

QUID 14· GROUND TRUTH EDITORIAL

- FIVE YEARS since the first issue of Quid and so far as the Buy Bags and Belts Online Data Vacuum permits us to be aware James F. McNulty is nary a whit more dyspeptic nor Francis Fukuyama a hoot more atrabilious (ask him: fukuyama@jhu.edu). Is it something we failed to say? Is he asleep who thinks himself awake?
- I obeyed, blushing crazy from lying, naked and with my butt there like raised high up my mother's lap. If her moved head was just in bits of loin, would she biro over every epithelial detail of my anatomy between my apart thighs. I decided to endure, though. Marx said that. He also said that we need to rouse / the world from its dream of itself.
- If noise is a problem, try earplugs, a fan, or a "white noise" machine to cover up the sounds. Avoid using your bed for anything other than sleep or sex. Let go.
- This is the untruth facility common to the majority of aestheticians at least since Schiller, those white men for whom the concept of *possession* (and self-possession in particular) is inducted by a sleight of sentiment into aesthetic equivalence with *real* or *reconciled* or *authentic* life itself. Real life is real when we own it ourselves: we are told this: it is a dictum rented to us. And owned/real life is the opposite of alienation. But what of my desire not to own my life? I want you to own me. Is it perverse or in some degree neurotic to believe that my life would be better if I could own less rather than more of it? Is it, that sweet word, *apathetic* not to care about owning it? Well might you be frantic to ask: is this the masochistic sublimation-speak of the *Ahnnehmungstypus* feigning ignorance of even the most basic economic concepts and their significance for non-economic existence? Mucking about? I want you to own me. Would it amount only to senseless or even merely fantastic self-disinheritance in favour of someone I love, or in favour of capitalism, or of nothing; or could it be true that the concept of self-possession is functional and important and meaningful but that it is nonetheless a commodity concept? The question is not: what does it already mean to say that the concept of self-possession is a commodity.

- <http://www.mypharmacy.co.uk/medicines/medicines/n/nytol/nytol.htm>
- You wouldn't really get me hurt. Maybe I'd have to even act like pain, to see that you think my quivering desired an effect for the punishment. As it turned out, I didn't have to have a worry about that. Waves of pain throughout my body.
- The neo-cons call themselves democratic revolutionaries. Michael Ledeen is not dead. Please send poems and articles and reviews and amusing jokes to:
- QUID c/o Keston Sutherland, Flat 1a, 77-78 Islingword Road, Brighton BN2 9SL. Or to K.Sutherland@sussex.ac.uk. See too: www.barquepress.com
- Please enjoy your magazine.

ROD SMITH · A POEM

A Net

(for love)

Loud, as is uncommon in this nowhere

The sky, half-fire, half-smoke,

Stops, but continues as a shining wall.

Outside, they who never were,

Loud, unthought nonexistents,

Reaggravated by the nothing.

Stupid one— your wall is all of this.

**MARIANNE MORRIS · THE ABUSED BECOME THE ABUSERS
THE POETRY OF BARRY MACSWEENEY**

[...] impotence and suffering arising from unmourned loss do not lead to a passion for objectivity and justice. They lead to resentment, hatred, inability to trust, and then, the doubled burden of fear of those negative emotions. This double burden is either turned inwards or outwards, but both directions involve denial.¹

I am using the above quotation to kickstart a commentary of Barry MacSweeney's poems of the late 70s and early 80s, such as 'Colonel B', 'Liz Hard', 'Wild Knitting' and the *Jury Vet* sequence, which suffer through a debilitatingly adamant political disgust, consisting largely of commodity fetish, self-loathing and violent sex. Rose's words are relevant to the dilemma faced by the narrator and the reader of this poetry, both of whom are required to wade through the 'negative' emotions kicked up first of all by 'impotence and suffering', and secondly by the violent reaction to it, visible both on the page and in the response. MacSweeney should by now be infamous for kicking up a critic's moral voice, which pipes in dutifully despite its bearer's radical protestations. The work is undeniably difficult to deal with, and electrifying for that.

Rose's words are diagnostic of the potential limitations of such poetry. Denial, she says, is a consequence of the failure to mourn, and mourning is a necessary precursor to the reintegration of emotion into the spectrum of 'objectivity and justice' (and thereby, presumably, the state of health implied by suffering's contrary). But this interpretation treats negative emotion, or the negative power achieved by powerlessness, as unproductive and undesirable (as does the morally burdened critical voice, perhaps).

Orientating them with the Rose quote in this way, then, suggests that they have somehow failed. In this case, however, I don't intend to limit the discussion of MacSweeney's poems to the idea that they are failures in any way, due to the psychological nature of such an inquiry, which would need to take upon itself the burden of examining what has been lost, and what has not been mourned, by way of an investigation into the more personal areas of the poet's life. This, in turn, would sensationalise and marginalise the work as the poetry of alcoholism or depression, for MacSweeney's personal life was fraught with difficulties resulting from both, a fact already widely publicised and

¹ Gillian Rose, 'Beginnings of the Day - Fascism and Representation' in *Mourning Becomes the Law: Philosophy and Representation* (Cambridge, 1996), 41-62 (p.51).

discussed under the guise of critical interpretation, and a fact that MacSweeney himself was happy to see publicised.

What attracts my discussion particularly to the work of the late 1970s and early 80s is the fact that it coincides with Margaret Thatcher's takeover of the Conservative Party in 1975, and of the government in 1979. This latter takeover was almost immediately followed by the reduction of Income Tax and the near-doubling of VAT; the restricting of trade unions began shortly afterwards. Up until this point, MacSweeney's economic, occupational and personal difficulties had found only an artificial outlet in the form of his journalistic writing. The political climate radically transformed this. For MacSweeney, Thatcher's was a repressive and fascistic regime that neither he alone as an individual opponent, nor the concerted and active effort of traditional working class organisations, had the power to resist.

There is an opening here for MacSweeney to become nostalgic and backward-looking - what we might construe as a form of mourning a loss - and to avoid the problems and frustrations involved in confronting the new situation. Rather than doing this, he embraced the implied stylistics of the Thatcher era, precisely so as not to be marginalised. The 'Liz Hard'² poems form one part of this, the title character being a reconstruction of 'an immigration officer he'd met and interviewed [...] she epitomized the most venomous aspects of that period of Thatcherism',³ and the poems, apparently revised from an original sequence called 'FUCK RANT',⁴ pursue sexual gratification through fetishised violence, bondage imagery and sexualised scenarios of an immigration power dynamic. The section 'Liz Sings Innocence Is True' (p.96), which features a 'split bint' and 'NAZI BEDCLOTHES / MADE BY MUM', very ostentatiously announces the decision to overturn all notions of mourning, asserting that there is in fact no loss to mourn, partly through its violence, and partly through heading the poem with the word 'Innocence'. Backwards-looking innocence would be delivered with the sentimentality or purity that meet our expectations of such words. But 'innocence', in the context of an abhorrent political regime, becomes in this poem the caroms and gambols of negative innocence. The poem itself becomes the degraded spectacle, immersing itself in hatred with the full

² Barry MacSweeney, *Wolf Tongue: Selected Poems 1965-2000* (Northumberland, 2003), pp.95-100. All future references will be to the page-numbers of this edition, and will appear in the text.

³ Simon Thom, in an email to the author, 15.03.04.

⁴ All manuscripts cited were viewed on 26.03.04 at the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne's archive of MacSweeney's papers, held in Special Collections at the Robinson Library under the direction of Helen Arkwright.

realisation of the fact that it does so, demonstrated in *Jury Vet* by the lines 'Kiss her 1980 strongly-stitched pale shirt. / Love the Dirt' (p.109).

For Rose, 'unmourned loss' is unintentionally unmourned. The resulting energy comes out of repressed anger, and is considered undesirable because of this, as the suggestion of 'a passion for objectivity and justice' avers. The mourning posture, which includes even mourning the ability or refusal to mourn, or feeling sentimental about the idea that poets are responsible for mourning, is completely rejected by MacSweeney in work of this period. The posture he takes up is one of negative mourning, which involves cherishing abjections, and manipulating these abjections in order to create a linguistic energy that becomes the driving force of the poems.

Factors other than the primary grievance of the Thatcher regime are involved in the development of MacSweeney's negative mourning. The poems mentioned above come from a fertile European cultural background which had already spat up Guy Debord, the Situationists and the 1968 Paris revolution, as well as the steady uprising of punk music and its accompanying radical attitudes in 1970s Britain. The latter phenomenon, a particularly confident, irreverent and wide-reaching display of dissatisfaction, was of particular importance for MacSweeney, and he gleaned the style of much of his own social and political defiance from it.

His posture of defiance was also partly formulated amongst 1960s mainstream poetry, controlled, promoted and published by large publishing companies, aimed at a wide audience and manufactured with the purpose of achieving financial success. MacSweeney's dissatisfaction with mainstream publishing began when his first collection of poems, *The Boy from the Green Cabaret Tells of His Mother*, was published by Hutchinsons in 1968, when MacSweeney was 19, and which contained poems that he had started writing aged 17. According to the poet, it sold '11,000 copies',⁵ and this success caused the publishing house to nominate MacSweeney for the Oxford Chair of Poetry in the following year, which, given the poet's age at the time, couldn't have been more than an absurd gesture designed to give the book maximum publicity. The book's American reincarnation, which appeared in 1969, hails MacSweeney as 'an unemployed, formally uneducated' poet who 'almost won the highly coveted Oxford chair of poetry'.⁶ MacSweeney in fact won three votes, and chalks up the experience to the fact that

⁵ Nate Dorward, ed. *The Gig Documents Series, #2, Six Poets: Views & Interviews* (Ontario, 2001), p.5.

⁶ Barry MacSweeney, *The Boy from the Green Cabaret Tells of His Mother* (New York, 1969), dust jacket.

I was naïve. I thought I would get something out of it. I did not realise that big publishing firms would do everything for themselves [...] Hutchinsons did pay two MAs at Oxford to put me up for it - they bribed them. From that moment on I was hard as nails about things like this.⁷

The poet was not only manipulated in terms of publicity, but also in terms of creativity, because the publishers 'were forcing me to edit poems [...] change them - take out the dirty words and all that'.⁸ It naturally follows that this experience drove him to start up his own Blacksuede Boot Press in 1970, an act of rebellion that meant he could publish whatever he liked, without fear of being edited or otherwise humiliated. MacSweeney's dissatisfaction in this case drives towards a poetic persona that comes to represent rebellious and anarchistic disgust that views all forms of arbitrary control and authority as its enemy, preparing the way for the poet who, ten years later, reacts with such violent glee and disgust to the Thatcher government. Take the last poem of 1969 included in MacSweeney's *Wolf Tongue*. 'The Last Bud' bids us farewell with the lines:

[...] Ahead of me
is brilliant darkness, and the king
of night. This is a signed resignation;
I am finished with your kingdom of light. (p.19)

These are the final dregs of MacSweeney's plainspoken vulnerability and green, erotic verses, which filled the pages of *The Boy from the Green Cabaret*. Ostentatiously and firmly, in staccato certainty, MacSweeney would like to inform us that we, the audience, can, along with the purest love poems and the promise of poetic history, get stuffed. From this point in his poetic career onwards, until roughly the mid-80s, we see very little of the patience and sincerity of the earlier work. The following poem in the chronological *Wolf Tongue* takes its title from a song by The Doors, demonstrating the appeal of musical culture in fashioning MacSweeney's own new, rebellious artistic style. 'Just Twenty Two - And I Don't Mind Dying' (pp.20-2), with its vocabulary designed more to agitate than promulgate, thrusts at us the very prominent red flag of punk pessimism. It is subtitled 'The Official Poetical Biography of Jim Morrison - Rock Idol' and begins thus:

Rock litmus. Titration from Springfield, she
wore no colour besides, unfashionable & mean, held
such chemistry in high frond.
Nothing else to commend her before she died.

Never mind. O Longchamps by silk blouse run
over, meander after crown trimming. Snail on the
elbow, peach-blue.
Wake up cunt you're living your life in bed. (p.20)

⁷ Interview, p.6.

⁸ Ibid., p.5.

The language and poetic persona of 'The Last Bud' have already become unrecognisable in lines that focus on alchemical detail to the extent that they omit narrative in favour of a tightly-wound drilling of double-meanings. Fighting the poet who wrote *The Boy*, this poem insists on the obsolescence of traditional modes of interpretation. It eludes those who would entertain the idea of poetry as a leisure activity: precisely the audience - all 11,000 of them - who gave Hutchinsons the profits and the license to ask MacSweeney to 'change' his poems in the first place.

The poem also, by nature of its association with Morrison, points us towards the 'well-heeled solipsism' of the 70s, in which 'rock stars made a utopia out of solipsism' by 'insisting on the sensitivity of the individual as the source of all value.'⁹ MacSweeney, no rock star, certainly parodied the degraded stardom associated with figures such as Morrison, and solipsism paraphrases the private nature of his poetry. It rejects the accessibility and near narrative of 'The Last Bud', and the tritely mawkish idea of the 'unique gift of capturing a moment, an emotion, or an object'.¹⁰ MacSweeney himself said of the poem:

[...] commas acting as magnets drawing the next thing in, without having to go into "and"s, "the"s, all sorts of descriptive shit. What you're getting in fact was the facets of a diamond, like the facets of a stone, like complete shape, like Gaudier-Brzeska's sculpture. They were dealing with shape directly.¹¹

And in 'dealing with shape directly', he said, his words 'burst on your consciousness in a way in which the poem has not explained to you,'¹² thereby consciously defining the poems as attempts to escape the expected. Poetry becomes a means of refuting tradition in all its forms - as interpretation, narrative, joy, optimism or even curiosity, and the complacency and naïveté they come to embody for MacSweeney - with increasing violence towards the late 1970s. Helplessness is however expressed in the imagery of 'Just 22' in that the bystander, who views only disjointed, disconnected details removed from their contexts, has no control over the events and images he portrays. They appear coherent due to the poetic stance that assumes power over the images, although at the same time the imagery has control over the poetic voice; this control is visible in the voice's fixation upon it.

There is further evidence that allows us to associate MacSweeney's violent and unusual style with 1970s rock and punk music attitudes. One of the *Jury Vet* poems, 'Pink

⁹ Greil Marcus, *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century* (London, 1989), p.48.

¹⁰ *Green Cabaret*, dust jacket.

¹¹ Interview, p.15.

Enamelled Tossput', contains some of the work's most violent lines, 'YOU WANT HER BROKEN WITH HER MOUTH WIDE OPEN / BECAUSE SHE'S THIS YEAR'S GIRL' (p.118). Whilst in keeping with MacSweeney's viewpoints in this collection, the lines belong to Elvis Costello, and, on investigating punk music journalism from the same period, we are told that the sentiment shouldn't come as all that much of a surprise. Lester Bangs's 1979 biography of the punk band Blondie informs us that:

75% of the guys in the country would elect to beat [the latest poster-girl favourite] up. She may be there all high and mighty on TV, but everybody knows that underneath all that fashion plating she's just a piece of meat like all the rest of them.¹³

This is not a punk-related phenomenon, but a product of the projection of the idol-spectacle onto the social order, which creates a dynamic that commands the observer's abjection. The resentment produced is not about unmourned loss; it is the mirror-image of the disfiguring involved in creating the idol-spectacle in the first place. MacSweeney enacts a similar ritual with the manuscript of his 1983 poem 'Wild Knitting', which takes its epigraph from another Elvis Costello song. The cover is a photocopied picture of Catherine Deneuve, and the ten final pages of the manuscript comprise ten further photocopied pictures of the actress, in various publicity shots and film stills, one of which has its eyes scribbled over with black biro, and its lips and hair vandalised with red and yellow coloured-pencil. MacSweeney's manuscript of work from 1978-86 also uses an image of Deneuve for its cover, and is titled 'Each Deneuving Rivulet of Horn'. The second version manuscript of *Jury Vet*, which was originally titled *People on Trial (Fail the Jury Vet)*, was also compiled with inspirational assistance from the actress. The second page of the manuscript is an A4 photocopied picture of Deneuve, the eyes of which have been accentuated with black marker, making her strangely stern and aged. On the back of the sheet, MacSweeney's handwriting reads:

"Even my earrings failed the jury vet" - Catherine Deneuve, Paris 1979

The manuscripts show an obsession with the illusion of the idol-spectacle, but they are not exactly expressions of frustrated desire. MacSweeney has made similar disfiguring marks on manuscripts for 'Liz Hard', over photographs of models and bondage fashion shoots.¹⁴ The process, or ritual, of doing so has two functions. The first is that it allows MacSweeney to express self-hatred. In disfiguring the image, he is disfiguring himself, because the act of disfigurement projects the self into the disfigured object as the origin

¹² Ibid., p.15.

¹³ Quoted in Greil Marcus, ed. *In the Fascist Bathroom: Writings on Punk 1977-1992* (London, 1993), p.107.

¹⁴ See Appendix.

of the violence that has been done to it. In turn, this expression becomes a means of accessing the destructive energy infused into and contained within rants like *Jury Vet*, fuelling the intensity of the poem's driving force. The stylistic device of incandescent, sexualised hatred that forms much of this work relates us back to the mistreatment of the poster-girl, but *Jury Vet* is not only about warped lust; this is one of its (albeit rather copious) by-products. Deneuve, the fashion model and the poster-girl are all presented in ways that are intended to inspire sexual abjection. Debord adds another element:

Stars of consumption, though outwardly representing different personality types, actually show each of these types enjoying an equal access to the whole realm of consumption.¹⁵

There is an economic and, by implication, political force behind the representation of all celebrities. Confronted with the idol-spectacle of the actress or poster-girl, the onlooker is sexually, economically and politically helpless. MacSweeney is not displaying the symptoms merely of a crush, but of a fetish. His reaction against social systems and political grievances, particularly in the Deneuve-inspired *Jury Vet*, gives special attention to the commodity of sexuality in particular over other commodities, fetishising the female body and its commercial paraphernalia of shoes and makeup, but the obsessive structures of fetishes are interchangeable.¹⁶ The fetishism of *Jury Vet* manifests itself through the lyrical use and abuse of commodities associated with women. It is not the choice of commodities which forms the basis for his obsession, though Jon Stratton argues that the appearance of the mass market brought the possibilities of choice to the consumer, beginning in 1852 with the appearance of the first department store in Paris, quoting Debord to assist his argument.¹⁷ As Debord implies elsewhere, this choice is an illusion. 'The real consumer [...] becomes a consumer of illusion. The commodity is this illusion, which is in fact real.'¹⁸ MacSweeney is alertly and keenly aware of this illusion; he is not trading in the *choice* of commodities available to the female consumer when he commands

SMACK HER FACE O PEARLIZED AUTOMATIK
JUMBO PENCIL

(p.124)

nor when he more quietly, and, by contrast more eerily, marvels at 'amazing jumbo pencils for your / eyes' (p.125); the structure of fetishistic language is more important than the content. The root of the images is hurt, and that hurt is expressed in violence as

¹⁵ Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York, 1995), #61 p.39.

¹⁶ See Marcia Ian, *Remembering the Phallic Mother: Psychoanalysis, Modernism and the Fetish* (Ithaca, 1993) pp.60-1, William Pietz, 'The Problem of the Fetish, I,' in *Res*, 9 (1985), 5-17, and 'The Problem of the Fetish, II', *Res*, 13 (1987), 23-45.

¹⁷ Jon Stratton, *The Desirable Body: Cultural Fetishism and the Erotics of Consumption* (Manchester, 1996), pp.27-8 & 29.

¹⁸ Debord, #47, p.32.

well as the shame that this violence produces, such as in the immediately following lines, which recognise their inability to reclaim beauty in their odd, sad lyricism: 'Liquid amaryllis true earth ground'. The poem 'Each Bead of Sweat is Love' ends with 'Now you have punished me / I will eat red stones', returning also the earth, once the self-fuelled energy of the poem has run out in the temporary gratification of its inward-seeking destructive nature and the desire to achieve this 'punishment'.

Power is sacrificed in exchange for the shamed gratification that ends many of the *Jury Vet* poems, but this sacrifice itself is a means to a further power in the next poem. The sacrifice is worth making, because the power of the individual in a context of political helplessness has already been trampled by the parade of the all-encompassing spectacle: not simply the collected images of the commodity, or the celebrity-as-commodity, but 'a social relationship among people, mediated by images',¹⁹ an idea modified from Marx's original observation that the commodity 'is a definite social relation between men that assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things.'²⁰ The loss of power induced by political helplessness, in MacSweeney's fetish-rants, is fashioned into poetic power. This idea of cyclical power is articulated by William Pietz in his etymological study of the fetish:

[...] the heterogenous components appropriated into an identity by a fetish are not only material elements; desires and beliefs and narrative structures establishing a practice are also fixed (or fixated) by the fetish, whose power is precisely the power to repeat its originating act of forging an identity of articulated relations between certain otherwise heterogenous things.²¹

The modern use of the word 'fetish', most commonly used to describe sexual behaviour that is socially perceived as deviant, serves as a barrier in reading *Jury Vet* and 'Liz Hard', grounding the fetish in the realm of Rose's 'denial'. The etymological history of the fetish in fact displays its original associations with magical practice and witchcraft in the late Middle Ages. The word 'derives from the Latin adjective *factitius*, which originally meant "manufactured", and develops into its modern meanings by way of Western writings on West African religious practices in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.²² The sexual connotations of the word did not appear until the late nineteenth century. Stratton, for example, following Freud's cue, explains fetishism as 'a cultural effect, from the individual male's fear of the loss of his penis'; and goes on to suggest:

¹⁹ Debord, # 4, p.12.

²⁰ Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, intr. Ernest Mandel, trans. Ben Fowkes, vol. 1 (London, 1990), p.165.

²¹ Pietz, 'I', pp.7-8.

²² *Ibid.*, p.5.

[...] cultural fetishism is an effect of a feeling of inadequacy, of relative impotence, provoked by the experience of the power of the state. As a signifier of male power, the penis is always inadequate when compared to the phallic and patriarchal power of the modern state.²³

For MacSweeney, inadequacy is an extremely useful motivation for accessing the poetic energy harnessed by the obsessive structure of the rant, and *Jury Vet* is very much aware of its own inadequacy; it achieves sexual gratification through it. It is Stratton's analysis, in this case, which proves to be inadequate. The obsessive rant structure of the poems is both the product and the producer of an equally obsessive desire for power.

Questions of victimhood arise in MacSweeney's work by way of these Marxist and Freudian definitions of sexual and commodity fetishes. Rose's idea suggests that victimhood is a means only to the powers of 'resentment' and 'hatred', which are viewed as false or unreasonable powers. MacSweeney would have rejected this: 'Who wants to be a victim crushed by pumped-up dirty / five inch scarlet heels' (p.122). For MacSweeney, the victimhood that might be construed as a false power ends up as the triumphalism of shocking most of his readers, and the further empowerment of thereby having reached an extremity of artistic expression. But the consequences of this process are not just about the content of the poem, although such consequences are visible in *Jury Vet*, as we shall see below.

MacSweeney integrates the idea of 'ritual' into a discussion of his work in the Mottram interview by way of discussing Jim Morrison's donning an Oedipal guise on stage, whilst performing *The End*, and roaring about wanting to kill his father and have sex with his mother. Mottram suggests that 'it was rather corny Freudian Oedipalism', and MacSweeney agrees that it is 'no answer', but points out that 'what he'd done was a ritual killing of his parents, to free himself of whatever he thought connected him to them.'²⁴ MacSweeney's fascination with this ritual was no doubt related to the force of the action, and what it meant for Morrison's art, rather than the tumults involved in performing the ritual. For the poems, the energy produced by the performance of the diatribe has prosodic consequences; but there are also personal consequences for the writer of them. *Jury Vet* and 'Liz Hard' enact ritualistic sacrifices by way of their fetishes, which are damaging to notions of innocence and simplicity to the extent that they become impossible to regain. In functioning as anti-spectacles, parading their own products and systems of appeal and disgust in the packaged diatribe form, the poems maintain strong

²³ Stratton, p.15.

²⁴ Ibid., p.14.

ties with the spectacle itself. Through the notion that all spectacle is spectacle, whether in negative form or not, a precedent is set for MacSweeney's later work which has serious consequences for the return to purity that *Pearl* is often hailed as by critics, one saying that the collection 'evoke[s] a childhood love between the poet-persona and his childhood sweetheart.'²⁵ This sentimentalisation of late work attempts to negate the sacrifices made elsewhere in MacSweeney's oeuvre, and in turn, to negate that work itself.

With regard to the effects that the ritual of the diatribe has on the poems themselves, it is useful to look at repetitions in *Jury Vet*. One signifier that repeats itself in the work as a means of focusing poetic energy is the 'varnished redhead' who opens the sequence, beginning 'CRIMSON' (p.101) and ending up 'Sweltering poupee varnished' (p.124), joining the ranks of the work's interchangeable victims. These symbols appear as a means of reaching the next, more degraded, symbol; in the same way that the redhead reappears in order to further deteriorate, her 'wet red Paris hair', which '12 Pairs of Shoes' considers 'full / & total hero's liberation', engenders the 'YAPPING TORNCUNT STARLET' who 'BOUNCED / IN TIME' (p.117). It is a 'hero' who speaks here by way of having successfully overturned another artistic boundary, ostensibly displaying the empowerment that is to be achieved through victimhood. The 'torncunt' returns later on in the sequence as the after-effect of 'CUMCHOKED WOMEN YELL', this time crooning the outburst to a new level of ambiguous calm: 'Torncunt swandown fingerling on Wendy's fan' (p.122). In this case, the word functions not as the shock, but as the after-effect of negative lightness and relief, the 'hero' reappearing to admire his poetic victory and realm of temporary new power.

Jury Vet takes an obvious interest in violating women, though this is not its only impulse, nor are women its only target. The poem implicates the commodity at every step, whether in the form of a celebrity or of cosmetic paraphernalia. In doing this, it demonstrates its understanding that the commodity has altered its sexual consciousness. When *Jury Vet* victimizes fashion and lingerie (such as at the appearance of its 'startled / halfcup bras' (p.125)), its interest is to violate the inanimate objects that women are expected to lust after. When it implicates female celebrities, its interest is to violate the embodiment of this commodified desire. *Jury Vet* understands the inherent connection between lust and consumerism, explained in Freud's belief that desire is 'an active searching after sexual satisfaction: the lack of libidinal gratification produces anxiety'.²⁶ If, as Freud thought, all desire has a sexual origin, it follows that, even in the instance

²⁵ Ian Brinton, 'Wolf Tongue' in *Tears in the Fence*, 37 (2004), 94-100 (p.96).

where desire is experienced for a commodity, it will have a sexual origin and therefore be in some measure a sexual phenomenon. Marx's definition of commodities as things which 'lack the power to resist man'²⁷ supports this.

The poetic persona of *Jury Vet*, fuelled by his own fire, often appears as a crazed consumer, whose various violations gratify him sexually. Like the Costello quote from 'This Year's Girl', gratification by way of tyranny places MacSweeney helpfully in the context of 1970s punk culture, in which such a demonstration was a fashionable way of ostentatiously resisting mainstream culture. Writing about another of Costello's songs, one journalist praised the album *Armed Forces* thus:

"I am the bastard child of an unholy union between fascism and Stalinism," writes Bernard Henri-Lévy [sic], seeking the source of the failure and betrayal of the last great rebellion of our time, that of Paris, May 1968. "Hitler did not die in Berlin. Conqueror of conquerors, he won the war in the stormy night into which he plunged Europe. Stalin . . . is here among us, a stowaway in history . . . And I am writing in an age of barbarism that is already, silently, remaking the world of men." [...] this is exactly what Elvis Costello is talking about.²⁸

One of punk's main requirements was not exactly that it should oppose what it loathed, but that it should become something equally loathsome as a mode of opposition. Greil Marcus writes about the phenomenon of the punk swastika,

painted on clothes, carved into schoolroom desks, carved into arms - how different was it, really, from the National Front campaign to purify the U.K. of its colored populations, Jamaicans, Pakistanis, Indians, the backwash of Empire? [...] meant, history books to the contrary, that fascism had won the Second World War.²⁹

Although it didn't exactly win, fascism remained a presence in Great Britain partly through its associations with the Conservative Party, thanks to Enoch Powell's infamous vocal contributions against immigration in the early 1970s, which were so extreme that 'Powell's denunciation of immigration had undoubtedly helped the NF. One former local organizer was later to note how 'Powell's speeches gave our membership and morale a tremendous boost. Before Powell spoke, we were getting only cranks and perverts. After his speeches we started to attract, in a secret sort of way, the right-wing members of the Tory organizations.'³⁰ The three 'Nazi's in 'Liz Hard' (p.96, 97 & 99) are no accident of hyperbole, neither is 'The Maggie Beast' in 'Colonel B' (p.93) a flippant reference.

²⁶ Quoted in Stratton, p.5.

²⁷ Marx, p.178.

²⁸ 'New West', 12.02.1979, *Fascist Bathroom*, p.38.

²⁹ *Lipstick Traces*, pp.117-8.

³⁰ Martin Durham, 'The Conservative Party, the British Extreme Right and the Problem of Political Space, 1967-83' in *The Failure of British Fascism: The Far Right and the Fight for Political Recognition*, ed. Mike Cronin (London, 1996), 81-98 (p.88).

*

'Colonel B' is not a diatribe. With tempered disgust, it indicates its dissatisfaction in part by referencing other time periods and poetic possibilities, including those of MacSweeney's own work. Early on in the poem, we are reintroduced to the youthful promise of 'Just 22':

I love you

my friendly little wayward trout of Lambeth Walk. (p.88 & p.14)

This brief signification is enough to tell us that the poem is interested in looking past its own boundaries for assistance, continuing by borrowing the words of other poets. He also refers to William Blake's *The Four Zoas*:

The moon (Beulah) walks Up.
She is white torch maiden [...]
No frights
distress her
glowing
garment hem. (p.93)

This reference borrows the Eden-like world of Beulah from Blake's design of 'mild & pleasant rest [...] a Soft Moony Universe feminine lovely / Pure mild & Gentle',³¹ and inserts it into the world of its opposite, in which Beulah's 'garment hem' is more important than what she represents, and where 'Dogs / shit on the earth & bark' (88), in an observation so commonplace as to convey the precise opposite of Beulah as 'the source of poetic inspiration and of dreams,'³² within a site of such seething and biting mediocrity that even other people's pets are implicated, and within a world so stifling to the inspiration that MacSweeney can only call back to the dead harbingers of inspiration, removed and impossible to become in the kind of society where the latest election campaign badge reads 'Do as you're told - VOTE CONSERVATIVE'.³³ Clive Bush suggests that

the poet is almost forced back into recovering the tradition of English visionary poetry to find some uncoercive stability of historical perspective, a sense of a longer historical time-span in which to place the new and more difficult times³⁴

³¹ 'The Four Zoas: The Torments of Love & Jealousy in The Death and Judgement of Albion the Ancient Man', Night the First, Page 5, ll.29-31, in *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. David V. Erdman with commentary by Harold Bloom (New York, 1988), pp.300-407.

³² S. Foster Damon, *A Blake Dictionary: The Ideas and Symbols of William Blake* (London, 1988), p.42.

³³ *Lipstick Traces*, p.139.

³⁴ Clive Bush, 'The Romantic Poets and the Early Poetry of Barry MacSweeney', in *Poetry Now: Contemporary British and Irish Poetry in the Making*, eds. Holger Michael Klein, Sabine Coelsh-Foisner and Wolfgang Görtschacher (Tübingen, 1999), 317-31 (p.318).

but this is not so. MacSweeney doesn't just try to situate his experience in a sanctioned context; he is virtually trying to break out of his own context. Pasticheing other poets signifies a desire to do this, and the same desire had MacSweeney writing 'Just 22' on 'about 45 Benzedrine [...], with headphones on listening to Doors records on the turntable, about four hours non-stop. [...] That was the ritual.'³⁵

MacSweeney fetishises the work of Thomas Chatterton in his poetry under what appears to be an attempt at returning to lost innocence, or escape. MacSweeney was so mesmerised by Chatterton that he wrote a booklet about the poet's short life.

There is no doubt in my mind, Chatterton was abused - because he was young, not of a particularly 'distinguished' literary background, was why Walpole rejected him.³⁶

MacSweeney's precocious entry into the Newcastle poetry scene, aged 15, at the Morden Tower poetry readings, as well as his working-class background, lack of formal education and the Oxford Chair of Poetry nomination along with the ensuing feelings of estrangement put MacSweeney in a position of being able to identify with Chatterton. A brief biography at the beginning of *Elegy for January* makes the association clear by pointing out MacSweeney's youthful beginnings as a poet, and the fact that 'since 1968 I have been making a scanty living, through poetry readings, royalties, and various other peripheral activities.'³⁷ MacSweeney's association with Chatterton forms the basis of another source of dissatisfaction and obsession in MacSweeney's poetry: the young, abused genius. Chatterton, who wrote his substantial oeuvre before the age of seventeen, was considered by Romantic poets such as Keats, Shelley, Coleridge and Blake as one of the greatest poets of the English language. A large portion of his work was written in medieval English under the pseudonym Thomas Rowley, a fifteenth-century Bristol priest who Chatterton learned about by reading 'a collection of medieval documents, filched by his sexton father from a coffer in St Mary Redcliffe' in Bristol.³⁸ Chatterton's writing of the Rowley poems is largely attributed to his immense desire for fame and fortune by whatever means possible, but his attempts were unsuccessful during his lifetime. He was particularly discouraged by his interactions with one would-be patron, Horace Walpole, who rejected Chatterton and his Rowley manuscripts after suspecting that they had been written by the young poet himself. Chatterton committed suicide in 1770 at the age of

³⁵ Interview, p.15.

³⁶ Barry MacSweeney, *Elegy for January: Thomas Chatterton 1752-1770* (London, 1970), p.22.

³⁷ *Elegy*, p.1.

³⁸ Thomas Chatterton, *Poems Supposed To Have Been Written at Bristol in the 15th Century by Thomas Rowley* (Oxford, 1990), Introduction, p.4.

seventeen by swallowing arsenic, despondent at his certainty that he would never achieve the fame he so longed for. MacSweeney saw this early death as spectacle-glamorous, in that the structure of a helpless career implies glamour, and glamour is its only vindication.

You committed the expected, Thomas . . . to destroy yourself then was weak and we love you madly and the rosy myth for it. We feed like maggots off your death. Off the spinning insane agony, when head and body do not clinch, but drift apart, and snap [...]. You are the elegant, eloquent, poet, my brother!³⁹

Such a death, for MacSweeney, links Chatterton to Morrison, who died in his late twenties, and who embodies this idea of the 'meteor snuffed out'⁴⁰, burning and exploding in the rigours of creative ability. In arming himself with these ghostly associates, publicly stating his affiliation for Chatterton and his dissatisfaction with the exploitation and abuse of Chatterton, and through incorporating Chatterton's verses into his own, MacSweeney consoles the memory of his own exploited, young poetic persona, reaching through the boundaries of time and space as much as Blake's *Four Zoas* did in layering waking and sleeping worlds together. One of Beulah's daughters, at the beginning of the poem, 'took an atom of space & open'd its center / Into Infinitude & ornamented it with' the 'wondrous art' that becomes, in part, the structure of the poem.⁴¹ The borrowing of voices in this way is a theme in MacSweeney's oeuvre. His *Starry Messenger* uses Galileo for inspiration; *Ranter* is based on seventeenth-century dissenters; and Chatterton is at the forefront of 'Brother Wolf'.

The implementation of Chatterton's verses in 'Colonel B' has a further purpose, if we compare MacSweeney's context with Chatterton's own. 'Colonel B' is one of MacSweeney's more politically-driven poems, taking its title from the so-called 'ABC Trial' of the late 1970s in which two journalists were imprisoned in the top-security level of Brixton jail for researching and gathering information about British signals intelligence. The most staggering irony of the case is that it was overturned once it had been established that all of the so-called 'secret' information uncovered by the two had previously been made publicly available. The lesser ironies included the constant postponements of the trial due to accusations of jury vetting and the more comical appearance of the witness 'Colonel B', an 'anonymous' witness (replacing the equally anonymous Colonel A, and who, in turn, was nearly replaced by Mr C), called to give evidence about his experience as head of Army Signals. His anonymity was an immediate sham. His name was leaked by a number of newspapers (one headline reading "Who are

³⁹ *Elegy*, p.23.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.22.

⁴¹ Blake, N1.9.9-13.

you trying to kid, Col. H.A. Johnstone?"⁴² as his details were so readily available to anyone following the trial, despite the fact that the legality of actually stating his name remained under question.

There followed considerable competition to find novel ways of naming Colonel B. Red balloons were released outside the court with the name Colonel H.A. Johnstone written on them. Johnstone's name was written in letters ten feet long on the sand of Whitley Bay, a gross contempt of court until the tide came in.⁴³

The trial, exemplifying the ridiculousness of the state's over-zealous preoccupation with secrecy, is referenced in 'Colonel B':

Col B's name
(JOHNSTON) writ large in letters scraped
on Whitley Bay's famous golden shore.
Where waves roar
inside the cardboard heads
of grey overcoats
with writs to serve. We swerve. (p.90)

The reference is so mildly stated and briefly made that its tone is difficult to judge, but we can gauge MacSweeney's despair by way of the Chatterton quote inserted into the first page of the poem.

She syttes upon a Rocke,
She bends before hys Speere:
She ryses from the Shocke,
Wieldynge her owne yn Ayre. Right. season fyttte (p.88)

These lines are taken from Chatterton's work 'GODDWYN. A TRAGEDIE',⁴⁴ which opens with the priest Goddwyn worrying about his country's wellbeing:

O! I weepe to thyncke!
What foemen riseth to Ifrete the Londe;
Theie batten onne her fleshe, her hartes bloude dryncke,
And alle ys graunted from the roieal Honde. (II.13-6)

And later, Goddwyn laments, 'Here liethe Englonde, all her drites unfree' (I.77, with 'drites' glossed by Chatterton as 'Rights' or 'Libertys'). The source of this constraint is not made explicit (as neither is it in 'Colonel B' until the sixth page, and the appearance of '*The Maggie Beast*'), but it is clear that those in charge are either causing or ignoring

⁴² David Hooper, *Official Secrets: The Use and Abuse of the Act* (London, 1987), p.141.

⁴³ *Official Secrets*, pp.155-6.

⁴⁴ Donald S. Taylor, ed. *The Complete Works of Thomas Chatterton: A Bicentenary Edition*, vol. 1 (Oxford, 1971), pp.294-305. All further references will be made in the text.

the trouble. Goddwyn and his companion, Harrolde, discuss the possibilities of what must be done. Goddwyn, opposed to Harrolde's idea to 'free mie Coontrie, or Ille die yn fyghte' (l.41), urges him

Botte lette us wayte untylle somme season fytte (l.42)

MacSweeney, in other words, is taking up this poetic battle where Harrolde left off, in wishing to 'die yn fyghte', suggesting that his poem means to tackle his dissatisfactions without mincing his words. MacSweeney's line 'Right. season fytte', when viewed through Chatterton's context, is a call to arms. The four lines culminating in this one are taken from the end of the same poem, in which 'She' is 'Freedom' (l.196), and the spear belongs to 'Power' (l.210); and though Freedom is victorious in the battle, 'War, goare faced War' (l.222) is awakened, and the poem ends with the image of 'Tenne bloddie Arrowes ynne hys streynynge fuste' (l.224). Freedom's brief victory is a precursor to indefinite carnage, and only a temporary mark of hope.

Chatterton's 'Elinoure and Juga' appears in 'Colonel B' as a cry for assistance, taken out of the context of Elinoure's fear for her lover in battle, and reappropriated as a cry of despair at the disconnected 'Flesh hanging / off the bone & hooks', which is 'all I see', as well as

people
eating anthrax virus. Horned
fuckdust plugs their eyes.

INHILDE SOMEJOICE OF LYFE, OR ELSE MY DEARE
(LOVE DIES -

burn yr halles of merriement - burst
yr miskynettes

Sack the scallywag who brought me to this
fucking awful place. (p.89)

This description, via the inclusion of Chatterton's words, infuses a brief burst of passion into what would otherwise remain a misanthropic rant which depletes into helplessness, the bathos of 'scallywag' admitting the directionless anger of the preceding lines in which food and sex become poisonous and infectious. The power of 'infuse some juice of life' lies in Chatterton's hands and circumstance, not MacSweeney's, and its presence here only serves clearly to outline the sickness of vision that has interred itself into his perception of society. Chatterton's original purpose in writing the Rowley poems, it could be argued, was to create for himself the atmosphere he longed to exist within. Chatterton wanted to revisit what he considered a site of purity in Rowley's life, in

particular the relationship between Rowley and William Canynge, the mayor of Bristol and Rowley's patron, an association of great significance to Chatterton due to his quest to find such a patron for himself. What he could not be a part of in his own life, he fictionalised in his art. Chatterton was dissatisfied with his life and his poverty, living 'in a world of bustling, get-rich-quick tradesfolk, and swaggering prentices, who preened themselves on their talents, spouting clubs, and effusions in the Bristol newspapers and the London magazines.'⁴⁵

*

Sexual power and hatred become insurmountable forces in MacSweeney's work, partly because of the nature of MacSweeney's work as a tabloid journalist, and its commodification of information. But it is important to note that journalism, as suggested earlier, was only an artificial outlet for MacSweeney's frustration, possibly because:

[...] a general precept demonstrated by the history of the tabloid press [is that] the lower the common denominator of a newspaper's content, the higher the circulation.⁴⁶

On the one hand, MacSweeney wrote political poetry from a nonspecific though certainly leftist and anti-capitalist perspective; on the other, he wrote articles in the style of tabloid journalism, which 'is the direct application of capitalism to events and ideas. Profit, not ethics, is the prevailing motivation.'⁴⁷ The conflict between these two ideologies is visible where headlines creep into the poetry, such as '((Liz Tough Smacks the Newsdesk Hard))'s '*BIZARRE SHOES IN SEX DEATH*' (p.97). The poem's manuscript provisionally had the line '*BIZARRE SEX IN SHOES DEATH*' instead, which helps to explain the paradox of MacSweeney's brand of journalistic writing, which from time to time required a most extreme bathos, resulting from occasionally having to make the most of an insufficiently horrific situation. An article by MacSweeney from a November 1976 South Kent Gazette, headed 'COMA VIGIL', tells the story of a boy who was injured whilst sticking his head out of a train. The article talks about the 'tragedy' of the boy's desire to join the RAF, and ends with a quote from an RAF spokesman: "We are very upset to hear the news. He was a perfectly acceptable lad."⁴⁸ Tempting though it might be to draw conclusions about MacSweeney's poetry from his journalism, it seems evident that the two

⁴⁵ E.H.W. Meyerstein, *A Life of Thomas Chatterton* (London, 1930), p.162.

⁴⁶ S.J. Taylor, *Shock! Horror! The Tabloids in Action* (London, 1991), p.49.

⁴⁷ *Shock! Horror!*, p.301.

⁴⁸ MacSweeney archive.

disciplines are sufficiently inimical to one another to allow us only a limited understanding of how MacSweeney's dissatisfaction was poetically articulated.

There are many contradictions involved in attempting to understand MacSweeney's poetry of the period I have focused on, all of which hover around a rapidly vibrating art-life dialectic. What I do think is certain about the poetry discussed here is its courage, which repeatedly overturns the comfort of poetic safety in favour of active defiance, as well as denying the idea of 'unmourned loss'; and this courage is coupled with the negative courage of work that attempts to please no one, or that does not concern itself with who might not be pleased. There is not enough poetry like it. Rose's 'doubled burden' becomes the property of the reader, and whether MacSweeney's critics choose to disregard it or not, it remains at the center of his oeuvre: a gleaming wound, reflected in the reader's face.

JEFF HILSON · 2 STRETCHERS

...I (binger) with my din
friends in the fields open
up my kit off & I wager
in the foundry your bell
counts over did you fuck
off in the inn did you sing
it to a birdy did you see
this did you see this (daisy
lane first where he thrilled
me later my legs in his mouth
& how he wore me in the
shallow end (the alley then
ringing with his light new
stripes he collapses all over
going I am not your failed
high street I am your water
scene (there is one scene
by an eel brook where we
filled him in there by the
eel brook (in the inn are of
no use to anyone in the fields)
& again & again in with it
til we lie down in the lane
with the ringing (so the bells
of bell alley) & he all open
going r i p you are always
be a r i p & the birdy singing
coo coo or *tac tac tac* or
sometimes a little bit of a call
(hop hop) (hop hop) (hop
hop) & if it is over it is in
london & if it is more in the
day it is all over...

...moving across the
ground in the summer
so rev rev he goes these
are only my bike notes
my only bike notes &
& it all floats up but
is not heard in england
it is not on my radio which
also tells me I am for it
my radio which makes this
noise (my other radio is
like chains (this is what
my radio tells me get it
from smiths who have it
in for you *(crcrcrcrcrcrc)*
the interferers come in
(crcrcrcrcrcrc) they
move around like sally
(crcrcrcrcrcrc) language
english I live in a trough
in the uk and I am fed
nuts (in the winter I also
use sound *(crcrcrcrcrc)*
shorter sound to get nuts
I am very handsome after
on saturday I will get up
see the join jane sees it
she is not like the other
months (I mean seasons)
she is a crack fairy at
the treatment bar & after
outside jobs she leaves
us all her fairy stains...

SEAN BONNEY · From FILTH SCREED

All poetry that does not testify to an awareness of the radical falsity of the established forms (of life) is faulty. Understand prosody via black bloc tactics*. No-one has yet spoken a language which is not the language of those who establish, enforce, and benefit from the facts. Language is conservative. Its conservatism issues (a) from its utilitarian purpose, (b) from the fact that the memory of a person, like that of humankind, is short.

*archaic reference, unexplained.

*

fly track
negative to negative
magnetic repulse
a glyph jerk
shrink into suck time
on all paws
raise entry
groan display
one fly will split
a tiny eruption
into open mouths
shudder star
amoebic surveillance
hanging
fault
another mouth stapled
magnet rip
all the cops in this room
are blue
scratched on the wall
with a knife
as data
threaded
insect cog
decode the symbols
as piss in his face

I don't
for example
believe
that all you need is love
in a box
starred
disorders smile
in blue suit
expensive hair
honestly rearing
noises
false
they strap the pincer gloves
they kill you for no love
drag and believe
its stupid
glue keeps the face on
for 90 minutes
stamped
on the inverse side
rearing
coins drilled
palms outstretched
the click on the phone
is the thing in your throat
is echo level
at seizure
rearing
shudder
the furnace is not in the post
the collective dream
is snapped price-tag
stamped
where I thought I had to have these
noises
& don't for example
believe that

*

alembic strip neutral. wiring
in the prison brain : snout
expands, a jewellery rip exploded
downtown Dagenham, combustion snort.

he collapsed in frame distort job split.

*do him, skull job split stagger
extinguish Picacadilly smack beam*

the bus stops here. and walking
even that is unpermitted -

*survive commerce on
8 7
- the solution?
no
but this is
Cheapside splurge
its alembic tin*

*[mailbox locked for
gas din : the sky
is a long line
of noise
or maybe*

*settle. 9. be dust
and slice, receive
wonder
why do they love that
ele-
mental face
arranged like
soap between thighs
will flutter
ceiling rip*

*the sky is clicks
hit remit*

*matter
matter*

*

laugh now / this is a spurt shop
this is a kiss duct

**KESTON SUTHERLAND: THE TRUE, THE GOOD, THE BEAUTIFUL
AND THE BAGHDAD CENTRAL DETENTION CENTRE**

The following brief remarks do not vent outrage over the scandal at Abu Ghraib, now renamed the Baghdad Central Detention Centre by the U.S. government in Iraq. That *scandal*, to use the platitudinous and deflective term with which journalism is content to describe not the fact of torture but, rather, the excitement roused up by its public revelation, is known well enough by consumers of the western media and its charade of an ethics industry to be *outrageous*. I will attempt something different. What follows is a slight excursus on two concepts. These two are the concept of crisis and the concept of deference.

As the market for philosophical writing continues to rise in the west, there is perhaps no concept in the market that is less *in crisis* than the concept of *crisis* itself. Growth in marketable theories of existence now guarantees a complementary growth in the number and asseverability of the “crises” with which the work of theorisation is beset. Whether it’s representation, ethics, self-knowledge, or any other sub-field of theoretical inquiry that falls under the lens of paid thinkers, we can rest assured that a conceptual crisis will be found for it, opened up, and discovered to be as fertile for innovative methodological and discursive investment as a new market is fertile for the investment of capital. Crisis is the linchpin of philosophy’s business plan.

A brief analysis of this trend might run as follows.

(1) The proliferation of conceptual crises is *possible* because the kind of historical thinking that carefully restricted the definition of “crisis” has apparently been more or less disjoined from active political work of any consequence. This involuntary evacuation of politics is naturally regarded by opponents of that kind of historical thinking as some kind of freedom from “ideology.” Freedom from ideology is in turn more or less identified, within the field of theoretical writing, with the propensity to announce or add to the proliferation of conceptual crises.

(2) The proliferation of conceptual crises *induces* the banalisation of the concept “crisis” itself—even as the discourses in which conceptual crises proliferate are implicitly or even explicitly structured on the antinomy of banalisation and crisis.

This circumstance is only apparently dialectical since the antinomy is in fact false. I would go so far as to suggest that every influential instance of this false antinomy within the field of theoretical writing conduces to diminish the potential latitude and power of contemporary dialectical thinking.

In order that the proliferation of conceptual crises should appear to be a consequence not of market forces but of the immanent demands of philosophical thinking itself, the proliferation is said to be caused by historical events described as extreme or singular or atrocious. This causative relation is set up in philosophy and implicitly propagated by it.

Auschwitz has become paradigmatic in this regard. What is questionable is not the extreme or singular or atrocious nature of what happened at Auschwitz, but the trend in paradigmaticisation that leads to Auschwitz being regarded automatically as *more singular* as the number of historical events that can in some way be compared with Auschwitz increases.

The trend in paradigmaticisation effects a cumulative overconceptualisation of singularity; which is to say that the singularity of extreme suffering and injustice is increasingly conceptualised, perhaps most piquantly of all where philosophy affects momentary dispossession of conceptual thinking, or of "meaning," in the face of suffering, by means of the concept "aporia" or some equivalent. Affected dispossession of conceptual thinking is always the aggrandisement of conceptuality. Precisely at the point where it is claimed no longer to work, where it is said to have reached a point of *crisis*, is where conceptual thinking gets its most lavish encomium: i.e., it knows exactly when to defer to the superior authority of mere life, life raw and confused, life incapable of a reasonable settlement with the concepts on offer. Every crisis in conceptual thinking is yet another proof that conceptual thinking knows its place. The induction into crisis is the reduction to deference. And since the concept of crisis is infinitely rebrandable, we may gladly assume that there is an infinity of deference up for grabs.

Both inside our own class society and outside it, right up to the limit of its perpetually advancing front, there is a lot of deference of all kinds to be seen. The kind now proper to the field of professional theoretical writing has a long and venerable tradition. At least since Plato, the tendency of one affective or intellectual capacity to defer to another which is declared (often unquestionably) to possess existential or some other form of superiority has been the tendency by which the inferior capacity is defined and granted its

place in the psyche or ego. Within capitalism, deference is the most laudable tendency attributable to affectivity. Feeling is condescendingly praised for its deference to thinking. This holds whether, as for Kant, apperception is superior to sensuous perception, or the reverse. The deference of one capacity to another in theory quite naturally mirrors and extends the deference of one class of people to another in society. The largest stakeholders in knowledge, what Plato called *dianoia*, quite naturally regard the deference of those palmed off with a ration of conjectures, or paranoia, as quite natural.

Auschwitz is the paradigmatic historical event for thinkers announcing a new crisis in aesthetics. The increasing paradigmaticisation of this Auschwitz is in line with the increasing proliferation of conceptual crises as a whole. Nothing would be more natural, in the present moment of that trend, than for paid thinkers to set up the scandal at the Baghdad Central Detention Centre as a new occasion for increasing the proliferation of crises in aesthetics. What, after all, is that perennially self-antiquating discourse we call "aesthetics" supposed to do or say in the face of its own blatant co-optation by torture-managers at the level of imperialist military policy? The scandalous pictures that emerged from Abu Ghraib are evidently the considered products of a torture policy with a commanding emphasis on the aestheticisation of intense suffering, and not merely on that suffering itself; or rather, they demonstrate that the American policy in dealing with Muslims involves the intensification of already intense suffering through playful aestheticisation of the latter. What journalism categorises in its ethics file-manager as the *scandal* of Abu Ghraib is really this fact, that aestheticisation itself is the key component in the new American strategy for torture management. Is this not irresistible cause for a new proliferation of conceptual crises in the field of professional writing on aesthetics?

The affected dispossession of conceptual thinking designated as *aporia* is affected and not real because conceptual thinking is not dispossessed in its various intractable crises but, on the contrary, is possessed more securely than ever, by virtue of its abrupt deference to whatever undefined capacity of intellection continues in its place, in stewardship of the discourse of its crisis. This is the comedy of deference in professional thinking, the endless one-stop seesawing of a theoretical discourse into the charade of dispossession prepared for it in advance. Aesthetics "as we know it" cannot address the enormity of its own abuse and expropriation at the hands of its and our enemy, or in light of an historical event too disproportionately tragic to be countenanced, without a compensating spectacle

of theoretical crisis and “fundamental” disorientation of its own concepts. This spectacle is the imprimatur of our freedom from ideology. It is also the quite natural consequence in theory of our continuous, inert, effectless deference to the imperialism of the United States in social reality. We call that deference radical thinking.

STUART CALTON · From UNITED SNAP UP

* * *

Non-ascendant and
you diagnose
card misuse, the CrASBO
acquisition blow
down unreturned
inside large,
unwieldy police biscuit dole
out free the milk sauna
steamed and
falls in. Drill-
holes in the Plexiglas
hatch are
get served and steel non-
ascendancy wires on
he was
wool-sorting
or by
food thrives get
750 sq ft or
2000 sq ft and we
ameliorate 13 Spar
snap up.

* * *

Fairly exhibited together sub-
sequently we win through
mustard stick around
except then clear the
table, strike out on a lotto
run like the last freely-enjoying
bandage tranquillised gut it.
You partially
glint with splendour and the
unpaid likewise
bounce, not to be
drawn against
sound health
uncleared, to
mash out a
parish vaccine
only you
bail out,
ski-lift of blazing deliver-
ance into the sinking fund.
So your duty
increased, licences

progressively
drawn against
back the
riven united
systematic opp-
employers, the
mutual and fair-
to rack up as
share-costing that publicly
wrong was in as few as
words possible to
1,700,000 by
supply chains
demand buy
up your own fleet, a
oatmeal doles out
By 1863
distribution and
more prosperous wake you can have
new demands, seize your
invincible loss protection.
canals pop out click into
available, induced to avail
yourself of public
naval materials go whistle the
means of temperate existence
pre-packed you hand down
inheritance tax. The portion
clipped is a poodle cut from
your commission rubric no or
rather, your with-

drawals eat out the depredatory
heart bequeathed cored, nailed
up, bad debt skimmed.

* * *

Like the phosphate
 meal you came
down in the last
 shower
scrub up, drained
 to face the
salt test acquisition
crumpled trolley end bent
up against the audit
 trail, give the
hellacious shelf lay-out
the push reverse it hot
salt intake motorised on the
 basis of need.

Rack up the
 vinegar splash
proudly it
 hydraulic saline
ram, open wide.

* * *

KESTON SUTHERLAND · A POEM

Dildo Ode

Eat them a snow roast the atmolysis dead
pretty a new way. They had tied me
on a stool fully clothed out the window but
in the episode and reached my head.
Sex shone in them flush mounted dirt-bag
lingam with the yoni, who fed the
its drip through retard sic you
 take love in at
 three speeds e.
g. cop / hen. Inside them is a comb for
saliva who don't want in that. So quick
they are likely to love you. But too
far inside hooded in pin suds. They sound
they swap eating they clot about jog
sounds like glycosuria, inside the sugar
free speech enclosure dap choking
 up on worked
 up
hot vaseline spit you up for pith their toothless
toy ileum squeaks when you bounce it
you do not bounce it you become a hole
sensitive and nervous the pleasure of sharing
talk in the spray-proof hutch. For the
cavalcade dries through its wind and will
is possible like a moistened planet that
 is wet
 indirect debit set
and go. Come yourself. They are the foundation
of the book others are allegorical.
They watched, some of them smoked.
Then let her arms hang at her sides put
their stool in, in whose hearts is admitted their
perversity follow the part thereof that
is there to die against, is again deep
 up them
 imperial tobacco.

Hesitate to contact us. You come with a lock
at the front of the belt and dream them
are not it. The Democratic convention gild
own throat ender kit they retroflect on acid in
their melody you all get some. From the
honey where the bat drowned scoop out
of wirecutters, let them drop into a bowl of hot
 otex minus

a hole
you are in the hole. Tonight we have with us
NTE5 note position white / orange. If this
square sits within another, and its pins are set
apart at intervals measured by our circle
try this: truth is lasting and or dead and is
the movement flattered by static to
living fused in three, the fierce transparent sky
is its perpetual riot,
our trap with no admission.

No shit is good shit. On a bracket are
audible countersunk pozi-cross head zinc so on.
You can get attached and always get
out if they do, forcing an oyster at gunpoint to
fuck sawdust for there are nuances. They ranged
themselves about the room, resting on the
edges of its couch leaning in half-meant
and relax
at speed one

nonchalance against the walls, papered
with fiery orchids, watched her remove my
car and go down in smoke. Safety
matches negation. Should they want you to
be more can punish your leg in stab it rend
hair vend erotogenesis push up to that glass
crackling in an art deco of eyelashes,
know where
you are with that.

Once went by licensed spontaneity roused
away crowds smashing windows in the name
of freedom with the prettiest emptiness.
Hire them by the broker's dozen, a livid trail
noughts into the telesphere. But with the
rise of organised working class movements
spontaneity itself shifts, the name burns

a hole
full of suspirable
blood into its gelid tag crazed off their
foot of the bed. Speed two, fingers in the wet
cookie lobe crossed like a street by fire
trucks conjuring a desire for what is dead
if necessary impossibility is dead. That is
a name for truth excess wire. The standpoint
of limbs in a flood of hate for their
own your life
tag in

raptorial total orgasm and living riotous joy
at kicking the faked edge of a life in
commodity-sepia to hell and knowing it
is a dream only in the crassest fantasies.
Only the most fatuous and deep-down catatonic
vote casters stifle paranoia, they keep

their fridge stocked with a thousand reflective
 slips of
 ice and gaze as
if not dead then wait. They are likely to love
you comb. Plan to need less eaten
shit and more of none of it. In the sky over
my throat which is still fierce transparent
as the riot of truth, like an attack in some
joke war a joke storm of sleet thrashes down
it is fragments of the newly annulled
 dildo you are
 invited to eat them.