**, “The Intertwining–The Chiasm,” 144.)

[61]

This is Pallasmaa’s “crisis in representation.” (**PALLASMAA**, The Eyes of the Skin, 24.)

[62]

**MERLEAU-PONTY**, “The Indirect Language,” 73.

[63]

ibid.

[64]

The mind of a moth, like its flight path, is far too elliptical to be pinned down to the written word – if such were to occur, then moths would “fold their wings and die,” as **WOOLF** says of words when they pinned down to just one meaning. See **WOOLF**, “Craftsmanship,” 132.

[65]

[Little did our little **MOTH** know that by that time it would be penned dead in this wardrobe by Woolf.] [**MOTH digressing**] I promise not to wear away every item of clothing you own while you are gone. for then you will not be sartor resartus – but rather sartor desartus. And in dire need of a tailor.

[66]

See Clive Staples **LEWIS**, “The Descent of the gods” in That Hideous Strength, 321-322.

[67]

**HYDE**, Trickster Makes This World, 6.

[68]

Which is a weave – and as **HYDE** has noted, the “trickster’s art involves playing with what I call second-order articulation; trickster shifts patterns in relation to one another, and by that redefines the patterns themselves.” Trickster is always engaged in a craft of ravelling and unravelling. See **HYDE**, Trickster Makes this World, 257.

[69]

ibid., 6.

[70]

ibid.

[71]

EXactly.

#### READER

So how can texts take on this freedom that is speech? How can we marry the world of signs with the world of song, the visual with the vocal? How to make texts speak, how to make the sign sing...?

#### BACHELARD

We might posit, that the answer is to be found in the poetic image, itself a marriage of visual with verbal, seeing as the poetic image is first and foremost a spoken image, residing primarily in the operation of the unforeseeability and a-causality of speech.[94] It is in fact “one of the specific phenomena of the speaking creature”[95] – for the first poets were also singers; the craft of poetry is rooted in the oral tradition.[96]

#### READER

Thus text must take on the a-causality of the poetic image[97] in order to speak – in order to set their meaning free so to speak. Poetry is perhaps one the textual forms that does this quite naturally – the many ways of forming and shaping a poem –

#### BACHELARD

– the way words are woven not in purely logical causality but in ambivalence and juxtaposition[98] –

#### READER

– exactly – means that we tend to read poetry not only horizontally, but also vertically; in a poem we recognise the simultaneity of language that is its interrelated, interwoven quality as an ecology[99].

#### TRANSLATOR

And so if a text were to take on this a-causality, this would be to take on the weave of interrelation[100] that is the \*teks of text in the first place.

#### BACHELARD

Precisely. Every word calls out and tugs at the thread of every other word in the text.[101] In this resonance is the power of poetry.

#### READER

And so for text to be truly textual, it must embrace the structures and signs that text is confined to, whilst also being willing to loosen its joints [102] a little, re-articulating[103] itself as as spoken-image to recognise that it is composed of a thick weave of expression and of the invisible lacunae between the threads of that expression[104] – which is itself a weave of lacunae[105]. In being so enlivened with the invisible flesh of the word, the body of the text becomes a living body,– a Leib, rather than a Körper. Only so resurrected can texts speak.[106]

#### MERLEAU-PONTY [to the TRANSLATOR]

– I caught resonance, but apart from that I’ve lost the thread of conversation.

#### TRANSLATOR

They have ascertained that to speak, text must exist in the operation of craft – that double reversibility between the flesh of language and that of the world, the operation of making as *Poesis*.

#### MERLEAU-PONTY

And so writers are tasked with “wield[ing]” the instruments of an instrumental, institutionalised language of the written word, in such a way that they may be “deployed henceforth in an imaginary world and in the transparent body of language.” [107]

[small lull]

#### READER [to MERLEAU-PONTY]

You use the phrase “transparent body” however does this mean the body of the word is unthick? Is transparency equivalent with a lack of thickness? How thick is a word, really?

**HUBERMAN**, cited by Lisa Robertson in *Thinking Space* (New York: Organism for Poetic Research, 2013), 13.

[72]

This is one of the seven old scales or modes which is a mix of two scales. It seemed the appropriate scale for the moment, for **HERMES** fully intended to mischievously mix things up, or rather – he intended to catch up his listeners into the mixedness and manifolded midstness of things.

[73]

The **READER** and **BACHELARD** seem to get on well without a translator, I think because they have mastered how to speak to each other via images alone. Where Merleau-Ponty is concerned however, a translator will always be necessary (indeed, I think Bachelard sometimes wished there was a translator present even for the conversations between the two of them, for thought they were both French, Merleau-Ponty was frustratingly – yet necessarily – complex in his way of speaking. Bachelard was complex, but his words captured the imagination before the reason, and so one can happily bask in them without a translator before realising one has taken in none of the meaning of what has been said. Or so the Reader thought)

[74]

**BACHELARD**, *The Poetics of Space*, 23.

[75]

**MERLEAU-PONTY**, *The Visible and the Invisible* 194.

[78]

For further critiques of **BERGSON**, which was one of **BACHELARD**'s favourite past-times, see **BACHELARD**, *The Poetics of Space*, 95-98. See also his *Intuition of the Instant*, trans. Eileen **RIZO-PATRON** (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2013), which critiques the Bergsonian *durée* as a merely horizontal, flattened time as a sequence of nows with no thickness, instead suggesting that our concept of time be thickened and folded via the poetic instant – a vertical time, pregnant with ambivalence and latent with both memory and imagination.

[79]

**BACHELARD**, *The Poetics of Space*, 96-97.

[80]

*ibid.*

**TRANSLATOR** [to **MERLEAU-PONTY**]

She takes issue with your use of the word “transparency.”

**MERLEAU-PONTY**

*[slightly affronted]*

I might blame you for this, given that you translated it – but this is an issue we must walk with.

*[Having so finished their meal, and with the taste of the words spoken still thus burning their tongues, they exit from the dining room, clattering piles of plates into the kitchen, cups into the dishwasher, the READER wiping a coffee stain off her sleeve. They move to the hallway, put on their jackets – it is set to rain, so it is a rain jackets and walking boots day – and exEunt via the front door through Bachelard’s lavender garden in the yard. The Reader hums quietly to herself, all else are silent.]*

[81]

This would be for **APOLLO** the archer, wielder of the instrument that is the bow, to triumph over **HERMES**, and this is not how we intend the story to play out.

[82]

**ABRAM**, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, 77.

[83] [**BACHELARD** digressing] They

are afraid of ‘saying the wrong thing.’ But to speak well one has to be willing to get it wrong. It is to be willing to be messy. Indeed, we must have the freedom to get it wrong without the worry of upset – one could even go so far as to say one might intend to upset, in the trickster spirit of language. We must be free to upset things precisely in order to work them out in the very outworking that is the word at work, that is operative speech. [**MERLEAU-PONTY**] Yes, manifesting a word is a messy business, and every artist and craftsperson knows this – especially painters.

[84]

Given that to speak well is to live well, and hence that in a way, to speak is to live. See **BACHELARD**, *The Poetics of Space*, 11.

[85]

[**MERLEAU-PONTY** *digressing*] You speak well friend. [**Bachelard**] yes, well I always say, “to speak well is– [**Merleau-Ponty**] “a part of living well” – yes you have said it often, and it is an epithet I strive to live by.

[86]

Dear **READER**: Wondering why he so keeps going on about resonance? So was **MERLEAU-PONTY** – but had he turned to the relevant pages, he would understand perfectly: **BACHELARD**, *The Poetics of Space*, 2, 7-8.

[87]

The **READER**, that is: fellow lover of wardrobes and words, and avid unpicker of jackets.

[88]

The friendship of The **READER** and Bachelard spans several years, one missed train, one lost copy of “*The Poetics of Space*,” one dissertation and many a conversation between The **READER**, **BACHELARD** and Dr Dorian **WISZNIEWSKI**, which are at once folded up and opened out in *Species of Nooks and Other Niches*, (Dissertation,

### 03: TeXtile

Taking Turns: how to unravel a word.

*The Inner Structure – “shadows stuffed with organs”*

[The first few moments of the walk pass in silence. All are thinking about speech, though speaks just yet. All is quiet upon their path, until they come upon a small traveller’s caravan, whose back had been opened out and converted into a stall. They hear the lo of cattle, but when looking about, none can be seen. Upon a stool sits a tall and rather bedraggled man; his clothes thin and ratty – but surrounding him, strung all about the caravan and spilling out of the cramped little caravan windows on lines of twine, were lengths of luxurious, thick, hand-woven fabric, “some dark red, some silvery white”[108]. The man was practically swaddled with them.[109] For this dishevelled man was a weaver, and though his clothes were moth-eaten and thread-bare, the fabrics he wove were fit for gods. In his wooden caravan hang a small lyre, and as he sees them passing, he takes it from its hook, and, after summoning the right words with a deep and long and silent breath, he begins to sing out in the Lydian mode:]

#### HERMES

Two words I have given, those two words that I sang,  
or perhaps only one, split off into two strands.  
A third thread I’ll add to the weave if I may,  
for here the word ‘teXtile’ comes into play.  
Be warned though you see – and I tell you no lies  
– but to attempt to unravel is to here intertwine.

Now I say mind the mist that will come on your walk –  
the midst of your minds is in the flesh of the world,  
and into that midst you must go as you talk.

“While he said this, his eyes twinkled continuously and he wriggled his eyebrows up and down, glancing this way and that.”[110] He sang his song, of course, in Greek, and so little was gleaned by our traipsters beyond the lilting yet somewhat looming melody – but all agreed it was, indeed, a beautiful melody.

#### CONVERSATION ON A WINDING ROAD

##### BACHELARD

What beautiful resonances...

##### READER

If only we could understand the words.

*[Walking to the cart.]*

One yard of this please –

*[–pointing to a particularly off-white length of muslin. She pays and then stretches it out all around her.]*

##### READER

– yes, it will do nicely for my window nook.

##### BACHELARD

Your nook...?

*[As they walk away, the weaver, unnoticed by the traipsters, picks himself up and packs up his cart – all of it, somehow, by some fantastical trick, into a very small rucksack – and vanishes off into the horizon. Still the cattle lo, nowhere to be seen.]*

##### READER

I am attempting make a sort of secret place in it. To make a house of it. (For a nook is a house – you know, and a house a word.) This has a lovely teXture – and look – [holding it up to the sun] it is at once opaque and transparent. But what is it made from? And where is it from? And – more pressingly – from where does a word come and what is its teXture? How

University of Edinburgh, 2017).

[89]

Gaston **BACHELARD**, *The Poetics of Space*, 166.

[90]

**TRANSLATOR**'s footnote in **MERLEAU-PONTY**, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 71.

[91]

Alphonso **LINGIS**, "Translator's Introduction" in **MERLEAU-PONTY** *The Visible and the Invisible*, Xlvi.

[92]

See footnote number 6 on distinction between interrogation and reflection.

[93]

**LINGIS**, "**TRANSLATOR**'s Introduction," Xlvi.

[94]

Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, 3, 9, 96.

[95]

ibid., 96.

[96]

The Homeric Hymns are not 'hymns' for nothing.

[97]

Poeisis, making, craft.

[98]

Bachelard, "Poetic Instant and Metaphysical Instant," in *The Intuition of the Instant*, trans. Eileen Rizo-Patron (Northwestern University Press, 2013), 59.

[99]

**ABRAM**, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, 84-85.

[100]

ibid. [**READER digressing**] Now I hear George Winston's *The Twisting of Hay Rope*.

[101]

David **ABRAM** explains this ecology of language well, referring to Saussure's notion of language as a "thoroughly interdependent matrix, a webwork wherein each term has meaning only by virtue of its relation to other terms within the system." (**ABRAM**, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, 82). This interconnected, complex, many membered body is what **MERLEAU-PONTY** is getting at when he speaks of the flesh of language, I think, for it is not too different from the notion of the flesh

thick is a word?

**MERLEAU-PONTY**

This now, is the trickiest issue – to unravel the tissue of the textile itself.[111]

**TRANSLATOR**

Here I might point out an etymological conundrum: ‘to unravel’ is ‘to ravel.’ The verbs are simultaneously synonymous and antonymous of each other, given that as threads are unwoven from, say, a tapestry, they become tangled.[112]

**READER**

And so to unpick something which is intertwined is futile, as more intertwining results –

**MERLEAU-PONTY**

–and so it is with the double reversibility of the visible and the invisible that is in language-as-craft. We cannot unpick this interrelation into separate threads, for they are so intertwined, and us with them, that we are left only with more woven interrelations[113] – only in a different order[114] –

**READER**

–the weave is cunning indeed, to tangle us up so.

**TRANSLATOR**

Such is the \*teks of the textile.

**MERLEAU-PONTY**

But this is exactly the issue; “each time we want to get at it immediately

**TRANSLATOR**

–it, that is, the idea –

**READER**

– the invisible, the word –

**MERLEAU-PONTY**

– or lay hands on it, circumscribe it, or see it unveiled, we do in fact feel that the attempt is misconceived, that it retreats in the measure that we approach. The explication does not give us the idea itself; it is but a second version of it, a more manageable derivative.”[115] This is just the style of things.

[pause]

It is also the same problem that arises when you try to unpick your jacket–

**CASEY**

If I may–

*[At this moment, just as they are about to embark over a stile at the edge of a field, the group are accosted by Casey, who has himself been walking after a most industrious morning casting glances about a local cafe. He had caught sight of the traipsters whilst walking along the hedgerow, and had been just a few paces behind them for some time now, following the conversation carefully. They exchange glances and greetings, and he is swiftly welcomed into their midst, being known to the Reader and being himself an avid reader of both Merleau-Ponty and Bachelard. The conversation continues...]*

**CASEY**

... and so attempts to untangle the midst either leave us with more midst, more tangling, or we have so stripped it back as to end up not with some underlying generality, but with non-midst. It is such with places – stripping back place, which is the general thing, is to find



of the world as constituting a weave of relationships between seers and seems, all in the midst of all the others.

[102]

**HYDE**, Trickster Makes this World, 252-255. Hyde outlines the etymology of ‘articulate’ back through the latin ‘ars’ (skill, artifice, craft) and ‘artus’ (body, joint), back through the greek ἄρθρον and harmós, to articles and ultimately the PIE root \*ar, meaning to join, to fit, to make. Hence – a crafty person, or god like **HERMES**, is well articulated in both senses as meaning knowing how to join together materials to make something, and how to speak well – in the word articulate we find again the crafty intertwining of ‘visible’ and invisible ‘crafts.’

[103]

ibid. **HYDE** notes that the gods will always “go for the joints” if they want to take us down. (252.) Thence, mind your meaning – for the meaning is in the joints, for the meaning is in the making.

[104]

In this way, the lacuna becomes a plenum.

[105]

**MERLEAU-PONTY**, The Visible and the Invisible, 227-228.

[106]

**CASEY** uses this idea of Leib, Körper and the “resurrected body” in relation to the flesh of the world and the body. I am here applying it to the flesh of the word and language. See **CASEY**, “How to Get from Space to Place in a fairly short stretch of time,” in Getting Back into Place (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 22.

[107]

**MERLEAU-PONTY**, “The Indirect Language,” 48.

[108]

**CASHFORD** (trans.), “Hymn to Hermes,” 67.

[109]

ibid., 66. Also on 67: “the little child wrapped in up in crafty wiles.”

[110]

ibid., 69.

[111]

On this being the most difficult issue

non-place.[116] And so with the word. In untangling, we either tangle it up in a new way, or we wear it down so much in our empiricist endeavours that we will cease to have words, and only non-words.

**MERLEAU-PONTY**

So you cannot understand the thickness of a word – only stand in the middle of [117] its own tricky thickness of which you are a part.

*[READER lagging behind a little; she is getting stuck in the mud.]*

**CASEY**

Hence do not unpick, but pick up and put on. Stop asking where is the word? and wear the word, walk with it. For, like places, we are not only in the words but of them. So *make a habit of conversation*. Converse[119]: inhabit the word. And pick up the pace by the way!

*[struggling out of the bog]*

**READER**

It's okay, I'll catch up. I was told something like this by a moth and a mirror[120]; I tried to understand and could not, but now I'm caught up enough to know I am, simply, *caught up*; I am already always in the midst of the word, for *the mystery of craft is its midstness*.

**MERLEAU-PONTY**

Yes – this is the trick of language.

*[the TRANSLATOR steps forward after hanging back a while with Bachelard, ready to assist and a little afeared of the linguistic tangle they may have gotten into.]*

**TRANSLATOR [to MERLEAU-PONTY]**

Need any help over here...?

*[But no help was needed, for truly essential speech, which speaks the things and not of things, precisely because it finds itself in the midst of the things – needs no translator. And thus the conversation goes on for several hours, the translator in silent rapture as the interlocution progresses. At length, the interlocutors realise they have performed, unwittingly (well, actually, with rather a lot of wit), a loop – or perhaps a spiral sudden back to the place they started – the path in the lavender garden. They had walked from the house to the place, to the word – which is a kind of house, if Bachelard is to be taken seriously in the conversation that ensues. Via a series of contracting loops, they have gone deeper into the midst of the issue, but still ended when they started – such is the power of reversibility, to so fold oneself back on oneself.]*

(the issue of the tissue, the tissue of the issue), see **MERLEAU-PONTY**, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 149. For the word ‘tissue,’ see 131, 132, 135.

[112]  
Online Etymology Dictionary, “ravel,” accessed 23 April, 2019, <https://www.etymonline.com/word/ravel>. See also “unravel,” accessed 23 April, 2019, <https://www.etymonline.com/word/unravel>.

[113]  
We cannot make visible the invisible but only make visible the “parapdoX of expression.” **MERLEAU-PONTY**, “The Indirect Language,” 113.

[114]  
“...trickster shifts patterns in relation to one another and by that redefines the patterns themselves.” (**HYDE**, *Trickster Makes This World*, 67.) Trickster is so caught up in the midst of things too – he intends to disrupt the relations and continually reconstitute them. Hence, if I have said nothing “original” or “new” in this *essai*, then I will at least, I hope, have shifted things into new relationships – then I will be satisfied to have performed decently as a trickster.

[115]  
**MERLEAU-PONTY**, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 150.

[116]  
CASEY, “How to Get from Space to Place,”

[117]  
*i.e. in the midst of*

[118]  
Casey, “How to get from Space to Place,” 19.

[119]  
Which historically meant ‘to inhabit.’

[120]  
Understandably – for who can interpret a moth or a mirror?

[121]  
**HERMES** had been friends with **NARCISSUS** long enough not to be immune to effects of this kind of thing on the ego.

[122]  
**CASHFORD**, “Hymn to **HERMES**,” 58.

[123]

#### **o4: Architectonic**

The Re-turn: how to get from the word to the house.

*The Inner Lining – “more of the visible”*

*[Diligently awaiting his little traipsters is Hermes, hidden in the lavender along the edge of the path. He has no caravan this time, only his cloak and his lyre – and his rucksack. He has been awaiting this moment – the moment where he would share the ‘last word’ in the dialogue before packing himself up and going off to disrupt some other conversation. But this conversation he had been planning for a long time, for the words of it really were his own words, of him, about him. To speak into this conversation had been the joy of speaking out his name, speaking out his very whatness[121]. The trickster spots the traipsters, pulls his lyre out of his many pocketed rucksack, and, after summoning the right words with a deep and long and silent breath, he begins in the modern major scale – for this was to be his victory song, and his ego no longer cared about giving away the ending – to sing:]*

#### **HERMES**

This final word I speak into to this weave  
Is a miXture of words, in truth I concede  
The word that I end with, that I give now to you  
May be used, perhaps, to build something anew.  
This word, this finale, this last little thread  
This word is Architec–

#### **APOLLO**

–Tonic anyone?

*[APOLLO appears in the lavender, suddenly and without warning. Hermes falls off his feet and into the thicket of green and purple, starting; it is not often our jester is jested.]*

#### **HERMES**

I don’t appreciate jokes  
when I’m singing with lyre –  
as I’ve told you before,  
and you know I’m no liar!  
EXplain yourself, now,  
why on earth are you here?  
You’re ruining a jest  
I’ve conjectured for years!

#### **APOLLO**

You know why I’m here  
little brother of mine  
The cattle – where are they?  
– and none of your lies.

#### **HERMES**

Dear brother, calm down,  
point your arrows away  
– I have not seen  
any of your cattle today...

But let us quarrel and query each other no more  
for argument, you know, is oh-such-a bore!  
Instead here’s a deal –  
no really, it’s a steal –  
I’ll give you my lyre  
and the loom of my words,  
if you give me your bow,  
and the cattle unseen but still heard.

#### **APOLLO**

A good deal it seems,  
But the trickster’s at play –  
now don’t look like that!  
I’m not playing your game. [voice steadily rising]

[124]

There were a few others there too. Mostly it is locals but every week there is a guest speaker. (NeXt week they have **BUKOWSKI**, previously they had O'Hara, they have had **VALERY** – they have even had **MODOC SINGERS** one week. Here is a snatch of his reading: “We never come to thoughts. They come to us.” (Heidegger, Poetry, Language, Thought,)

[125]

[**BACHELARD**, digressing] I do not like to drink often, but when I do I prefer to drink with those who like to think.

[126]

Heidegger, \_\_\_\_

[127]

[**BACHELARD**, *digressing*] for every word has their cellar of obscure etymologies and their attic of possible future uses – and their everyday ground floor, which is course not to be disdained... (See **BACHELARD**, The Poetics of Space, 166.)

[128]

Not however, the earliest dwellings, which were of course caves. Then there were mud brick houses, which echo the eXperience of the cave – the emergence of weaving as a part of constructing a dwelling in 4000BC could potentially be read as an emergence from the merely found object (the cave) into a realm of creative fabrication – of poesis. For even before we had mud houses, we had clothes. In the cave, we had clothes. We hid in the cave, naked, until we were given clothes. Clothes enabled us to be in the world, to have shelter in the world. The woven wattle and daub houses can be read as eXtensions of pre-historic man's clothes, the fabricated house an eXtension of fabricated clothing. Studies conducted by scientists into the emergence of clothing-specific lice suggest that ‘Anthropologically Modern Man’ began to wear clothes 170,000 years ago – long before the first brick houses. Melissa A. Toups, Andrew Kitchen, Jessica E. Light, David L. Reed, Origin of Clothing Lice Indicates Early Clothing Use by Anatomically Modern Humans in Africa, Molecular Biology and Evolution, Volume 28, Issue 1, January 2011, Pages 29-32.

[129]

Hence the trickster **HERMES**, who can pack up cellar and attic into his rucksack. A bag of tricks indeed.

My bow is my own,  
and I am the chief –  
so show me my cattle,  
you codswalloping thief!

**HERMES**

*[hesitating, considering, then saying in a calm and lilting voice]*

To do that my friend,  
we must build a house,  
must weave it of wattle and willow and daub.  
Into this thickness, the cattle will come  
*The invisible:*  
it's only in thicknesses they run.

*[now slyly, for "he did not forget the art of trickery"[122]]*

But to do such a thing,  
we must still exchange gifts.  
You give me your strength,  
the structure of your bow,  
and I'll give you the midst,

and together we'll weave a tall house of all this.

*[And so **HERMES** and **APOLLO**, the chief archer and master crafter, the Archon and the Tekton, together in a tangled ecology of lavender, wove the first truly Vertical House – a tall, well structured house of many woven stories. Into the silent midst of this house would come the invisible cattle.]*

*Meanwhile, up the path come **MERLEAU-PONTY**, **CASEY**, the **READER**, the **TRANSLATOR**. They go in round the back door, take off their coats and clean up their muddy shoes. A few minutes later, enter **BACHELARD**, who had dallied and then dallied again in the Lavender Garden. Today, thought **BACHELARD**, the scent of the lavender is so strong the plants seem almost to speak – and here, amidst the lavender, he received an idea for another chapter in his book. He tarries a moment, then makes his way into the house. Together the interlocutors prepare a meal, put on their dinner jackets, and sit at table. The conversation ensues thus, assisted by wine from **BACHELARD**'s corner cellaret.]*

**CONVERSATION, SIMPLY.**

**MERLEAU-PONTY** [to **BACHELARD**]

...we lost you on the walk I think, but it appears you made your way back just in the nick of time!

**BACHELARD**

Well, while you were deep in discussion, Alphonso and I were discussing the "mild, philological pain" we feel whenever "a great writer uses a word in a derogatory sense." Eventually the translator got caught up with you; I held back and kept silence. When we came to the small conglomeration of houses in the thicket, I saw that in the Public House there was today to be a reading from Heidegger for a spoken word event.[123] His words I enjoyed so much that I sought to come into conversation with him over a small alcoholic beverage[124]. We discussed a poem by Hölderlin, and he said something which resonated strongly with me: "poetic creation, which is a kind of building, lets us dwell."[125] What do you think of this?

**READER**

Well if poetic creation does correspond to the poetic image as a spoken word, it makes the word into a house, a place in which we dwell, a place which holds us in its midst.

**BACHELARD**

And so words are little houses! I have always thought so.[126]

**TRANSLATOR**

[131]

*[The **READER** silently notes the  
following words:]*

...for so a word, like a house is  
teXtured indeed.

A word like a house may be folded into  
three

– it is latent you see

pregnant with pasts,

presents,

and with futures to be.

[132]

For a similar situation, see **LEWIS**,  
The Hideous Strength, 321.

Here we can bring the root \*teks back into the midst of things. We know it means essentially to weave, but it also meant more *specifically* to weave wicker into wattle for mud covered houses – some of the earliest houses.[127]

#### READER

But then, *the built world has always been a woven world* –

#### TRANSLATOR

–and consequently, the links between the word habit as firstly a garment, and the verb inhabit as pertaining to the occupation of a house, and further the word converse as historically meaning ‘inhabit’ – are beyond etymological. The spoken word, the built realm, the tailored item – are so interwoven that to put on a spoken word is to inhabit a house; to simply converse it to dwell. We can be on the move and at home all at once![128] – so long as we put on the weave of the word.

#### READER

Words really are little houses, and houses little words – spoken, crafted, woven, witty, cunning words. It is all a weave; an intertwining. Architecture is architeXtural, and Word and House are reversible in the weave of the word that is craft itself ... [130]

#### MERLEAU-PONTY

– and *this* is the trick of language.

*[At this the conversation comes to an abrupt halt. The spell, having been so called out, breaks, and they find that, in all their gesticulation and eXpression, and quite without them realising it for they were so caught up, the table they had set has been utterly decimated: all is a-muck, glasses broken, wine spilled everywhere, water running off the slanting table (for naturally, the ground floor in Bachelard’s house is not strictly horizontal), and food smushed into everyones’ clothes. Wether this was the effect of wine or of essential speech, it was hard to tell.[131]*

*By this point, Apollo and Hermes epart arm in arm, off to wield their bows and weave their mischief elsewhere.]*





– *and just like that, Hermes devised craft and deed together* –

– CASHFORD, “Hymn to Hermes,”<sup>57</sup>.



## **2 - THE WORD COUNT**

*"Where are the words?"*

*- How to count words in a woven world.*

Dedicated to the words I had to delete, and the ones who could not be pinned down in this text.

- The Reader



**oo: tekhne**

mastering the art: how to count words out of a woven world

cuff links: "lacunae"

*[The reader eventually emerges out of the wardrobe back into her room, and finds herself facing her familiar reflection. She so sits and types out all she can remember from the conversation as it transpired. Evening came, and then morning came, and she faces her reflection again, text in hand, and finds herself in the mirror again, reflecting. (Old habits are difficult to kill.) Having so finished the text, she realises she has forgotten to include a word count.]*

**THE READER REFLECTS, AGAIN.**

**READER**

... oh dear, I had quite forgotten... where is the word count?

**REFLECTION**

Well where are the words? And which words count anyway?

**READER**

You are so good at reflecting things back so by refracting things into two. In answer to your first question – take a turn in the text and you'll see (or you'll shatter). And in answer to the second question, I will answer with negation, seeing as we are reflecting. Thence, the word count does not include:

– Words not "spoken" – for, if speech is indeed embodied, then it is only spoken words that matter (literally). Hence, stage directions, titles, headings, and the names of interlocutors (added for merely textual purposes) elude the word count.

– Words spoken by invisible beings – singing gods in this case – for these words are tricky, and elude the word count which seeks to pin them down. Only the interlocutors words are counted, seeing it is only interlocation, in this essay, that counts.

– Nor, of course, are footnotes counted in the word count, for (and aside from this being entirely 'legal' in the academic code) – while they give weight and footfall to what is said on the walk, they remain only implicit and invisible in the words said on the walk-about, and so the above note on invisible words here applies.

– Nor are reflections counted – again, only inter-locutions. For where words are concerned, reflections do not count – for the word is to be found in the word at work, and this happens in speech, which is always already in dialogue. In this way, the pre-amble in oo:Pre-texts is a little like a spinning wheel; sometimes, before you weave and get caught up in interrelation, you have to spin the thread with which to weave. Hence, sometimes, before you get into the thick of things, you must spend a little bit of time spinning around in circles; going in a loop – this is the first section on reflection. The Reader's decision to emerge from this is when productive conversation starts – when the words that count begin, and thus when the words begin to be counted.

With all these words in mind (that is, in the midst of things) – the (spoken) word count is thus:

**3,384**