

Retrieved from:
The European Journal of Psychoanalysis
Jun 24, 2024
<https://www.journal-psychoanalysis.eu/articles/mnemo-mama/>

Benjamin Davidson

Mnemo, Mama

Summary:

Time and time again, Montale's poems speak to a loved and absent auditor; they address, intimately, a *You*, a second person or familiar other. You could call this work *museic*, which would be to say both that it is often musical (deploying a pleasing geometry of sound and sense bordering on the unsayable) and addressed to a *muse*, a cherished femme figure serving at once as a source, catalyst and inspiration for song.

Among Kristeva's gifts to practicing analysts are a series of concepts and coinages speaking directly to the question of this *You*, the "*matrixial borderspace*" or forgotten song central to language and to psychic life which is transmitted via *polyphonic* or *polysemic* modes of signifying rooted in the sounds and sensations of the body.

These registers skirt a delicate and doubled line between metaphor and the meat of matter; they work, on the one hand, as a living memory of real experiences—those of infancy, anterior to the acquisition of language, or those of motherhood, surpassing words—and, on the other, constitute a timeless presence within speech and thought, a weather or welter of past, present, and future immanent to sign and to syntax.

Reading Kristeva with Montale brings into bold relief the urgent necessity of the *talking cure* in an age in which the age-old symbolic orders governing *speaking beings*—the panoply of human compacts and regimes generated by song, sign and syntax—have come to founder.

—Your first love?—asked Gerda.

—No, it was something more lasting than that. At first an infantile hatred, then manly pity; and then oblivion. . . that is up to a minute ago, when this tune came back to me.

Eugenio Montale [1]

. . . what contains the entire art of the canzone should be called *stanza*, that is, a capacious dwelling or receptacle for the entire craft. For just as the canzone is the container (literally lap or womb) of the entire thought, so the stanza enfolds its entire technique. . .

Dante, *De vulgari eloquentia* II.9 [2]

1.

Ripullula il frangente ancora sulla balza che scoscende—

You don't need to know what it means to hear what it's saying. In his early work, the Ligurian poet Eugenio Montale excelled at a ravishing musical mimesis; he used the very *sound* of his language to aurally invoke what the words of the poems evoke, rendering places or moments, creatures and relics lost to the past as something akin to eucharistic *real presences*. Their effects belie understanding; to hear these poems in the mind's ear is to undergo a bodily experience in which *what is inexhaustibly meaningful may also be senseless* [3] or, put the other way, it's to listen to a song in which what is inexhaustibly sensual may also be *meaningless*: [4] *andando nel sole che abbaglia*—walking, in dazzling sunlight, *ascoltare*—to listen—*tra i pruni e gli sterpi*—between the crackle of twigs and scrub, to the *schiocchi di merli, frusci di serpi*—the clacking of blackbirds, rustle of snakes, *mentre si levano tremuli scricchi/di cicale dai calvi picchi*—while from the barren peaks, the tremulous screech of cicadas rises up.

That was in 1939. By the Sixties, Montale was talking about the need to *excavate another dimension* from the Italian he called *our heavy polysyllabic language*. [5] In 1972 he published *Satura*, a book made up of poems written in an attenuated, aphoristic, even gnomic voice. Altogether unlike the soundscapes of the first poems, these seek their own music: a rhetorical one. Composed of linguistic fragments, memory traces, even bits of bureaucratic jargon, they parody or satirize—the Italian word *satire* a near homonym for *Satura* [6]—the banal, composite, depreciated quality of the contemporary vernacular; taking these desiccated speech strands as material; working, weaving or composing them into elliptical or enigmatic essayettes, these texts aspire to a syntax in which, to paraphrase George Steiner, *the poetic genius of abstract thought would be illuminated and made audible*. [7]

Montale's late poems *at the most basic level of the text elude*, in the words of critic Claire de C.L. Huffman, *even the most attentive of critics*. They articulate a *cohesive yet unanalyzable thought* in which *indefinable emotions* are conjured by *words incorporating, binding, and yet barely giving up symbolic, phonic and emotional meanings*. Representing an altogether *new effort to make poetry where and when poetry seems impossible*, the language of *Satura* is characterized by a *strangely rich dryness which leans towards prose and then, out of technical virtuosity, refuses it's bounds*. Details pile up. *Names, through some failing of memory, overripeness of knowledge or skepticism have outlasted images, and an overabundance of objects, empty names, and phrases have darkened living memories*. [8]

The drops of rain in the pine woods immortalized by D'Annunzio in his 1902 ode to the actress Eleanora Duse *La pioggia nel pineto*—an iconic example of Italian lyric as onomatopoeic aural symphony—no longer fall, in Montale's parodic "It's Raining," on *divine myrtles, scaly pines, brooms gleaming with clustering flowers* or *junipers thick with scented berries* [9] but now on *hours of general strike, the tax-collector's brief case, the Official Bulletin or progress of the lawsuit, cuttlefish bones and bureaucrats, public opinion: the new epistemes, as Montale calls them, of the biped primate*. [10] The reader is forced to *feel*, along with the poet, *the limitations of contemporary words* and to *listen to what is not exactly said*; [11] these poems pitch our ears to what Montale, with Lacan, called *half-speech: a stuttering, stammering necessity to rouse language from its torpor*. [12]

Misled by me,

the critics keep on saying

that my you is standard practice.

If not for this foible of mine, they would have known

that in me the many are one, though seemingly

multiplied by mirrors. The problem

is that of the netted bird

who doesn't know whether he's trapped

or it's one of his too many doubles. [13]

Montale's extreme stylistic turn should be read as a sign of the times. The torque of his poetic form took place during the aesthetic revolutions of Italian poetry in the Sixties and Seventies, a period during which new literary modes were increasingly felt to be necessary in light of a shared *perception of the world that in those same years was becoming... ever more fragmentary, discontinuous and indistinct.* [14] *It is difficult to convey, Enrico Testa writes in the introduction to his book on Italian poets publishing between 1960 and 2000, the sense of gloom that characterized the Sixties. 'A decade of struggle, of terror, marked even before the economic crisis (the passage from consumer society to that of austerity measures) by the human devastation caused by drugs, fascist massacres and the Red Brigades attacks... [15]*

Social paroxysms undermined a millenias-old literary genealogy; recasting what Testa calls *the traditional parameters of the interpretation of cultural facts,* [16] they demanded *a revolution in thought, an intellectual turn* in which writers would come to *question the polarities making up the 'most elementary topologies: affirmation and negation, above and below, subject and object.* Italian poets *intervened in the upheaval with a radicality perhaps unprecedented in the twentieth century.* They revolted en masse against the lyric legacy of their literature, adopting what was referred to then as a *'living Italian' ... guided by a direct, unmediated taste of experience.* [17]

Not so Montale. We might read his strategic casting off of the senselessly meaningful—or meaningfully senseless—soundscapes of his early poems as a harbinger of the full-blown language catastrophe we're living in today. For his adoption of plain speech was anything but a symptom of the incipient global trend—which over the following decades would accelerate, which would compound—in which, in the words of Lacan's biographer Élisabeth Roudinesco, *the ideals of communicative transparency would ineluctably subvert the civilization of the book and of writing, according ever greater priority to the realms of 'experience,' of affect, the neurochemical, the machinic, the spectacular or other aspects of the nonverbal.* [18]

If anything Montale anticipated what was to come: *dopo la lirica,* after the age-old reign of lyric forms, he looked to a dawning era in which the panoply of human compacts and régimes grounded in natural language—bonds rooted, even prior to the ascent of writing and books, in the word, in the symbolic orders generated and transmitted by song, sign and syntax, in verbal *representation* with its human dazzle of political, aesthetic and ethical elaborations—would come to founder. This is the world in which, today, psychoanalysts practice the *talking cure.*

Radicalized, Montale's late work sought a *saturation point* (“*il piu alto valore possibile die certe sue caratteristiche*”) demanding, in the words of the critic Rebecca West, *that the question of the interrelationship of the quotidian and the literary, of everyday speech and poetic language, be confronted not only as a symptom but indeed as the very etiology of this new season.* [19] It was less a repudiation of his early work than a kind of rendering of it; a return, via the vulgate and encouraged by the times, to the

linguistic *apprehension* of something (some *Thing*) undergirding or prefiguring the lyric forms themselves—as if, availing himself of the speed and economy of the vernacular, he might better *articulate* the antitheses or equivocations encompassed within the human *word* itself, its liminal status in relation to the real. He sought, as the analyst does, the musical *boundary conditions*... *pressing utterances towards aporia, towards antinomies and undecidabilities at the very edge of language.*[20]

From an old song, renounced or forgotten—cast off, deemed, in his words, *heavy*, deemed *polysyllabic*—he aimed to *excavate another dimension*. This language was new, yet primal. Literary and philosophical at once, it *fused the lyric and the analytic*. [21] (In fact the words I've just quoted are from Steiner's descriptions of the fragments of Heraclitus; much of what's been written about the pre-Socratics also describes Montale's groundbreaking late work.) Like his antique predecessors—and speaking as if directly, *avant la lettre*, to our contemporary civilizational exigencies—Montale *both celebrates and wrestles with... the terrible power of language to deceive, to demean, to mock, to plunge deserved renown into the dark of oblivion*. His later poems serve as *dialectical* illustrations of how speech's *capacity ... to ornament and enshrine memory also entails its faculties of forgetting, of ostracism from recall*. [22]

An analyst reading the poems might well be struck by Montale's enduring preoccupation with these verbal-mnemonic paradoxes. He rendered whorls, torrents and interlacings of remembering and forgetting as a complex rhetoric in stanzas that illustrated or *figured* the labile quality of memory itself, memory cast here as thread or net; mapped there as web, as veil or sail. This woven textual tissue, at once sensual and conceptual, spins throughout his entire corpus. Montale's meshes evoke the plexus of recall and loss encountered at each step of an analysis, as much as Proust's fabric of remembrance in *Time Regained*, with its warp of mnemonic traces, woof of oblivion—or Lacan's attempts to render what he called a *fabric of temporality*, a *generation* or *logical anteriority* of *schema* in place of ego psychology's *stages of development*. [23]

The language comprising any one of these poems—like a myth, or one of Lacan's "mathemes," or the "full speech" at play each time an analysand, free-associating, comes out with a singularly stunning verbal production—*transmits* via a music at once real and symbolic, mimetic and abstract, concrete and articulate. As in any analysis, *the spurious promise of logical relations and coherence* sustained by *narrative sequence* [24]—the effigy or integrity insinuated by all the chronological conventions of biography, the tropes and tales of genesis (onto- or phylo-), of history or ends—will be disabused; these texts talk about time in a way which confounds all linear clichés and models. They talk about time; or rather they illustrate its "weathers"—

Essential elements do endure. A *shift in tone* had brought Montale's work *closer than ever before to everyday speech, open to slang, dialect, foreign terms, and all the other elements that constantly make a spoken idiom*. [25] Yet he described the difference *in terms of voice more than of themes or even overall stylistic choices*; he said that he was now simply "*playing the piano in another, more discreet, more silent manner*." The same *wraith of tightly-knit logic*, in the words of his translator, the poet James Merrill—a *syntax to be followed at your own risk for the thread might snap at any turning—marked even the least of his poems*, [26] early or late.

•

For awhile now I've been dogged by the thought that following Montale's knotted lines (traversing the territory of this *wraith*, attending to its *syntax* or coming to discern its *logic*) might generate rich fuel for my own psychoanalytic researches—for my ongoing translation and transmission, since the conclusion of my personal analysis some years ago, of unknown knowing. I've wondered about the critical part that forgetting—a riddling preoccupation in his poems—plays in my own work with analysands: the various styles of elision or blanking I observe in them (forgetting as repression: that old standby *I had a dream to tell you, but now I don't remember any of it*, or forgetting as destitution: *I secretly recorded our session*

because I was afraid I wouldn't remember—I just wanted something I could keep with me...) and also in my own listening; the angst unfurling as a session speeds into uncharted waters, for example, taking form in the dawning thought that the key signifiers animating the sparkling discourse unfolding *right now* will surely come to be lost to oblivion by the time I'm finally free to take notes... In countless ways, psychoanalytic praxis revolves around recall and its obverse—remembering to forget, forgetting to remember—as they link, turn, and separate in a kind of formal minuet featuring the emergence and elision of retained impressions, or their articulation in a complex syntax of conditional tenses. (What flies suddenly up out of the dark, and when—and what in the world do we do then?)

These diverse modes of loss and recollection, confounding our abilities to experience, comprehend or voice the passing of time, fire the allure, the *impossible necessity* of cultivating what Lacan called a psychoanalytic *savoir*—the paradoxical effort comprising the cumulative project of psychoanalytic *know-how* itself, its very praxis. It's a slippery work, the gleaning of an enduring, transmissible body of knowledge from all the obviating streams, the phenomenal moments ever comprising our recollections, our dreams and associations, our symptoms and speech acts; the repetitions, performances and surprises continually at play in the theater we call *the clinic*.

Succeeding generations of analysts have formalized this effort as a frail craft, a *praxis*, by which we aim to wrest—out of the oblivion of their streaming—some essential *something* that might be retained and carried forward from each singular successive enunciation, recounted or encountered fantasy, session or case; it's a matter of retroactively recasting or renewing, out of the opportunity emerging in each instance, all that's come before. The work entails a kind of tracery, a weaving or stitchwork of inherited heuristic-hermeneutic threads. These threads will be spun from each analyst's own prior peregrinations; produce of her transcriptions, transliterations and translations of unconscious knowledge, they will track back through the histories of her cases, the romances of her formation and control analyses, the verses and choruses of her personal or “training” analysis, the motifs and reprises of her life story, childhood, infancy, linguistic-symbolic prehistory... back through the succeeding generations of her analytic predecessors, ultimately, in turn, to Freud, along with his cadre and forebears (Freud the founder who was, of course, himself early on much preoccupied with neural nets and mnemonic traces).

I wonder today, not without a biting sense of urgency, whether *risking the snap of the thread—following Montale's syntax, his wraith of tightly-knit logic, through its turnings, its verses and strophes, its gardens, stanzas or rooms—might come to shed light on the apparent paradox of why in the world anyone would choose to undertake a talking cure or practice the art today, just as the very potency lighting the human symbolic mesh seems increasingly attenuated—or even eclipsed. Because (it seems to me) we may by now already be on the other side of the verge invoked by Shakespeare's imprecation at the end of *Timon of Athens*: *Lips, let sour words go by and language end: What is amiss plague and infection mend!* [27]*

We might trace Montale's thread to a forgotten music.

•

With him it's all about his auditor: Time and again, his poems speak to a loved and absent *Tu*—they address, intimately, a *you*, a second person or familiar other. (This *imagined interlocutor is one of the lexical and psychological constants of Montale's poetry.* [28]) You could call this work *museic*, which would both be to say that it is often musical (deploying a pleasing geometry of sound and sense bordering on the unsayable) and addressed to a Muse, a cherished femme figure serving at once as source, catalyst and inspiration for song; (recall that mythologically, a muse is daughter of Mnemosyne, goddess of *memory*)—if, in many an instance in his poems, a forgetful one.

The polymath Julia Kristeva has, over the span of nearly half a century, sounded her depths. Among her abundant gifts to practicing analysts are a series of concepts and coinages all of which speak to the question of Montale's *Tu*, this intimate *you*, matrix—*matrixial borderspace* [29]—or forgotten song, the edge-space or *non-temporal locus* [30] vital, Kristeva maintains, to speech and to the psychic life of speaking beings. Since her groundbreaking *Revolution in Poetic Language* of 1973 she's elaborated the workings of what she calls its *polyphonic* or *polysemic* modes of signifying, which are rooted in the sounds and sensations of the body—one's own or one's mother's. Kristeva calls *semiotic* these *rhythmic, melodic articulations* which perpetually, in her words, *interfere with* [31] the *logical and syntactic organization of linguistic signs*, [32] *articulating other arrangements of meaning*. [33]

She's described the semiotic as a *different language, the unconscious "language"*—she puts the word in quotes—*found in children's echolalia before the appearance of signs and syntax, and, especially, in ... aesthetic discourses like poetry, literature, painting and music*. [34] She puts it, as is her wont, psychoanalytically: the semiotic is, she says, an *organization of drive-related and affective meaning*, running counter to symbolic economies and deriving from the *nonverbal, sensory aspects* of the unconscious *primary processes ... sound and melody, rhythm, color, touch and smell*. [35]

We might, with Kristeva, identify analyst, mother and muse alike as the locus of this non-verbal warp into which language is woven, a warp which, less *preverbal* than *transverbal*, [36] is marked nonetheless by a quality of *antecedence*. She encompasses a kind of "beforeness", but not necessarily a developmental or genetic "stage" prior to something else: *not* the infantile stage prior to my acquisition of language, or preceding my assumption of an image or identity; *not* a *depressive position* allowing me to apprehend my mother *as a whole object*, as conceived by Melanie Klein; *not* an archaic symbiosis preceding my turn towards the law of a father, neither the launching pad for any of my epic Oedipal dramas. She endures, rather, as an insinuating, ever-present *arkhe*—a perpetual origin, partaking of the maternal root-bed, which, smoke-like or spectral, becomes apparent to me only in traces or—retroactively, in just-vanished temporal apertures.

Montale meets her in remote enclosures. In one of his most celebrated early poems he describes an isolated house *sul rialzo a strapiombo sulla scogliera (on a lurching rise above the cliff-face)*. [37] *You don't remember the house*, the speaker says to his unnamed and unidentifiable listener, which *sits, desolate... waiting for you since the night "in cui v'entrò lo sciame dei tuoi pensieri"*—*when the swarm of your thoughts went in (and waits for you still,) unsettled*. This enigmatic addressee, her place taken in turn by each successive reader of the poem, will be absent or absent-minded, unreachable, diminished or departed: *the sound of your laughter is no longer gay*, the poet tells her: *the compass swings crazily at random/and the dice don't add up*. *You*, he repeats, *don't remember; another time distracts/your memory; a thread unwinds./I still have hold of one end; but you remain alone/not breathing in the dark*. The poem concludes: *Il varco è qui? Ripullula il frangente ancora sulla balza che scoscende. Is this the way through? ... You don't remember the house of this/my night. And I don't know who goes, and who stays*. [38]

— *Ripullula il frangente ancora sulla balza che scoscende*. The sound of it! The waves shatter and froth still upon the cliff-sharp? No English rendering quite cuts it.

•

It's a commonplace that what's most essential in a poem—that element which, in effect, *makes* it a poem—is untranslatable: *tradurre*—to translate—*e tradire*—is to betray. In the transposition from one tongue to another an originary pith or gloss, an *isness* or play of articulated sense—constitutive elements of a singular linguistic *style* carrying trace minerals from an anterior or abyssal beyond of language—will be

lost. In some way every *talking cure* proves, ultimately, nothing other than a search for these lost charms: subaqueous, banned or forgotten vestiges recalling an inexpressible concordance of words and things, signifying remnants of the matrix of what might be said and what *is*. We recall them; they call (again) to us—

On the couch, what I've forgotten retains its palpable presence; what stubbornly refuses formulation dogs me at every step. It exerts its pressure in my silences, slipping between the lines of my speech. It evaporates with my dreams. Nascent in that nullity or blank, the *mute presence* of my analyst, my listener, will magnetize my words, *prefiguring* the possibility of *a condition in which falsehood would be immediately rendered visible and absurd*, [39] even comic (the word gesturing etymologically to an interlude, lyric poem or miracle play having a happy ending). Inexhaustibly meaningful yet senseless, inexhaustibly sensual and yet devoid of apparent meaning, a music *other text* will materialize in the empty place between us.

As ever-sought elusive source, object, beloved or muse, my analyst comes to assume the place of repository for that melodic, harmonic or rhythmic truth *remaining always just out of reach...* a truth *in which formal logic*, according to George Steiner but also to Lacan, *would come to irradiate everyday speech*. [40] The psychoanalytic project is charged throughout with the promise of this *possible truth*. I show up day after day, speaking day after day to the enigmatic presence in her seat. As I talk to her, gaps ravel in the unfolding fabric of my spoken text, sinister or charged silences suggesting the prospect of outcomes alternately tragic—subject to fate, *fatal*—or comic—accountable to my desire, to my act and its effects.

Steiner speaks of this silence: *as in modernist poetry, the blank spaces between the lines, whether... declared or inferred acoustically, as in music... can contain the suppressed, the apparently forgotten which exercises a felt pressure. They can be loaded with futurity, with potential eruption into significance on the very edge of deployment. Emptiness is made fertile ("le vide frais")... the unspoken is made eloquent, even Delphic*. [41] The stillnesses seeding my sessions confound the one-way sequence or chronometric logic of the ticking minutes of the clock, the weave-work of my words *uncovering* a multiverse of future tenses and tempii, *recovering* a host of retained impressions I'd long thought forgotten.

This *between time* opening in silence or via a slip of the tongue passes like a shuttle, warp-thread in tow, through the loom's threaded woof. Extrinsic to the forward movement signified by the Ancient Greek word *chronos*, we're talking here about a kind of originary instant, another conception of time that they called *kairos*. This word springs from a root-mesh of derivations and sequellae, each one of them germane to the practice of analytic listening. In her *Dictionary of Untranslatableables*, Barbara Cassin defines *kairos* as a *nonmathematizable singularity. Not linked to history and unlikely to be dated*, it's a time which occurs *unpredictably or repeats periodically, like a favorable season in a natural cycle or an auspicious moment ... favorable for a certain kind of action*. [42]

Time here takes the form of a crux or a crossing (from Latin *crux interpretum*, an impossible point in a text, *tormenting interpreters or philosophers* [43]), or a *crucial cutting or opening point* as in the *Iliad*, where a version of the word *applies to the flaw in a breastplate, hinge or fitting, as well as to the bony suture of a skull, all places where a blow to the body could be fatal ... could decide one's fate—which may perhaps explain how in Latin the skull's "temple" (tempus), "time" (tempus), and the (architectural) "temple" (templum) all link to temnô, the word meaning "to cut" which is derived from temenos, meaning "enclosure, sacred place or altar" [44]). (I'm reminded of Lacan's theoretical landscape with its temporal slices and orifices, its "logical time" featuring pulsing *instants of the glance, periods of understanding and moments to conclude*—) [45]*

Kairos also belongs to the vocabulary of weaving, where it refers to the braid that regulates and separates the threads of a warp, allowing for its interweaving the weft; it is the opening allowing the shuttle's passage, just as the proper path for a sprung arrow was through a series of apertures. Suggesting the eruption of something discontinuous into a continuum, the breach of time in space or, in medical vocabulary a moment of crisis, *kairos* is any moment that is there to be seized as it passes by... the very opportunity in Pindar, as

in the analytic consulting room, when *words* like a speeding arrow *hit their mark*. [46] (In modern Greek it refers to the *weather*.)

These openings in the talk of someone undergoing an analysis—verbal stumbles or *aporia* giving onto alterations in time and *tempo*—have the power to *undo*, in Auden's words, *the folded lie* of everyday speech, [47] *disclosing* or *discovering* a passage through the *blabla* of quotidian chitchat, the flow of rehearsed complaints, the thoughts retracing again their conventional conceptual circuits, all the stale niceties or ruminative repetitions, the depleted tropes making up the bulk of a day's symbolic commerce. So much talking! On the couch, this verbal onslaught or *forgettury*, Hamlet's *words, words, words*—Steiner's *mendacious, imprecise and politically prostituted language, that vast noise... of the media and the monstrous amplification of the trivial*—will be *set against... that which reveals its truth just because it cannot or should not be said*. *Between suspect speech acts, blank spaces* come to reveal a *poetry of the unspoken*. [48]

•

In such moments the room electrifies. Something flies up out of the darkness and catches in the net of speech (Lacan in fact referred to clinical practice as a *bird-catcher's net*)—or, as Montale wrote in *On the Beach*, an early, fictionalized biographical essay published in the Milan daily *Corriere della Sera*, *springs up like a jack-in-the-box from apparently inert material*. *A complete oblivion*, he wrote, *suddenly reveals itself as a presence*. [49] It's not a matter of willfully retrieving some resplendent creature from a dimmed hutch, as in Plato's *Theaetetus*, where memory is described as an aviary, [50] or tracing words from a buried tablet on which all one's past impressions are imprinted; we may recall this presence, but it is more as if *it is remembered to us*, or even as if it is *we who are remembered by it*. *A shade*, Montale tells us, *has condescended to awaken*. [51]

Memories which *assert themselves on their own* in this way *are*, in the words of the poet Kay Ryan, *indistinguishable from matter in that they can neither be created (despite the claims of vacation brochures) nor destroyed*. *We may already be living more fully than we know, in possession of the kind of mystic writing pad* described by Freud: a registry which retains, beneath its apparent blank surface, *every single thing that has ever happened to us and every thought we thought we forgot*. [52] Yet *every act of memory is also an act of forgetting*. [53] Ryan finds herself refreshed by the thought that far from being just its *negative*, memory might itself work as *a form of forgetting*: *Our journals do not save but wipe away... It is so relaxing to think that we are an endless palimpsest, that the act of trying-to-keep is itself an act of erasure*. She then suggests we go even farther, asking *if the reverse is not also true, that forgetting is a form of remembering*. Since, she observes, *it's only within the context of loss that something new can be found*, we might consider oblivion itself as a necessitating precondition for discovery, the fallow field a fertile ground for retrieval or recall. Forgetting then would allow for the possibility of new or renewed knowing, a knowing with the capacity to, as she puts it, *show greater tolerance for our own apparent indirections*. [54]

In Hesiod's *Theogony* the Muses, daughters of the Goddess *Memory*, are described precisely as serving the purpose of *oblivion*: *Mnemosyne (Memory) bore them ... mingling in love with the father, Kronos' son... as forgetfulness of evils and relief from anxieties*. [55] The mingling of memory, meter and forgetting they engender enables, precisely, the song of speech; the Muses constitute a *co-presence*, a vehicle for abidance, for refreshment or even rebirth. *What drops into oblivion under the bardic spell is the fatigue, wretchedness, and anxiety of the present moment, its unrefined particularity, and what rises into consciousness is knowledge (of the better world that lies hidden beyond this one)*. [56] Under the spell of song, it's the forgetting of the exigencies of the present moment that allows for the remembrance—etymologically, the *retention*—of future possibilities.

(You could just as easily claim the opposite: that we consistently forget past pains and cleave to the succor of present compensations. And in fact this would be one way of characterizing repression, the very

relegation to the unknown of fantasies, insupportable wishes or associations with past wounds or shocks—“trauma”—that constitutes the psychoanalytic unconscious.)

It works either way. Something drops from the mind, something rises up; it's as if forgetting and recall existed in a perpetual coming and going, a kind of changing of the guards. And in fact in “On the Beach” Montale compares the *tricks that memory plays* to the holy well at Orvieto, [57] a deep cistern which, a few cursory clicks promptly reveal, takes the form of a double helix, the central shaft composed of two spiral ramps *accessed by two wooden doors allowing mules to carry empty and full water vessels separately in downward and upward directions without obstruction*, [58] *one donkey carrying empty buckets able to travel down the winding staircase in one direction without ever crossing paths with another donkey carrying full buckets coming up in the other direction*. [59]

The poet here with a seemingly off-hand metaphor creates something very like a Lacanian *matheme*, a graphic symbol capturing and transmitting a complex psychic dynamic the description of which, rendered in natural language with its inevitable elisions, remainders and temporal deformations, would be sure to fail. The *models, schemata, graphs, topologic surfaces and knots* of Lacan's teaching [60] run counter to the flow of speech; they allow for the transmission of essential relations, of *instances* which would, articulated, mutate in the very time taken to communicate them in words, their shape, size, composition or spatial relations inevitably transformed.

Lacan maintained that these graphs could instantiate a mathematical truth which would otherwise remain unconscious, elusive or forgotten. And in fact the *privative or negative form* of the Greek word for forgetfulness, “lethe” (from a Proto-Indo-European word meaning *to hide*) is “alethia”, *the Greek word usually translated as “truth,” the truth then being a thing uncovered or taken out of hiding*. [61] Lethe in Greek mythology is also, of course, the underworld river of forgetting and concealment; a-letheia thus standing for the structural and enduring *truth* of remembrance, as against the obviating phenomenal streams Lacan strove to supercede. (In Latin, *Obliuio* is both the proper name for this river and a word signifying forgetting—an act, or state, of *unconsciousness*.)

Truth, *a-letheia*, runs counter to the flow of forgetting. Though if you go further with it—as we discover time and again in the clinic—things get start to get really weird; the (prefix) “a”—and feel free to think of Lacan's *petit objet a* here—signified *many things for the Greeks*. “a” is not only *privative but intensive*; used *sometimes as a negation*, but other times as an *an addition* [62] or augmentation, an expression of *likeness* or even of *union*. [63] So: *negation, addition, or union*, we might come to see “truth” as at once a movement away from and an intensification of forgetting, inhering in a kind of *spatial relation*, perpetual and inconclusive, *between instances, between systems* of speech or thought—between registers like, for example, Freud's conscious, preconscious and unconscious, or, corresponding to them, Lacan's registers of imaginary, symbolic and real. *The spatial metaphor* of psychoanalysis, its *topography, is constituted by this ‘between’*, [64] *a liminal space, betwixt and between* the real, the imagined or fantasized and the symbolized, *a ‘limen’ or threshold on one side of which is potentiality and on the other, actualization*. [65]

It's precisely the *place* of this enigmatic *between* that Montale invokes in *In limine* (On the Edge), the odd pseudo-poem serving as an epigraph to his first (1925) collection, *Cuttlefish Bones*. In it, he writes of an enclosed space—described, in turn, as a walled garden or orchard or spit of land—where what he calls the *dead tangle* or *web* of memory *sinks*. He will go on to describe this place as a *reliquiario* (reliquary) which becomes a *grembo* (womb) and ultimately a *crogiolo*—a crucible. Here is the Jeremy Reed's translation:

Be glad if the wind frisking the orchard

re-fires in you the need to live:

here, where a burnt-out circuit

*of memories sinks,
was not a garden, but a burial pit.*

*The throbbing you hear isn't flight,
but a tremor from the earth's core;
see how this solitary spit of land
flares into a crucible.*

*A blaze rages on the wall's nearer side.
If you go on, you will come,
perhaps, across the presence who saves.
It's here narratives are composed, and acts
deleted by the future.*

The words Reed translates as “the earth’s core” are *eterno grembo*, literally “eternal womb.” The word Reed translates as “presence” is *fantasma*—a wraith or specter.

You could read *In limine* as a succinct description of an analysis. In this reading, you’d enter an edge-space, stanza or room—where all the threads you once thought dead light up. Montale called it a *womb*.

2.

In 1974, Kristeva called it the *chôra*. It’s a word which, despite a rich history—in Plato, in Heidegger, in Derrida—has been described in a study of the *Timaeus* by the philosopher John Sallis as essentially without meaning, *intrinsically untranslatable* and even *such as to disrupt the very operation of translation*. [66] A signifier rife with contradictions, for Plato *chôra* refers to a topos outside the social contracts and hierarchies of the city, an extraterritorial non-place (the word’s root, *chorein*, meaning *to go* or *to roam* [67]) that *at the same time* signifies a *receptacle*, a “room” or “occupied space,” as in “*a field full of crops or a room replete with things*.” [68] *Resting between the sensible and the intelligible*, [69] *neither void nor matter*, [70] for Plato the *chôra* is *always already there*. *It is at once an all-receiving... receptacle and something that harbors, shelters, nurtures and gives birth. It is infinitely malleable like gold, and it is a matrix for all things*. [71]

Kristeva *borrowed the term* to describe what she called a *vocal and kinetic rhythm* within speech evincing a *geometry*, an order of the body extrinsic to laws, symbols and social or familial relations. This order *precedes all evidence, versimilitude, spatiality and temporality*. In her *Revolution of Poetic Language* she characterized it as a *rupture of the linear order of language*, articulating a kind of beyond within its movement and drawing on infantile experience; she described the *chôra* as *a nonexpressive totality formed by the drives and their stases, governing the connections between the body (in the process of constituting*

itself as a body proper), *objects and the protagonists of the family structure*. [72]

Akin to Lacan's *lalangue*, Kristeva's *chôra* acts as an a priori of language, a signifying capacity preceding the acquisition of speech in which *concrete operations* like *displacement, condensation, repetition and inversion* [73] *organize meaning according to logical categories which both precede and transcend it*. At once a *before* and a generative *simultaneity*, the untranslatable word delineates a logical *phase* perpetually in advance of and exceeding anything we are able to convey with words, evoking the *topos*, in Aristotle's words, *so difficult to grasp whose power is marvelous and prior to all others*. [74]

Her work asks to be read in the doubled sense of the term *a priori* itself, which refers *both* to an essential knowledge transcending the particularities of any given experience *and*, at the same time, a knowing at once ineluctably concrete and essentially *prior*, taking the form of a perpetual before or antecedent. [75] Her concepts gesture towards a mode of psychoanalytic thought grounded in theoretical deduction rather than empirical observation or mimetic description, the kind of anti-phenomenal knowing that Lacan termed *logical* or *structural*. *At one and the same time* they evoke a knowing bound eternally to *generation*: to origins, causes or first principles.

Kristeva's coinages skirt a delicate and doubled line between metaphor and the meat of matter. The linguistic elements she calls the *semiotic* or the *chôra* or *signifiante* (the *vaster process, dynamic and movement of meaning encompassing language and its instinctual substrata* [76] all serve, on the one hand, to revive or sustain the fleshy memory of real, lived experiences—those of infancy, anterior to the acquisition of language, or those of motherhood, surpassing words. They refer to moments in a life history. On the other, they constitute a timeless presence within language and thought, a weather or welter of past, present and future immanent to *sign and to syntax*.

Kristeva speaks *at once* to the biographical vicissitudes of those people we call *mothers and babies, daughters, sons or women* and to the varied structural positions that any of us might assume within the mesh of language to which we are all, each of us, *subjected—thrown under or born into* (what Montale called the *constitutional, invisible, bird-catcher's net we can never get out of*). [77] These "positions"—or, better yet, call them "phases" (etymologically, appearances or showings of the moon, and thus less linear than *lunar*)—are instances of monumental time; as monuments, as *memorial structures or reminders*, they describe topological shapes or sites which might be occupied by a succession of shades—of agents, presences, stand-ins—of *speaking beings*.

Lacan pioneered this strategy. He famously freed what he called the *functions* of the *maternal* and *paternal* from, at once, the figures of the actual biographical characters making up cases and life histories, the mythological characters making up Freudian "complexes," and their reduction to measurable, biological agencies. (Thus '*Mother*' is a function that could be fulfilled by the father or the grandmother, a function, just as the '*father*' is...) [78] In his words: *the subject must come to occupy his place therein, but don't think of these schemas as typical stages of development; what is at stake is rather a generation, or a logical anteriority of each schema with respect to the one that follows it*. [79] Kristeva, with Lacan, follows Freud in his attempt to free generative capacity, or even the act of generation itself, from genesis—from *development*, from *process*, from *temporal unfolding*. [80]

We might follow Kristeva.

We might, with her, call *the feminine* not an 'enigma', as Freud did, but rather that *radical and ungraspable element of our psychosexual identities linking soma and psyche*, a polyphonic "overflow" of diverse modes of being and ways of acting, or what she calls an *altered sameness* or *integrated otherness: self beyond the self*, alien territory *within*—what Lacan termed an *extimacy*.

We might, with her, call *heterosexual* the dramas of divided subjects of all genders, genres and sexualities; the impossibility, for any *speaking being*, of achieving what Lacan called *sexual rapport*, the fantasied union

with the *other sex* which might make us whole, repair or overcome the *inaugural and constitutive split* characterizing our subjection to the order of language and its confounding dictates.

We might even, with her, call *phallic* (yes, that battered mainstay of psychoanalytic theory) the archaic play of presence and absence, or oscillation between being and having—game of peek-a-boo or fort-da, *shell game* ever underwriting our symbolic activities—which was conceived, aeons before Freud, as *Kairos*.

And we might, finally with her, call the *maternal* a timeless *state of emergence* in life or into life, a libidinal experience of *sense without meaning* or a recalled state of interdependence, beyond the anguish of *expulsion, abjection, separation* [81] and loss. This is a radical conception of the maternal. It has little to do with psychoanalytic platitudes about holding environments, mirroring, good-enough care or Oedipal stages—and everything to do with the singular vicissitudes of *thrown* subjects, their paradoxical experiences of meaning, music and time.

Following Kristeva would mean taking the maternal as an intimacy characterized by a *co-presence*, an *at oneness*, that of the *borderspace* or *reliquary* which, as in Montale's *In Limine*, flares into a *crucible*.

This borderland is the analyst's home ground. It's the place where the human impulses conceived, over the generations of psychoanalytic venturing since Freud, as *drives* pulse at the nexus of things and words, circling targets they never reach. They delineate an enclosed space, a matrix or hole, an *emptiness at the center of the real* [82] that can never be entered or named. The analyst sits precisely there, listening, in the place where words fall short or convey some inexplicable meaning: this is the site of the remainder, the perpetually missing object, *whirlpool, vacuole*, unnameable thing-as-such or (maternal) *Thing*. It's there where she sits and there where she listens, with her very being, for what Kristeva calls a passage from the *sensorial* to the *linguistic* [83]—or, as one as one of my patients put it only moments ago, for *endings and beginnings that become a new language, an essence*.

Beyond expulsion, we might with Kristeva rediscover the maternal as a *refined* or *refound love* which, in the words of Giorgio Agamben, *at once enjoys and defers, negates and affirms, accepts and repels; and whose only reality is the very unreality of the words which, swimming against the tide, limn our practice*.

Through our analytic encounter with their *dense textual interlacing*, their *interweaving of phantasm, desire and word*, our *revolutions in poetic language* might become the source of new forms of *authority* or *ethics*, might become themselves *stanzas offered to the endless joy of erotic experience*. With Agamben, we might say of an analysis that its hermeneutic rings *trace a topology of this joy*, which would be the very *stanza*, in his words, *through which the human spirit responds to the impossible task of appropriating what in every case must remain unappropriable*. Its path is that of *the dance in the labyrinth, leading into the heart of what it keeps always at a distance*, a kind of *spatial model symbolic of human culture and its royal road toward a goal for which only a detour is adequate*. [84]

3.

George Steiner describes listening as an *act* that keeps language *electric*; he says it's a kind of *re-creation* that *seeks to elicit incipient intentionalities*, aiming to *make manifest the covert or incomplete impulses and significations* buried within the spoken or written *text*, to bring *to light what is buried between and, as it were, underneath the lines*.

He insists he's not talking about psychoanalysis, but his words speak directly to our practice. He writes that audition "*excavates*" *significations of which the author may not have been conscious... the latent, potential surge of meaning within language itself, in the central axiomatic paradox whereby we do not speak so much as we "are spoken."* The word "*owns*" us, he says, and *thus the autonomous powers of language... always surpass human usage and exceed total understanding*.

The *creative work of audition*—which of course is the *task of the analyst* as much as any *true reader*—would thus be to *listen, as the musician does, to the voices of the unsaid, to the deep-lying rhythms and undertones of thought, of poetic conceptions before these stiffen into conventional and mundane speech... sensing, all the while, that any such apprehension will inevitably be fragmentary, unstable and ... distorting.* He calls it a kind of *primal audition*, which is precisely what the analyst's listening strives for: an *over-hearing* by which *what is "wild, obscure, interwoven" at the sources of the word might still be made out.* [85]

•

Can we make it out today? That's the urgent question, I reckon, for those of us still practicing the talking cure. For *language today*, in the harrowing words of Giorgio Agamben, *is given as a chatter that never clashes with its limit and seems to have lost all awareness of its intimate nexus with what cannot be said, that is, with the time when man was not yet a speaker.* This nexus—matrix, *chôra*, stanza binding us to language and enclosing us within it—is a musical one. Agamben reminds us that *music is constitutionally bound to the experience and the limits of language*, just as, *vice versa, the experience of the limits of language—and of all forms of political representation along with it—is a musically conditioned one.*

It's this very *limit* that today is missing from our speech and our politics, where *a language without margins and frontiers corresponds to a music ... that has turned its back on its origins, and a politics without consistency and place. When it seems everything can indifferently be said, singing disappears and, with it, the range of emotional moods and colors by which we might articulate in a musical—or museic—way.* The field of possibility is eclipsed.

In *our society*—one in which, ironically, *music seems frenetically to pervade every place*—what Agamben calls the *museic nexus*—and what we might call, with Kristeva, the maternal—*has lost its relation with the limits of language. No longer nourishing, generating, driving our speech, no longer informing our most deeply-invested cultural aspirations, it now produces only a sort of blank mission or inspiration that, absent its bodily, semiotic, intimate/extimate muses and roots, goes around in circles.*

Agamben argues that *philosophy is today possible only as a kind of reformation of music*, and I propose to you that the same is true for our field. This means that the analytic *task is today constitutively both a poetic and a political task*, requiring *artists, philosophers and analysts to join forces* [86] in the ongoing work of recalling the forgotten song in our speech, the infinitely creative work of *remembering us to our language.*

Psychoanalysis came into being in a fin-de-siècle Europe on the verge of catastrophe. From its inception it aimed for an ethical intervention at the plastic locus where—in the history of a singular human, or that of an entire civilization—symbolic and biological frontiers collapse. In the very place of that breach, our practice privileges the nexus where speech becomes, in Valéry's terms, *a prolonged hesitation between sound and sense.* [87] This is the very definition of poetry. [88] Through it we cleave to an always possible renaissance. It's in this sense that we might, with Kristeva, call analysis the *maternal cure.*

—for my mother, and to the memory of my father.

Bibliography:

Agamben, G.:

— (1993) *Stanzas: Word and Phantasm in Western Culture*, transl. by R. L. Martinez (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press).

— (1999) *The End of the Poem: Studies in Poetics*, transl. by D. Heller-Roazen (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press).

— (2018) *What is Philosophy?*, transl. by L. Chiesa (Stanford: Stanford University Press).

Cassin, B., ed.:

— (2014) *Dictionary of Untranslatableables: A Philosophical Lexicon*, transl. by E. Apter, J. Lezra and M. Wood (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press).

Collodi, C.:

— (2009) *Pinocchio*, transl. by G. Brock (New York: New York Review Books).

D'Annunzio, G.:

— (1988) *Halcyon*, transl. by J.G. Nichols (Manchester, UK: Carcanet Press).

Eidzelsztein, A.:

— (2009) *The Graph of Desire: Using the Work of Jacques Lacan*, transl. by F.F.C. Shanahan (London: Karnak).

Ettinger, B.L.:

— (1994) *The Matrixial Borderspace* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press).

Glare, P.G.W., ed.:

— (2005) *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Hyde, L.:

— (2019) *A Primer for Forgetting: Getting Past the Past* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux).

Montale, E.:

- (1971) *The Butterfly of Dinard*, transl. by G. Singh (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky).
- (1980) *It Depends: A Poet's Notebook*, transl. by G. Singh (New York: New Directions).
- (1984) *Tutte le poesie* (Milan: Mondadori).
- (1996) *Il secondo mestiere: arte, musica, società*, ed. G. Zampa (Milan: Montadori).
- (1998) *Satura: 1962-1970*, transl. by W. Arrowsmith (New York/London: W. W. Norton & Company).

Kristeva, J.:

- (1973) *Revolution in Poetic Language*, transl. by L.S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press).
- (1995) *New Maladies of the Soul*, transl. by R. Guberman (New York: Columbia University Press).
- (2002) *Intimate Revolt: The Powers and Limits of Psychoanalysis*, transl. by J. Herman (New York: Columbia University Press).
- (2010) *Hatred and Forgiveness*, transl. by J. Herman (New York: Columbia University Press).

Lacan, J.:

- (1978) *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, transl. by A. Sheridan (New York: W. W. Norton & Company).
- (1992) *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis, 1959-1960: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VII*, transl. by D. Porter (New York: W.W. Norton & Company).
- (2006) *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, transl. by B. Fink (New York: W. W. Norton & Company).
- (2019) *Desire and Its Interpretation: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VI*, transl. by B. Fink (Cambridge, UK and Medford, MA: Polity Press).

Merrill, J.:

- (1994) *A Different Person: A Memoir* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco).

Hesiod:

- (2006) *Hesiod: Theogony, Works and Days, Testimonia*, ed. and transl. by G. W. Most (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press).

Lidell, H.G.:

— (1991) *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press).

Nancy, J-L.:

— (1996) *The Muses*, transl. by P. Kamuf (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press).

Onians, R.B.:

— (1951) *Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle: The Origins of European Thought* (London: Cambridge University Press).

Onions, C.T., ed.:

— (1966) *The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Plato:

— (2003) *Plato's Theory of Knowledge: The Theaetetus and The Sophist*, transl. by F. M. Cornford (New York: Dover Publications).

Roudinesco, É.:

— (1990) *Jacques Lacan & Co.: A History of Psychoanalysis in France 1925-1985*, transl. by J. Mehlman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

Ryan, K.:

— (2020) *Synthesizing Gravity: Selected Prose* (New York: Grove Press).

Shakespeare, W.:

— (1983) *The Globe Illustrated Shakespeare: The Complete Works Annotated* (New York: Greenwich House).

Steiner, G.:

— (2011) *The Poetry of Thought: from Hellenism to Celan* (New York: New Directions).

Testa, E.:

— (2005) *Dopo la lirica: poeti Italiani 1960-2000* (Torino: Guido Einaudi editore, 2005).

Thomas, H., ed.:

— (2002) *Montale in English* (New York: Handsel Books, an imprint of Other Press).

Thompson, K.:

— (2019) *Blanket* (New York and London: Bloomsbury Academic).

West, R.J.:

— (1981) *Eugenio Montale: Poet on the Edge* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press).

Notes:

[1] Eugenio Montale, *The Butterfly of Dinard*, translated by G. Singh (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1971), p. 19.

[2] Cited in Giorgio Agamben, *Stanzas: Word and Phantasm in Western Culture*, translated by Ronald L. Martinez (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), p. viii.

[3] George Steiner, *The Poetry of Thought: from Hellenism to Celan* (New York: New Directions, 2011), p. 17.

[4] “We witness simultaneously....a pure production of sense *and* the sensuous dislocation of sense.” Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Muses*, translated by Peggy Kamuf (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1996), p. 27.

[5] Eugenio Montale, *Il secondo mestiere: arte, musica, società*, ed. Giorgio Zampa (Milan: Montadori, 1996), p. 1496.

[6] The Roman word “satura” signifying, among other things, *a dish of mixed ingredients, an early form of stage medley, a literary composition consisting of a miscellany of prose and verse on various topics, a poem*

directed at prevalent vices or follies... P.G.W. Glare, ed., *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 1694.

[7] George Steiner op. cit. 2011, p.13.

[8] Eugenio Montale, *Satura: 1962-1970*, translated by William Arrowsmith (New York/London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998), pp. xiv-xv.

[9] Gabriele D'Annunzio, *Halcyon*, translated by J.G. Nichols (Manchester, Great Britain: Carcanet Press, 1988), pp. 68-69.

[10] Montale op. cit. 1998, pp. 79-81.\

[11] Ibid., p. xv.

[12] Ibid., p. 123.

[13] Ibid., p. 3.

[14] Enrico Testa, *Dopo la lirica: poeti Italiani 1960-2000* (Torino: Guido Einaudi editore, 2005), pp. v-vi.

[15] Ibid., p. xii.

[16] Ibid., pp. v-vi.

[17] Ibid., pp. vii-viii.

[18] Élisabeth Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan & Co.: A History of Psychoanalysis in France 1925-1985*, translated by Jeffrey Mehlman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), p. 478.

[19] Rebecca J. West, *Eugenio Montale: Poet on the Edge* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1981), p. 95.

[20] George Steiner op. cit. 2011, p.34.

[21] Ibid., p. 96.

[22] Ibid., p. 31.

[23] Jacques Lacan, *Desire and Its Interpretation: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VI*, translated by Bruce Fink (Cambridge, UK and Medford, MA: Polity Press, 2019), p. 12.

[24] Steiner op. cit. 2011, p. 25.

[25] Ibid., p. 94.

[26] James Merrill, *A Different Person: A Memoir* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1994), p.175.

[27] William Shakespeare, *The Globe Illustrated Shakespeare: The Complete Works Annotated* (New York: Greenwich House, 1983), p. 1252.

[28] West, op. cit. 1981, p. 13.

[29] See Bracha L. Ettinger, *The Matrixial Borderspace* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).

[30] Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, translated by Alan Sheridan (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1978), p.56.

[31] Julia Kristeva, *Intimate Revolt: The Powers and Limits of Psychoanalysis*, translated by Jeanine Herman (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), pp. 258-259.

[32] Julia Kristeva, *New Maladies of the Soul*, translated by Ross Guberman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), p. 104.

[33] Kristeva op. cit. 2002, pp. 258-259.

[34] Julia Kristeva, *Hatred and Forgiveness*, translated by Jeanine Herman (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), p. 81.

[35] Julia Kristeva op. cit. 1995, p.104.

[36] Julia Kristeva op. cit. 2002, p. 259.

[37] “La casa dei doganieri” in Eugenio Montale, *Tutte le poesie* (Milan: Mondadori, 1984), p. 167.

[38] Ben Johnson and James Merrill translation. In Harry Thomas, ed., *Montale in English* (New York: Handsel Books, an imprint of Other Press, 2002), pp. 98-99.

[39] George Steiner op. cit. 2011, p. 171.

[40] Ibid., p. 171.

[41] Ibid., p. 158.

[42] Barbara Cassin, editor, *Dictionary of Untranslatableables: A Philosophical Lexicon*, translated by Emily Apter, Jacques Lezra and Michael Wood (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014), pp. 685-686.

[43] C.T. Onions, editor, *The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 232.

[44] Richard Broxton Onians, *Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle: The Origins of European Thought* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1951), p. 346.

[45] Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, translated by Bruce Fink (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006), pp. 161-175.

[46] Cassin, op. cit. 2014, pp. 685-686.

[47] “To unfold means to reveal and disclose, or to develop and progress, as in *the events unfolded*. To unfold might be to discover something new as it occurs in real time (even if *real time* is itself an illusion, a sleight of hand that objects pull on the human brain), or to lay bare—to make open and exposed what has long been secreted and protected by folds within folds. To fold and unfold a blanket is to touch a memory, to access past and future, perhaps from an otherwise banal or forgettable now. Unfolding is not an undoing, but an intimate exchange.” Kara Thompson, *Blanket* (New York and London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), p. xiii.

[48] Steiner op. cit. 2011, pp. 158-159.

[49] Montale op. cit. 1971, p. 163.

[50] Plato, *Plato's Theory of Knowledge: The Theaetetus and The Sophist*, translated by Francis M. Cornford (New York: Dover Publications, 2003), pp. 130-136.

[51] Montale op. cit. 1971, p. 164: “I’ve always believed in a relative forgetfulness which is almost voluntary, a sort of Taylorian process by which the mind rejects what is no longer any use, while at the same time retaining the end of the thread. But in this instance there was no doubt at all: A— who had been buried in my mind for four, five or six years had now come back because she wanted to come back. It was she who had chosen to grace me with her presence, not I who had condescended to reawaken her while searching through the past in a desultory way. It was she—the amiable creature, the worthy intruder, who while digging her past up again, had come across my shade and tried to re-establish a ‘correspondence’ in the best sense of the term.”

[52] Kay Ryan, *Synthesizing Gravity: Selected Prose* (New York: Grove Press, 2020), p. 102.

[53] Lewis Hyde, *A Primer for Forgetting: Getting Past the Past* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2019), p. 12.

[54] Ryan op. cit. 2020, pp.102-104.

[55] Glenn W. Most, editor and translator, *Hesiod: Theogony, Works and Days, Testimonia* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 2006), p.7.

[56] Hyde op. cit. 2019, p. 12.

[57] “To tell the truth I felt depressed by the tricks that memory plays—a sort of St. Patrick’s well of remembrance.” Montale op. cit. 1971, p. 163:

[58] Wikipedia entry, “Pozzo di S. Patrizio,” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pozzo_di_S._Patrizio.

[59]“Orvieto: Deep down in St. Patricks Well,” <https://onedayinitaly.com/deep-down-in-st-patricks-well/>.

[60] Alfredo Eidzelsztein, *The Graph of Desire: Using the Work of Jacques Lacan*, translated by Florencia F.C. Shanahan (London: Karnak, 2009), p.1.

[61] Hyde op. cit. 2019, p.13.

[62] Giorgio Agamben, *The End of the Poem: Studies in Poetics*, translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 41-42)

[63] Lidell and Scott, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 1.

[64] Eidzelsztein op. cit. 2009, p.2.

[65] Rebecca West, “Afterword” to Carlo Collodi, *Pinocchio*, translated by Geoffrey Brock (New York: New York Review Books, 2009), p. 173.

[66] Cassin op. cit. 2014, p.131.

[67] Ibid., p.134.

[68] Edward Casey, cited in ibid., p.131.

[69] Wikipedia entry “Khôra”, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khôra>.

[70] Francis Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology*, cited in Cassin op. cit. 2014, p.133.

[71] Ibid., p.133.

[72] Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, translated by Margaret Waller (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), pp. 25-27.

[73] Julia Kristeva, *The Sense and Non-Sense of Revolt: The Powers and Limits of Psychoanalysis*, translated by Jeanine Herman (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), p. 199.

[74] Agamben op. cit. 1993, p. xviii.

[75] See Kristeva on Bion's conception of the “existence of an ‘innate preconception of the breast’ ... that evokes the Kantian notion of an ‘a priori pure concept’ ... transcendental given of a drive originally endowed with a ‘thing in itself.’” Kristeva, op. cit. 2010, p.85.

[76] Kristeva, op. cit. 2000, p. 37; see also pp. 55-56.

[77] Eugenio Montale, *It Depends: A Poet's Notebook*, translated by G. Singh (New York: New Directions, 1980), p. 69.

[78] Eidzelstein op. cit. 2009, p. 4.

[79] Jacques Lacan, *Desire and Its Interpretation: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VI*, translated by Bruce Fink (Cambridge, UK and Medford, MA: Polity Press, 2019), p. 11.

[80] Ibid., p. 76: “Freud...proceeds, as I am doing for the time being, by means of a possibility—and even by means of a deduction—that is logical, rather than pointing to its genesis at a specific moment in time (*génétique*).”

[81] Julia Kristeva, “Prelude to an Ethics of the Feminine”, 2019 address to the IPA, <https://www.kristeva.fr/prelude-to-an-ethics-of-the-feminine.html>, pp. 2-4.

[82] Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis, 1959-1960: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VII*, translated by Dennis Porter (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1992), p. 121.

[83] Kristeva op. cit. 2019, p. 11.

[84] Giorgio Agamben *ibid.* 1993, p. xviii.

[85] Steiner op. cit. 2011, pp. 201-202.

[86] Giorgio Agamben, *What is Philosophy?*, translated by Lorenzo Chiesa, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018), pp. 106-107.

[87] See Lacan, op. cit. 1978, p. 56: “the unconscious...apprehended in its experience of rupture, between perception and consciousness, in that non-temporal locus... another locality, another space, another scene, between perception and consciousness.”\

[88] Giorgio Agamben, *The End of the Poem: Studies in Poetics*, translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 109.

Bio:

Benjamin Davidson is a faculty member and research psychoanalyst of the San Francisco Lacanian School, and maintains a private practice in Palo Alto and San Francisco. Since 2010 he has led a seminar on Lacanian psychoanalysis at Stanford University, where he works as a dean.

Publication Date:

February 4, 2021