

A discussion with cris cheek

[The discussion took place through 2009 and the first part of 2010 and would have been continued face to face in Ohio after the last post_moot if things had gone according to plan. In the event, Upton was unable to travel, due to the grounding of passenger air transport. Since then, the participants' commitments have made it impossible to continue. The discussion is clearly incomplete.]

UPTON:

cris, I'd like to kick this "interview" off with a few housekeeping ideas and proposals.

My intention is to seek an agreed text, a true text rather than a documentarily accurate text. To that end, what is said can be edited by either side as we go or at the end.

I will not release the text until we have agreed it; and I offer / suggest that we regard the text as a joint text, jointly copyrighted... When we get to the end then I'll offer you a finalised typescript which you can accept or to which you can offer changes.

I hope to see the interview into publication, probably via a web magazine – and I welcome suggestions – with an ambition to have, later, a book of some or all of the interviews I conduct in this period and project.

In that context, I should explain why I put the word interview in quotations. Though I expect you will say more than I shall, I am open to it becoming a discussion in places. We'll see.

While I could – and did, when we spoke – identify specific items I want to investigate, I do not want to narrow this down too much. I think that the questions I am investigating raise just about every other question; so, in some ways, everything must be asked and everything must be challenged. There is no word limit, therefore. No predefined word limit. Let's see how it goes. It takes as long as it takes though I hope we can keep going fairly speedily.

I suggest that I use my college email, not least because it allows attachments in the way that my other email does not encourage.

Is that ok? Anything you want to add. If it's ok, sit comfortable and I'll begin

Cheek: yes i am up for it <cut> and yes to interview in the format suggested

i might actually be able to talk some sense or not now

;-)

i am sitting and fairly comfortable

xx

Upton: cris, How do feel about, what positions do you have on collaborative artistic production?

Cheek:

i'm going to put some kind of time limit on my first dive into this question so i have an arbitrary hour we are already collaborating by talking, here, using a language collaboration is pretty much inevitable unless one is utterly self- sufficient and has no contact with others and even then there would be the question as to what point in one's life such isolation from the human began. i take it for the moment that we are mostly talking about human - human collaboration. happy to broaden that thinking if you really want to go there. Although that could get very weird very quickly it could also be momentarily of interest. I awoke this morning watching dark shapes activating the tree line in the woods around this house. I went to sleep last night listening to coyotes hunting in the creek-bed below my window and woke in the dark hearing the triumphant hoots of an owl. The times between such sounds are rich with cicadas and occasional cars passing on the arterial about a hundred yards away.

the human condition (to pinch Hannah Arendt's title) is to be enmeshed with each other i am being a bit silly but there it is. doubtless you ill bring some finesse to my blunt modeling. the tools that i use to write with are not made by me. neither do i write only for myself, other people are present as i write. i will likely work with some form of publisher, some form of editor, some other agency to move production into circulation.

others present as i write include those others i have read, some of whom exert influence on me. i am constructed by interactions with others. i am become others. indeed sometimes i go in search of

myself and find others. i do not exactly mean a process of othering when i invoke others. others present as i write include practitioners of art forms other than that which could easily be bracketed under the term writing, and whose work(s) exert an influence over me. in saying so that does not mean that i am positive towards what they have made. indeed sometimes it is very interesting to work against something and into something else that one is not at all comfortable with. indeed i have sought to do that from time to time.

sometimes, as you know, and as you know yourself in your own practice, i am sufficiently fascinated by conversations with other practitioners and other practices (both from within and without signifying on traditions and conventions of writing) that I end up in detailed extended bodies of work that foreground collaboration

i'm going to try to tease out some of that and not worry too much about making coherent and logical arguments right now. that might and might not need to come later.

(at which point, about twenty minutes into this my day intervened
blam!)

so, i'm sending this. at least you'll know i am started. then i'll come back to the meat of the response. hopefully later today.

Upton: Dear cris

Just interpolating into your two- or more - part answer

- >I take it for the moment that we are mostly talking about human -
- > human collaboration. happy to broaden that thinking if you really want to
- > go there. Although that could get very weird very quickly it could also be
- > momentarily of interest.

You take it correctly; but I too am prepared to broaden. And now, cris cheek and Lawrence Upton interview a group of bonobos on just why they collect Peter Gabriel recordings; and the bonobos discuss their belief that he is trying to communicate with them, even if the content is a little confused

I'll leave that with you in case you know any collaborative non-humans, and await the rest of your response

jive long and potter

Cheek: L, i have collaborated with other writers and continue to do so. It (my writerly collaborations) began with Clive Fencott as Chencott 'n' Feek and then with Clive and yourself as jgigjgigjgigjgigjgigjgig (as long as you can say it that's our name) and we expanded that work to include Bill Griffiths and Jeremy Adler . . . i know you've written about this elsewhere and i enjoyed reading that account. but i could also say that my collaboration with other writers began with my experiences of learning to read, something that i have written about elsewhere. the idea that reading and listening to other writers is a form of collaboration with them, active meaning-making between their meanings and the meanings that i make from them, i know that my delight in nonsense poetry and my enjoyment of my father's delight in reading them to me was formative. so much about how we construct ourselves and are constructed by and through our early and developmental experiences of reading and writing . . . our reading--writings and writing--readings persists, as influence and even as tradition

that learning continues and has something of a quality that i can only approximate by reaching for the crutch of a term such as palimpsest
i can offer memories of that experience.

you and i explored my first more clearly defined experiences of writing into the same document. a lot of that which Clive and i explored was more to do with the aleatoric (a dog bursting into a room choosing the sequencing of pages in a book by the order of the pages that it stepped on . . .

our performance, of a gestural piece based on Christabel, in Torontoⁱ was a revelation in terms of how odd it felt not to be performing in any way in relation to a piece of paper (even if for the piece Clive and you and i performed at the Poetry Centre in Earls Court "Tulips" the piece of paper was on the floor or cascading from the ceiling or forming echt curtains on the balcony or being word, even worn, as a costume . . .)

i distinctly remember becoming more and more interested in dance. o
gawd, it's almost painful to start thinking about this stuff because
there is so much to say. once you're not holding a piece of paper the
whole body is foregrounded, its involuntary gestures in the act of
giving voice in any way, but in particular in using more extended
vocal techniques

Christabel led us to Baltimore and my long summer in Baltimore with
Kirby and Marshall and Nora and Patty and Lisa and tentatively a
convenience and Chris Mason, Chas Brohawn, the Svexner Labs . . .
Anselm Hollo, Gerrit Lansing . . . Doug Sumo Retzler, Richard
Ellsberry . . . the Crab Feasts, the Sleep Deprivation experiments
long nights experimenting with voice and costume and projections
and movement and sound in various rehearsal locations such as the
Red Door Hall, "yz a number of earthlings" and "tv trio" spinning away
from Co-Accident led me more and more into considering movement
as something i was intensely interested in even if knowing little other
than everyday experience of when i finally saw what some of the
performers at X6 Dance Space were up to i knew i had to take my
curiosity further. I say all of this not just to list a lot of names, but
because out of intense conversations collaborations come . . . also
this was a time of transition for me, with one foot as it were in the
poetry communities and the other foot in performance art and new
dance.

In the interim of course lay our own ongoing work(s) together in
various books that still hold my attention and a trio with yourself and
erik vonna-michel (as *Bang Crash Whalopp*ⁱⁱ) which explored print
improvisation and chance-generated book production and hours of
almost certainly lost live sound on the wilder fringes of what radio
could offer by way of a sort of sound poetry meets music concrete
meets horspiel meets the Firesign Theater . . that kind of mix.

And the boundaries between what my own stuff was and what i was
making with peers in many different artforms began to be not nearly
as interesting as just the act of making something together that kind
of Third Hand, Third Mind, Fourth / fifth sixth hand etcetera . . . much
of the rest is herstory. after the jggjggjggjggjggjgg (as long as
you can say it that's our name) and bang crash whalopp and the two
of us (never our official name i'll warrant ;-)) and the edge of
CoAccident becoming yz a number of earthlings and tvtrio (with

Marshall Reese and Kirby Malone) i made a bit of work with Patty Karl and wanted to explore three areas of arts practice where women seemed a) more numerous b) more empowered than was the case with poetry in the UK at that time and c) overlaps with other art form practices and practitioners for whom the poetry and poetics i had grown more interested in exploring offered grounds ripe for interdisciplinary collaboration . . . new dance and musics (in particular i had an interest in extended vocal techniques) and visual arts traditions of installation (site-related transformations) and performance

i know this all sounds utterly fanciful. i was really just drawn to it. i also was very much thinking like that. partly it was just about different companionships, different friendship. partly it was literally about making sexual play and sexually emotional interactions a part not apart of my syntactical alertness. partly it was about learning, taking myself out of my comfort zones . . . i have always been interested in being the uncomfortable (i'll let that odd expression stand for now) . . . over time two bodies of work occurred. one with Sianed Jones, another with Kirsten Lavers. Yes, there still other collaborations (in sound work with Matt Rogalsky; in teaching text - movement generation with Mark Jeffery; with Keith Tuma and William R. Howe as The Three Little Heretics, with William R. Howe on a series of eminently publishable pieces called fucking great house of ghosts). the trio Slant (with Sianed and Phillip Jeck) also collaborated with a number of fine musicians and Sianed and myself played in groups such as Noor Shimaal with Dawson and Amel Benhassine-Miller and Vivienne Corringham . . . as well as with Samia Malik and Suhkdeep Singh in Garam Masala . . .

i hate this kind of writing because it becomes about lists and that doesn't interest me at all . . . except that i hate to leave some people out. I made text-dance work with several notable new dance choreographers and Contact Improvisers (Kirstie Simson; Mary Prestidge; Lisa Nelson, Miranda Tufnell and Dennis Greenwood) the list just goes on. i'm not sure how to mention all of this without listing people. the problem is that many of those people remain known only in their communities and to audiences of particular interest and in certain histories of arts practice. There was work with Carlyle Reedy in O Productions One; occasional work with Paul Burwell . . .

i still do get involved in one-off collaborations, most recently with Christine Duncan and Jean Martin, two excellent improv musicians in Toronto, and with Fault Tactical Network for a special presentation in Zagreb at PSi15.

having written all of which i come back to your question . . . how do i feel about collaboration?

well i find i get involved in it on a daily basis. I am working with colleagues, with extended networks with ongoing informal collaborative units, with bodies of work that have formally ended but whose influence continues both inside and outside of me.

i have a litte banal typology of writerly collaborations i could share with you. I have written an extreme and boorish length about collaborating, in particular on the tnwk work(s) with Kirsten Lavers elsewhere.

i need to send this. It's not very good. but maybe it will spur you to probe more

looking forwards

cris

Upton: Dear cris

Thanks for your responses. They are worth waiting for.

I agree with you about the potential width of "collaboration"...

I am also quite prepared to go into human-hon-human collaboration... Maybe though I'd better do some more thinking, not just about the subject but about where it might go in the context of why I proposed the interview.

The weirdness would be the attraction! Or one of several maybe.

Your point that being influenced by work by others does not necessarily mean that one is positive towards it is welcome. Digging at that could expose all sorts of things, the dry rots and tree roots under the establishments of literary theory. We are our wounds as well as our flesh in some ways (though perhaps some will latch on to "wounds"!) and we are a peculiar substance based on what we have rejected. (I am sure that my wounds and flesh metaphor points to some of my origins; and it survives also because I once used it in a

poem which was largely against the Pauline influences in my life! I named the enemy and partly became it.)

You say, I think of the palimpsest of your learning, “i can offer memories of that experience.” and I’d welcome that, now or later.

Also I’d welcome your “little banal typology of writerly collaborations”; and let’s make sure we make available the references to your other writing on collaborating when and as we move to offer this for publication.

I note and accept your distinction between you and I, on one tentacle, and you and Clive Fencott, on one or more others – the aleatoric with you too; which was there much less when it was just us two, as opposed say to what we did in jggjgg (as long as you can say it that’s our name). I wouldn’t say that jggjgg was ever very aleatoric but there was a lot of indeterminacy going on!

I shan’t respond to all the things you recall which we have in common though they are all worth remembering. But I’ll say that, in my experience, you’re spot on in noting that what one tends to call “my own stuff”, your phrase, can be less interesting to its maker at times than the stuff one makes with others.

There can be a glamour to that co-made work; and I think that it arises from the way of seeing as from another’s point of view. And that leads on to vast tracts, both desert and green & well-printed and hand-written, regarding companionship; and Eros; and politics and... The great art of being on top of each other.

And also I note your – I believe, accurate – observation that one is often working with collaborative bodies of work which have formally ended and one is still influenced by that interaction. Past times continue.

I gave voice yesterday in Whitechapel Art Gallery, producing a live sound track for William English’s film “Still”. (I was in the audience with a radio mike for the whole 18 minutes and few spotted me) As the film ran in, 7, 6, 5, 4... I was feeling decidedly unMercurial and remembered the seconds before we, jggjgg, started “Another Istory of the Middle East” at Kings College (1978, I believe). You’ll recall that was Clive’s authorship and to me at least he gave a copy of the Middle East Economic Review and said “You’ll find the words in there”.

I don't think I shall ever forget that. There was so much in it and arising from it. It remains part of who I am as a performing artist.

I think your listing of many collaborators is useful. There's a potential dialogue between narratives in the way that our artistic lives ran on almost the same line at one point, and then in parallel and then seemingly away from each other... But then, and as now, we cross, Lawrence or cris the tank engine and his friends

It's good that you give a sense of the different people you have worked with even if those who to read this do not know them all. As if I do! It is surely part of what one needs to know in terms of inquiring into collaboration – the amount of it, and little of it being a + b, poet plus dancer et cetera, though I have nothing against that; but much or all of what you are listing is group interactive trespass; group interactive cooperation; heterogeneity as some kind of standard. Am I right? or am I right?

You've referred to a great variety of collaborations, including those that you and I shared and not just all that far and long ago. There were the odd and I think useful workshops at Chisenhale 7 or 8 years ago. You've spoken of, in a way, the impossibility of avoiding collaboration... Er, says your interlocutor...

It's my own fault for using such a banal construction as "How do you feel?"

I suppose I could ask another journo question, like "Is it a good thing?"! And I don't even know the name of the elephant in the room or what they're thinking.

As well as saying yes to all the things you've suggested you might speak of, if you feel so inclined at present, I'll ask:

To what extent do you regard yourself as a solo artist?

I have given it its own line so that it doesn't get lost in the verbiage

Don't, please, place too much weight on my use of "artist", though by all means comment on it if you wish. I proposed "artist" for myself, in an interview over the weekend, just to avoid worrying about any limitations that might be imposed by "poet", or any other term.

I mean, is the concept of solo artist useful to you? I was writing up notes on some past performances today, organising potential nodes

in future writing; and, in a word-processor table, filling out a column of cells wherein I typed either “collaboration with <name>” or “solo”.

Boring as it was as an activity, in that context, it had some utility. It was potentially useful data that I was “on stage” alone for this or that, or in a studio alone. Yet, in other ways it said little. When I am collaborating nowadays I usually need also to add who did what if it is to be of any use. That is, I need to do that in the kind of collaborations I find myself doing for much the time now (by choice). It’s a long way from sitting across a table from you, crossing out or adding lines turn and turn about. Yet it is all in the same territory.

When I go solo, I am, as you hint, going with head-resident ghosts and avatars.

For some years, I have been writing a set of fairly non-disjunctive poems placed in Ennor (Scilly before it was drowned by rising sea); and I tend to write them there, out in the near Atlantic, sitting on rocks, waiting for a mackerel to take the bait.

I go alone, chatting over a café tea or in the shop, deliberately socially silent otherwise. Yet I’m not on my own in some senses; and maybe that’s something I’d like to come back to you on, later. Later on.

The city has made me. Technology has shaped me. And I am the product of interactions with the many remarkable people I have met and often worked with. Please include yourself in that list. And of course by the time anyone wrote about Arcady it was already too late for any poet to go there without one way or another beaming down subject to Federation regulations and worrying about damaging the environment. Any Eden was gone as soon as there was something else.

Likewise, I am whom I have become and am, for a moment on an island served by motor vessels, consciously abandoning inquiries into aleatory, technology and polyphony in the belief that there is still also something to be done with the pose of a single human with pen and paper...

Wo! I’m beginning to tell you an answer I might find agreeable... Are such concepts as *solo artistry* useful to any degree in any way?

Lawrence

Cheek: Hi Lawrence, i'm trying to catch myself unawares as i approach responding to this boom boom question.

I understand completely that you don't want me to focus too hotly onto the word "artist" and i'm trying not to focus instead onto the word "extent."

I have become extremely interested in the boundaries between what might still be called "an individual" and 'the social", at least by dint of an identifiable bracket around consciousness. I am also aware of at least some of the research being undertaken into what the heck consciousness might be understood or turn out to be. I read some of that, but am only an amateur in those more scientific discussions.

i have been trying, since the end of TNWK, to carry on making things but not to make too much. I have often simply written or made too much. In my opinion it has been too much of a mindless whirlwind of just doing things that begin to trace a mark or start what might become a text. To leave no tone unstoned.

I woke and it was still very dark. Early by the western daylight clock. Still I got up out of bed and made my way across the creaky wooden floorboards to a pile of clothes by moonlight. The moon was laying milky shadows through the woods around my house onto the clearing just beyond my bedroom window. Entranced by this sight I went to get my camera and take a photo of the scene but returning could not nearly hold the camera still enough for long enough without the tremor in my body rendering the shot impossibly fuzzy. I both appreciated and disliked that fuzz intensely. Forsaking the hunt for a tripod and the amount of fiddling that setting it up might entail I sat down and wrote this instead.

and then i have deliberately left a long long pause in my answering. Honestly i'm not sure what to say. But the main thing that occurs is just a gap. Do i even consider myself a solo artist? Well, i do, in that others clearly do or have done so. Yet, when i am making a mud pie i am aware of how slight that sense of the solo might be. Much i guess like not exactly taking a solo in a musical context so much as the inevitability of small differences. I am an inflection. The musical context doesn't seem inappropriate though. Every day i could play the same note for the same length of time and it might sound and feel and be heard quite differently. But now perhaps i'm just getting all too

pre-Socratic. Yes, i have that sense of lyric self from time to time and i neither deny nor specifically indulge it. Still. Yes i have a sense of individuated consciousness. It does not give me great pleasure to recognize its existence but i take some daily observance of its workings. The sense of the facts that there are things that there is not so much one can do about; they are just there and one might as well make cognizance as far as possible of those things part of the work as not.

To that extent. Not to keep making and making as inscription of self. Not to valorize and trumpet self at all. But also not to negate it. Nor to consider that whatever i make has any value and is worth sharing. From early splurge beginnings i have become a pretty fierce editor in every aspect of what i share. In fact i am now reticent to write. I partly see any write that i might present to the world as a burden on others. I used to relish that challenge. Over the past couple of decades i have become far more ambivalent about it.

I have been thinking that it might be worth describing a fairly typical day. Not in its demotic minutiae. But for its glimpses into practice. I read a lot, a mixture of online and offline sources. Most days i take a couple of photos of things that particularly catch my eye. I work on a visual object in some way. I make notes. I tinker with a poem. Often i am reworking and revising with half an eye on possible outcomes. I take a long-term view of getting work out into the world.

I could turn this question, which has become somewhat of a depressing existential drag on me back onto you. Am i a solo artist???

I find that a lot of my creative time is colonized by students. Recently at a south-west ohio poets event i was hoping to read new work. However a graduate student had written a piece for me and wanted to hear it performed. So even my reading slot was not filled with my own work. Well it both was my work and was not my work.

xxx

cris

Upton:

Hi cris,

My apologies for my delay in replying. It's been a number of annoying things; but that has given me the time to reflect...

And now we're coming up to the silly season. After which I have my own private Scilly season; so I am investigating the possibility of a broadband dongle so that I can continue talking.

It's good to be starting this again

It has occurred to me that I should change the direction of discussion a little; and maybe that is what I am about to do; or maybe I am worrying the existing themes further towards their metaphorical death

I have lighted on your "trying to catch myself unawares" which is, in some ways, my only method!

And I want to try to relate it a little to your reference to the boundaries between what might still be called "an individual" and 'the social'.

I, too, feel amateurish when I consider some of what is being done towards an understanding of consciousness; but I think one can still make some progress without demanding of science what it cannot yet offer and without assuming that one knows what it should know. And that's by way of the thought experiment... or is that rather called crass assertion?!

It's to do with what you say as the sense of the lyric self; and how far that is a true sense and how far it is an illusion. There was an sf film I saw once, maybe many which have merged, where a bomb in human form had no idea that it was a bomb. I believe the RC Church took a similar analysis to heretics once: you may not know you are evil, but you are. (The woman I lived with in the 80s certainly said that to ME when she left in the 90s!)

But my question is not that I doubt the existence of the self, lyrical or otherwise; rather I wonder how many of them there are.

Do you know the Greg Bear books that include **Eternity**?

"Frants had evolved to pass along memories and experiences of every individual to its fellows. The great mass of Frants carried the memories of all individuals, if not in detail, then at least as a kind of inbred history."

There's something there, with differences, of how I think we exist. I spoke about this at ICA earlier this year and it's soon to be published in *Readings*; so I won't go on and on. Suffice it that I wish to assert the probability of our manyness and that individuation is an art of living together.

One can either try to standardise the behaviour of hoi polloi or study its political behaviour. I prefer the latter

Seeing your "I am an inflection" and raising you with "I am inflections"

And rather than inscribing what one asserts or collaborates with as "self", letting these selves inscribe... whatever they inscribe. The air mostly. But also oneself. One's behaviour is steered a little and / or shaped by desires which are not socially instantiated, Trojan metaphorical hors d'oeuvres that we could get our teeth into, voices whispering to us from deeper in than our ears,

Some of that may be implied by / inferred from "the mindless whirlwind of just doing things". There are a seasons, churn churn churn

Am i a solo artist???, you ask me... Probably not

Which might raise the question of intentionality

What I am trying to get to is something that arose in improv discussions I had with Alaric, so some way over ten years ago, at the latest August 1999 when we were in the same place for the total eclipse and the last long talk without an intended outcome, maybe before.

Alaric threw back at me, he said, something I had said about self-collaboration – I am speaking here of conversations so long and rambling they began to have seemingly intoxicating effect.

Did I say that?

Yes, you did.

He / they wanted to know what it was I had said; and I, for my / our part wanted to know what I / we could have meant.

This singular / plural thing is probably wrong. It's likely one of us has the conch and the others are jostling for position in case that one lets it go.

The idea becomes clearer, I think, if one remembers that complementary (I now see) idea of not quite knowing what one is doing. I learn from each other. I suggest that manyness is a quality we all have; but that it is normal to stamp it out.

If you are at all with me in comprehension and at all in agreement, in so far as I have said anything coherent enough to facilitate agreement, then it problematizes the idea of the single lyric self expressing itself. Where the Strindberg of Miss Julie had his characters as something approaching collages, I am seeing them as something like mobs. Mobs suggests something malicious. Maybe it's more the way that a little collection of boy scouts used to turn up on the festival of Saint Bobajob.

And as a piece of writing can be seen as a notation of the performance of its writing, so too it can be seen as a notation of a group improv by unseen persons within the figure of the writer / poet / artist... ditto regarding musics and graphic images

Am I wrong or am I wrong?

OK I'll leave it there, if I may, with us in the middle of the interchange, potentially ready to go down what I think may be the next most productive mental carriageway

Over to you

Cheek: HI Lawrence,
delays 'r' us it seems.

Well i am certainly specializing in them in this case. I'm wondering what i find so hard to answer? Inflections, plural, certainly. I'll take that as friendly amendment.

The attempt to "catch myself, unawares" is tied to potential and actual habits and the ruts of behavior surely. In that it is a subtle loop. Even the well-worn thinking about "catching myself, unawares" becomes in itself a treadmill.

I'm lost in some of the terminology in play already between us. I would say that there is no way either for the self or for another than a self to tell whether that self is an illusion to any extent.

The fact of individuated experience is pretty tough to deny. I don't mean necessarily big-time differentiated, i mean very micro differentiated. We have points of view between "us" and we have points of view that are "us". I don't buy into a stability let alone a fixity in terms of a "self" but i do subscribe (it comes in installments, rather than all in one go for home assemblage) to a sense of boundary that can be drawn through a bundle . . a thicket . . . (whatever) . . . or accumulated experiences that condition and propel agency. Yes we are many . . . even Whitman's "multitude" and Rimbaud's "other" both within a bounded body (i am talking simply about contiguous skin) and yes we are also more singular in some ways in our manyness and we are many in our manynesses and we yet also exhibit kinship forms through those differences.

Yes, we are all inflections inflected but the differentiations between those markers (even their granular stratifications and subtle orders and volumes and impacts to affect and effect) is what makes the person called Lawrence different from the person called cris . . . despite many many other attributes that are similarities.

I do celebrate those differences and those similarities. It could come down to a tiny shift between pitch and emphasis, for example. That is perhaps why Plato wanted to take his vain stand in The Republic against the reductive paradoxes of certain forms of mimicry and it is why Plato was so ludicrously wrong in perpetuating his anxiety about heterogeneity to seek stability. I have not advocated on behalf of anything called a lyric self before this. I am however convinced by my friends Katharine Gillespie and Catherine Wagner that one needs to pay attention to those small dances between the particulars in moments carved out not away from the world at all but in a different part of the world. That necessity is to do with reciprocity and reflexivity. It is also a politics of resistance.

I pay additional attention to such an urging because it comes from women. I wold say simply listen to what the women close to one have to say. Not accept their perceptions and advice blindly at all. Just pay attention and be prepared to adjust one's position. I know that might seem crazy. But do so because if for nothing else when we listen to women that we respect and love and are close to we also listen to aspects of ourselves that might become shouted down in the onrush of more and mere masculinist proclivities. I don't mean to make a major point about gender here beyond the fact that it has struck me

that the most interesting conversations that i have had about notions of individuality and selfhood happen to have come from those friends and that made me stop and think and listen to myself.

Perhaps it is a growing sense of mortality that has encouraged me to think more about the space and time of self. Perhaps it is the fact that i currently live in a fairly quiet location looking out into delightful woods. Could be there is the sense of Tillie Olsen's Silences combined with Virginia Woolf's A Room of One's Own (just the sentiment embodied and emboldened in that title) that is loitering and has been knocking, a place and time and space and interest in reflection . . . not to get away from so much as to come back to . . . it could be that is a somewhat calm place, a sexual hover, a sense of fat (as distinct from thin) time, somewhat meditative, not removed but functioning for a different purpose, even if that purpose is inutile.

So, you see even as i talk a little bit about these subtle distinctions i am in reference to others who speak to me and perhaps even through me, even though i feel i am a smudged and inadequate bullhorn for anything that might be said. Nevertheless i am still trying to say something about finding something to say. I completely agree by the way about our mannyness and individuation being a art of living together, and would amend that to say something more about relative and related fixity (plural to boot) and unfixity (plural to boot) in relation to processes of production and circulation and of their ongoing micro-macro inter-relations.

Using another dodgy metaphor (surely all metaphors are dodgy . . . even in some instances dogged and plain doggy) of a musical combo, let's say it's a kind of chamber set up, the "solo" can be in every note . . . even from a very determined and determining score, rather than the "solo" being understood as the self foregrounded against the backdrop of others (whether they are a supportive cast or not).

Generally i also turned away from the airbrushed fucking virtuosic twiddling guitar solos of the early 1970s into an exhilaration through punk rock all manners of autonomic and anarchic angles were burnished in the desire to play fast and rough together.

By-and-large i'll accept your idea of flash-mobbing the self and of the self being flash-mobbed with a frequency we can only begin to comprehend but which is notated through reading-writing-reading-

writing-writing-reading-writing . . and at least part of me is happy to have such flickering in-betweens considered as self-collaboration.

I like that you are pressing on that point, even though the application of said pressure might feel a little willful, drifting towards ideological.

Snowing outside the window closest to me now here and i am seeing multiple varying crystals of very differing sizes too in my field of vision. THE snow is falling through branches of trees and between trees whose dark wet branches act momentarily as a screen against which their varying trajectories of falling are projected. You know, since i was a kid i've been fascinated with the prospect that what makes watching snow fall so pleasurable, for me, is the thought that in ways i cannot explain what i am seeing is in ways that i fail to understand in conversation with the synaptic activity going off inside my brain. That is the relative interiority and exteriority are conversing, perhaps collaborating, perhaps eve colluding, to produce and to circulate simple pleasures.

Upton: Dear cris

Thanks for some very interesting responses

I'll pick up on relatively little because I want to concentrate here on you not us

I shall respond to

- > I like
- > that you are pressing on that point, even though the application of said
- > pressure might feel a little willful, drifting towards ideological.

Not because I want to dispute it particularly, though it's not often I am accused of ideology

[I did once, when teaching secondary school, have an angry parent come in demanding to know why I was a fanatic, unquote

Why was I teaching his son about Russia?

I was teaching World War I poetry - teachers, standard issue for the use of - and I mentioned Prussia

But I digress]I may have pressed you too hard. It's something that I have been thinking on greatly and have moved away from psych books I have read because I find the classifications and categories I

have seen unuseful for what I *sense of course what one senses may be erroneous

I have long doubted or wanted to doubt the idea of an individual's centre - partly thinking it may be like the relatively inedible centre of a big cauliflower when eaten raw

and also having witnessed several human beings disintegrating as they lose the faculty of memory and NOT simplifying like HAL in Kubrick's film but changing and diverging from their external personalities as known

My interpretation might be argued with; and possibly rightly; it's not the argument... it's a but and an if and a distraction while I think of an argument which will not come... it's a non-ideological system of ideas (!) with which I am writing quite copiously - everyone to her own gyres apart from all that, if I push, perhaps it is because these suggestions have been rejected so strongly in a few quarters

I shall press no more. I'll put it back on the shelf, Help yourself if you get the thirst

OK your question for the inflatable bike and bar-b-q combination...

I have been sitting handling with tactile keenness your SHORT LIFE HOUSING from The Gig in 2009

and I have come away with some words adhering to the front of my memory, "notation" & "transcription" among them

these clearly are... these seem to be transcriptions; &, if they've been worked up and over in the process, fine... I know too that they have a notational element in that you perform your poems

so... free and associative as you like, to what extent are your poems on the page notational?

L

Cheek: HI Lawrence,

before we move on i wanted to say that i have no sense whatsoever as "individual's centre" . . . far from that. i have a sense of porous boundary . . . but of boundary nonetheless, however extended and

muddy that boundary might be or become. Just "skin" both as verb and as noun, perhaps also a sense of filter that might be nameable in the way that a name becomes useful either and to a namer and to a named; given that names can be understood as invidious potential.

I want to say just a tiny bit about consciousness here too. I like Gerald Edelman's simple statement that "we are conscious of being conscious." I like that use of we. A sense that I is a plurality. Further that "conscious events involve a complex of qualia" (qualia for Edelman, "cannot be completely isolated but exist in a multi-dimensional space").

I'm going to bother to type this out because it might spur further conversation . . . here is Edelman's "Features of Conscious States" (from "wider than the sky" Yale University 2004) . . . I DO SO NOT BECAUSE IT IS EXEMPLARY BUT IT IS TO HAND:

General.

1. Conscious states are unitary, integrated, and constructed by the brain.
2. They can be enormously diverse and differentiated.
3. They are temporally ordered, serial, and changeable.
4. They reflect binding of diverse modalities.
5. They have constructive properties including gestalt, closure, and phenomena of filling-in.

Informational.

1. They show intentionality with wide-ranging contents.
2. They have widespread access and associativity.
3. They have center-periphery, surround, and fringe aspects.
4. They are subject to attentional modulation, from focal to diffuse.

Subjective

1. They reflect subjective feelings, qualia, phenomenality, mood,

pleasure, and unpleasure.

2. They are concerned with situatedness and placement in the world.

3. They give rise to feelings of familiarity or its lack.

And that is all before he gets of into nonconscious states which he does get off into some of the mechanics of and which are also within this "skin" above, bearing in mind that Edelman is only talking about the brain and my interest would be in the entire body (such as it is and can be).

Upton: Dear cris

I *do have a sense of an individual centre – in me certainly; and in John Drever who dropped by a few hours ago; and another collaborator, Tina Bass, with whom I swapped emails a little while before that. I sense it too in a set of aggressively rude morons with whom I tried to conduct a simple travel transaction before that.

The trouble is, if it is a trouble, that I believe it to be illusory; or at least exaggerated.

I have been discussing "inspiration" with a number of young people (late teens, early twenties) recently as part of their pursuit of musical knowledge, so that I am developing quite a slick line in saying "I know it feels as though something is entering you."

The best I have come up with as a metaphor is that sense of something huge in the ear which turns out to be a tiny bit of wax!

I have also been thinking on your saying that there is "no way either for the self or for another than a self to tell whether that self is an illusion to any extent".

Maybe,

Yendred in Dewdney's Planisphere does eventually infer – I can't remember! I think he works out, concludes, whatever, that there's more to existence than the two dimensions he knows. He infers his observers.

On the other hand, from far back in my head, I *think I remember the demolition job that René Descartes does in the discourse on method; and then he bottles out and says "OH, but I forgot God". A rather big special plea.

I recall a cat of my acquaintance who, hearing his mistress's voice, she who must be cultivated, came out of the bushes in his garden, to find that she had left the garden. From inside her house, in a dimension more than that then known to the cat, if you like, I knew that she had walked out of the garden and down the hill with her visiting friend. The cat, however, was an emblem of subjective confusion: why would anyone go into the garden and not speak to him? Briefly, he was quite desolate; and then incoming sense data saved him and he went back into the jungle of his large garden. Maybe Descartes felt some of that Desolation when he had cleared everything. Maybe he was just worried that they'd lynch him if he published his demolition job unqualified.

For some reason, I put this memory of Day Cart beside Yendred's inference. Both go beyond the boundary of what can be reasoned soundly. Both point to something beyond our sensory knowledge. And while I am cheering on the fictional Yendred, sort of, because "I know" there are more than two dimensions, I am still inclined to call Day Cart in and threaten him with Deselection.

Porous boundaries are good. Is good. Whether it is skin or not that divides us, I am not so sure. Maybe we are all in a big Venn diagram. We add things over the top of our skin. We look beneath it. But it'll do. I mean that it'll do very well.

And naming. I recall your use of "skin" as a potent word; and I am quite occupied with the concept of "naming" nowadays...

Just now, soldiers have names as well as numbers. And then they are killed and the names are not mentioned while families are told; and then they are named.

It's the same name they had before and yet it is being seen in some quarters as transformational. A bit like baptism. I don't like that; but it is there. And all making and all analysis is a kind of naming. We all do it if our use of language is not entirely clichéd..

Yet I rather like the Quaker habit of saying "Hallo Friend" as a general. and particular greeting sometimes. Names function, of course; but what matters, in my limited experience of them, is that wider naming in that the person addressed is seen as being "Friend". It doesn't even indicate membership of the Society of Friends as

such. It's wider and more open than that. It is a move towards avoidance of naming's "invidious potential".

You speak of "a sense that I is a plurality." Indeed,. Earlier, I was going to write you a message about ways and means, not part of this, and feyly meant to play upon "I and I". Too many of us have forgotten what we were going to say for that to be implemented. But, yes, we are plural. And this is different to the Whitmanesque collective: that's something else again.

I haven't read the Edelman. It looks good. I can't say that I disagree with it. Btw, don't you think Qualia would make a good name? This is my lover, Qualia. (One assumes it would be someone of many qualities.)

Well, do I agree with it? Are conscious states unitary and integrated? Always? Completely. I don't doubt that they are constructed by the brain.

They may be temporally ordered. Yes. But how long is "temporarily"?

I was thinking this morning whether to go to the grocer's on the way to the railway station, aware that I could get much more done for my time, about twenty minutes, if I skipped it and made use of the need for a break and walk to buy food later on. Going to the grocer's is familiar; and time runs out of it like water from something with a hole in it. Having a good think about a (relatively) new idea, seemed more productive. It turned out to be so.

Of course, that involved *disordering my existing thoughts.

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ⁱ Performance by cris cheek and Lawrence Upton, *St Lawrence Centre*, Toronto, 1978

ⁱⁱ This is the same as *Bang Crash Wallop* in Lawrence Upton's accounts: spelling was never standardised