On Narrative Modes: Or What Happens When Fictional Pain Cuts Too Deep

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Abstract: *Writers must concern themselves with the degree in which dramatic illusion can manage the right proportion between the reader's co-participation and affective involvement in, and torturous exploitation by the textual mechanisms of the fictional ontology. They believe in the necessity of poetic faith as much as they believe in the necessity of emotional safety/stability for the reader—whose stance is perceived as being that of an ally-into-emotion rather than that of a guinea-pig or scapegoat who takes onto them the ordeal of emotion poured through the text's texture. The major claim, which I exemplify and discuss, relates to the solution some writers come up with when they feel that the fictional pain their writing produces can cut unbearably deep. Bringing forth four differing examples, I suggest that when writers begin to panic as to the possibility of inflicting irreversible mental, or even physical, pain upon their readers, they appeal to several textual face-saving devices: glosses (as in the case of S. T. Coleridge's Rime); genesis explanation (as in the case of E. A. Poe's Philosophy of Composition); forewords (as in the case of V. Nabokov's "Introduction" to Bend Sinister); revisitations (as in the case of S. Dunn's re-reading of The Guardian Angel). The four writers' paratextual solutions to the problem of fictional pain management may also bring some illumination to the present day philosophical and psychological debate on narrative/counter-narrative vs. paradigmatic discourse, in terms of fictional aesthetics and human life too.*
Keywords: *textual face-saving devices; narrative; counter-narrative; paradigmatic discourse; fictional aesthetics*

Résumé: *Nous ne saurions pas douter du fait que les écrivains prêtent attention à l´illusion dramatique censée maintenir l´équilibre entre la co-participation voire l´implication du lecteur et les tribulations lui étant éventuellement infligées par les mécanismes textuels forgeurs d´ontologie de la fiction. Ils se fient aussi bien à la nécessité d´accepter la convention fictionnelle qu´à celle de maintenir l´état émotif stable du lecteur vu en tant qu´ allié sur le territoire de la sensibilité et dépourvu de tout ce qui pourrait le rapprocher d´un cobaye ou d´un croquemitaine auxquels on appliquerait une correction, fût-elle par l´intermédiaire du texte. L´argument prioritaire à l´appui de ce que nous venons d´avancer, repris et développé par l´ouvrage, pointe vers la solution adoptée par certains écrivains au moment où ils s´aperçoivent du danger couru dans leur écriture susceptible de blessure, d´outrepasser des limites supportables. La piste que nous poursuivons à travers trois exemples différents se veut illustratrice d´une série de solutions textuelles adoptées par les écrivains flairant d´eux-mêmes l´induction au lecteur d´un dérèglement mental ou de possibles douleurs physiques. De tels procédés sauve-face seraient: les gloses (S. T. Coleridge,* Ballade du Vieux Marin*); les explications génétiques (E. A. Poe, Philosophie de la composition); re-lecture (S. Dunn s´y applique dans son poème* L´ange gardien*). Selon notre opinion, ces moyens paratextuels adoptés dans le cadre de la gestion de la douleur provoquée par l´approche dangereuse des sujets profondément humains sont à même de faire voir plus clair et d´enrichir le débat philosophique et psychologique contemporain contre/narration vs. discours paradigmatique car ils touchent aussi bien à l´esthétique de la fiction qu´à la vie humaine.*
Mots-clés*: moyens textuels sauve-face; narration / contre-narration; discours paradigmatique; esthétique fictionnelle; théorie cognitive*

Introduction: On Narrative and Paradigmatic Modes

In the past few years, "narrative" has become "coin of the realm" in many domains—most spectacularly in journalism, but also in the fields of psychology and sociology—, and from thence, as Carroll nicely puts it, it has become "an artefact of ordinary parlance by way of chattering classes" (2009, 67 (1): 2). Philosophers, who, among other things, are in charge of the examination of the conceptual network of our ideas and categories, have lately joined the forum of ideas, thus spreading the discussion to the diverse regions of philosophy, including metaphysics, epistemology, philosophical psychology.

Since my concern is with questions about the relation of narrative to the emotions of both the author and the reader, and the management of these emotions in the case of highly emotionally charged texts, I propose, first, to look into a parallel two psychologists, Allan Cheyne and Donato Tarulli, draw between paradigmatic — i.e., psychological discourse —, and narrative discourse — i.e., fictional discourse —, and then, into a narrative inquiry by philosopher Aaron Smuts, concerning the conditions for re-identifying instances of the same narrative. Although the two

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readings have significantly different goals to meet, I charge them instrumental in my subsequent construction of a metaphysics of reading of three different fictional texts whose common denominator is the impossibility of coping with the terror of pain—physical, spiritual, moral.

Allan Cheyne and Donato Tarulli's argumentation (1998) purports to show that narrative descriptions of person, place, and time, as reflected in Bakhtin's taxonomies of novelistic genres (1986)—narratives of adventure and ordeal, and the *bildungsroman*—, find their parallels in the paradigmatic discourse of scientific psychology. As it comes out from the demonstration, Bakhtin's description of travel romances and ordeal romances finds application in naturalistic and experimental reports in psychology. While Bakhtin's historical typology of the *Bildungroman* has relevance in the application of the notion of development in the theoretical discourse of psychology. The two psychologists' structural and conceptual parallels regard the explicitation of how implicit narrative structures and themes enable and constrain practice and theory in paradigmatic discourse.

For the sake of my own demonstration, I shall mention Bruner's (1986) concise summary of the characteristics of the different modes of thought—paradigmatic and narrative—, as presented in the above mentioned article (1998: 2-3). In brief, paradigmatic or logico-scientific mode of thought, according to Bruner, is characterized by: clear reference, well defined categories, rigorous observations, events explained by nomic subsumption—cause and effect relation falling under strict deterministic laws —; and it aims to be formal, logical and, if possible, mathematical. The paradigmatic dialect seeks for completeness, validity, closure, and agreement in the answers to explicit questions, which makes paradigmatic discourse, transparent, non-ambiguous, and language, denotative and rational. Narratives, on the other hand, are said to dwell on the local, temporal, historical, and emergent conditions of actions and experience, as they aim to be "good stories, gripping dramas, [and] believable …historical accounts" (Bruner, 1986, p. 13). They rely on particular examples and tend to sacrifice transparency of reference so as to communicate the meaning and importance of events. These listings of differences create an impression of radically different modes of discourse or thought. While it is true that the paradigmatic style/stance of writing maintains a certain methodological rigor the narrative style lacks, the two psychologists' argument points to the idea that these apparent differences are largely matters of style and that the paradigmatic style is simply a specialized development of the narrative, as the paradigmatic continues to be structured and deeply informed by the narrative.

Aaron Smuts's argument (2009) about story identity and story type builds on the distinction between the story and its telling, which is in fact the basic premise of narratology. According to Chatman (1978), the basis for thinking that such a distinction can be drawn is what he calls the "transposability of the story," which means that the same story can be told in a different way, even in a different medium. According to the transposability thesis, no matter the medium, if it is capable of narration, it can tell "Cinderella"—Chapman's exemplification of narrative transposition. Smuts's philosophical demonstration refuels the debate concerning the conditions for re-identifying instances of the same narrative. He examines alternate solutions to the query whether the selfsame story can be retold and expresses his worries that, on a strict theory of story identity, the putatively same story can never be told again, whereas, on a more lenient theory, it will be difficult to differentiate between a general story type and the putatively same story. Smuts argues that Chatman's theory, according to which the preservation of the same kernel events represents the necessary condition for a telling to count as a retelling of the same story, may not hold true since many character and setting details also need to be present in order for something to count as a retelling of a story. In his view, any element of the story, kernel or satellite, could potentially be essential for story identity, since the salience of any given character or setting detail is the result of the presentation of the story and not the story proper.

Smuts's dilemmatic stance about the possibility of a plausible theory of story identity bases on two divergent views: (1) If the story is the complete set of events and existents included in the work, then the same story can rarely be told twice and can never be transposed; and (2) Not all the event, character, and setting details presented are part of the story; that is, some are part of the discourse.

What I consider relevant from the above philosophical inquiry into the (im)possibility of story transposability, for my own discussion on the treatment of fictional pain is the reinforcement of Plato's idea about the inflexibility of a text, its fatal inability to change its story (Plato, 275e, p.

141-147). Thus, Socrates' say to Phaedrus — that a text is repetitive, unaddressed and unprotected, its author (father) being unable to reclaim his words once they have gone from him—is not very different from Smuts's cautious conclusion to an emerging plausible theory of story identity, when he says: "that we can base a work on another story and that we can tell something very similar, but it is rare to tell the same story twice" (2009, p.12). As the story is rarely divorceable from presentation/discourse, then any misdescription by the discourse needs to introduce a plausible theory of fictional reference that would allow us/the author to misdescribe but not to fail to refer to fictional events, characters, and settings.

For a metaphysic of reading: On the *treatment* of fictional pain

My own argument regarding the possibility of constructing a metaphysics of reading of texts whose common denominator is the terror/horror of physical, spiritual, moral pain bases on the following hypotheses: (a) Writers must concern themselves with the degree in which dramatic illusion can manage the right proportion between the reader's co-participation and affective involvement in, and torturous exploitation by the textual mechanisms of the fictional ontology; (b) Writers believe in the necessity of poetic faith as much as they believe in the necessity of emotional safety/stability for the reader—whose stance is perceived as being that of an ally-into-emotion rather than that of a guinea-pig or scapegoat who takes onto them the ordeal of emotion poured through the text's texture.

The subsequent claim, which I will exemplify and discuss, relates to the solution some writers come up with when they feel that the fictional pain their writing produces can cut unbearably deep. By bringing forth three differing examples, I here suggest that when writers begin to panic as to the possibility of inflicting irreversible mental or even physical pain upon their readers, they appeal to several textual face-saving devices: glosses (as in the case of S. T. Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*); philosophical explanation (as in the case of E. A. Poe's *Philosophy of Composition*); re-visitation (as in the case of S. Dunn's re-reading of *The Guardian Angel*).

I further claim that these paratexts may have the same function as the paradigmatic genres of psychology — i.e., naturalistic, experimental, and development reports —, in that they are meant to, first, evince, and then, assuage, if possible, the drama of human estrangement the fictional discourse stages.

As diverse as they seem, these writers share several common features: they all believe in the animating power of language to either foreground or dissimulate the truth of human nature; they favour the symbolic over the allegorical as the former allows the union between the human word and the divine spirit/power of creation/ de-creation; they fuse the questioning spirit of philosophy/science with either religious faith/mysticism/belief in humanity; they create their own critical jargon they practice on famous readings in literature or even develop their own critical theories in the hope of defining the workings of the poetic and imaginative mind (i.e., Coleridge, Poe); they all seem to dismiss the allegorical, which is certainly consistent with their method of observing the mind, that of focusing on 'the relations of things' and not on 'things only'; they all have a preoccupation with the nightmarish side of human consciousness under different guises (explorations of the dream-world, the mysterious, the supernatural—in life and beyond life—, the sensational, the horror of the known and the unknown); they all possess the psychology of attention as they are masters of detail maneuvering in order to validate their fictional ontologies; they all fight/protest against the mutilation of the human personality, against the transformation of man into a helpless marionette; they all intermingle humour with terror, the grotesque, social criticism, ethic behavior, and humanism; they are concerned with images of the double, which make possible the existence of masks of reflexivity, metastability, anamorphosis (Coleridge, Poe, in particular).

They all, as cognitive theorists would put it, imagine intricate designs for their works with the purpose of, first, pointing out the process of imagining a new thing out of what is already known; and then, making a full display of the human mind at work.

For instance, Coleridge's prose glosses, added after seventeen years to his already famous poem *Rime of the Ancient Mariner,* seem to enact the two arguments I mentioned in the introduction. They highlight, on the one hand, the differences between narrative and paradigmatic modes of thought, and, on the other hand, the arbitrariness on which the linguistic sign operates. Both instances favour my contention that Coleridge adds the glosses so as to assuage the drama of human estrangement the poetic discourse stages. If we assimilate the glosses to the psychological

experiential and development report partaking of the paradigmatic style of writing, then the impact of the terror, desperation and desire of a man enslaved, in mind and body — as transmitted by the poetic conflation of elements of romances of travel, ordeal and bildungroman, at the level of story and discourse—is muted since the facts only cannot literally speak for themselves, and no amount of transparent, referential description can bring them to life. In *Biographia Literaria,* Chapter 14 (1817/1986, pp 397-398), Coleridge admits that his aim in "The Rime" is to imagine "persons and characters supernatural," and he was to make the supernatural seem so rooted in human psychology that readers would choose to "suspend their disbelief" during the act of reading. To this purpose, Coleridge chooses to make good use of the accounts of sea voyages in the epoch, but, very perceptively, he inverts Cook's feats of courage into the mariner's journeys into the sin, guilt, alienation and living death. The mariner's voyage into a living death of superstition begins with a casting-out ritual, that of the arbitrary killing of the albatross. The mariner accepts the role of scapegoat because he knows that he has violated the crew's taboo. Thus, becoming a pariah, he suffers from a worse plague since he has to work with the living dead. The many superstitions imbuing the poem help confer the mariner the aura of being haunted, and the poem the aura of haunting power. The mariner spellbinds those who come into contact with him. So, Coleridge had minutely planned, in De Quincey's words, "a poem on delirum, confounding its own dream imagery with external things, and connected with the imagery of high latitudes" (qtd. in Fulford, 2002, p.52).

In the 1800 edition, Coleridge most suitably subtitled the poem "a poet's reverie" as he contends that a "night-mair is not properly a *Dream*; but a species of Reverie… during which understanding and Moral sense are awake tho' more or less confused" (from *Coleridge's Notebooks III, 4046,* in Fulford, 2002, p. 52). Coleridge is here referring to both narrator and narratee, since, as Fulford also remarks, "Poetry of this kind becomes like obeah, like a wizard's spell or shamanistic rite, making an imaginary world seem real enough to affect readers physically – their spines tingling and hair standing on end. It places the 'civilized' reader among the 'savage' people he would like to feel superior to, making him experience the mental enslavement that is the superstitious imagination" (p. 53). The enslavement is performed through verse techniques, the result being that enmeshing effect of story and story-telling/poetic discourse purported to inexorably draw the reader inside. By having the prose glosses added in 1817, Coleridge makes explicit the difference between an experiential approach to the poem—wherein its meanings may be unfolded through the temporal process of storytelling — and a paradigmatic approach to the poem, which tempts completeness, validity, closure through the use of transparent, non-ambiguous, denotative language. Suffice it to take one example to see how the required reader involvement varies in the two modes of thought. In the verse, words acquire symbolic value which, in turn, confers them virtual memory, endangering thus the reader who can become as unstable, insecure as the wedding guest or the mariner of the story (*I fear thee, ancient Mariner!/I fear thy skinny hand!/And thou art long, and lank, and brown,/ As is the ribbed sea-sand.// I fear thee and thy glittering eye,/ And thy skinny hand, so brown.'/ Fear not, fear not, thou Wedding-Guest!/ This body dropped not down.// Alone, alone, all, all, alone,/ Alone on a wide wide sea!/ And never a saint took pity on/ My soul in agony.* Part Iv, ll. 224-235). In the additional gloss or paradigmatic mode of thought, the reader is informed — through a narrative — about the psychological dilemma the two protagonists confront (*The Wedding-Guest 'feareth that a Spirit is talking to him; But the ancient/ Mariner assureth him of his bodily life, and proceedeth to relate his horrible Penance.* Part IV, gloss to ll. 224-235). Coleridge's discursive power in the poem—causing the reader's spine tingle and hair stand on end, as he looks with the eyes and listens with the ears of the wedding guest—is muted, or, at least, diminished in the glosses as far as terror of sense/mind annihilation of the reader is concerned. The glosses, partaking of the paradigmatic dialect, offer then some rational order in the development of the narrated events the verse narrative deliberately avoids to the purpose of constructing the gripping drama of human estrangement—the haunting auspices under which man was born.

Poe's explanatory text, *The Philosophy of Composition,* added one year after the publication of his poem *The Raven* in the *New York Evening Mirror* on Jan. 1845, besides constituting itself in a poetic cosmogony, is also a demonstration of the power of narratives to shape interpretations of causality by controlling the sequence in which information is revealed. My claim is that, along with other stories, this philosophical essay stages, on the one hand, Poe's theory

of 'the demon of perversity'— that which gives man the power to defy death if this allows him to investigate the unknown —, and, on the other hand, Poe's contradictory nature, which reflects in the way he conceives of inspiration—at once a mysterious, absurd and strange act (*The Raven*) and a positive and calculated 'investigation' (*The Philosophy*). If, in the poetic discourse, Poe sets free the subconscious mind so as to create strange and terrible images of the unknown, in the essay, the poet-essayist demystifies the fear of death/superstition through the use of paradigmatic discourse aiming at validity, completeness, and clarification. My subsequent proposition, if I were to use Poe's paradigmatic dialect from his scientific poem in prose *Eureka* (1848), is that in *The Philosophy,* Poe manages, in fact, to show what at a much larger scale he will try to show in *Eureka,* namely that, "in the Original Unity of the First Thing lies the Secondary Cause of All Things, with the Germ of their Inevitable Annihilation" (2005, p. 24). In *Eureka,* Poe admits that he purports "to speak of the *Physical, Metaphysical and Mathematical – of the Material and Spiritual Universe – of its Essence, its Origin, its Creation, its Present Condition and its Destiny"* in such a way "that the mind may be able really to receive and to perceive an individual impression" (2005, p. 24). In *The Philosophy of Composition,* Poe renders it manifest that no one point in the composition of his poem *The Raven* "is referable either to accident or intuition," in the sense that "the work proceeded step by step, to its completion, with the precision and rigid consequence of a mathematical problem" (1986, p. 482). Poe's plea for the import of logic and the defiance of any "intuitive leaps" in the composition of the poem is rather hard, if not impossible, to accept from the poet who, only two years later in *Eureka,* under the guise of a controversialist, expresses his admiration for Kepler's putative reply to the dogmaticians of truth about how he guessed, that is, imagined his vital laws: "Had he been asked to point out either the deductive or inductive route by which he attained them, his reply might have been – 'I know nothing about *routes* – but I do know the machinery of the Universe. Here it is. I grasped it with *my soul* – I reached it through mere dint of *intuition'* (2005, p. 40). Whether Poe, in his poem *The Raven,* like Kepler, in his laws foundation, has gone "intuitively and thus unbecomingly" or "decorously and legitimately," as he feels obliged to demonstrate in his *Philosophy,* is of no special import to us. What is indeed relevant about the deductive-inductive reasoning behind the composing stages of the poem, is Poe's unmasking of the impossibility "to confine the Soul – the Soul which loves nothing so well as to soar in those regions of illimitable intuition which are utterly incognizant of '*path"*' (2005, p. 38).

The "progress of the construction" in terms of the degree of both the character's and the reader's gripping self-indulgence and despair, in the poem, is explained at length by Poe, in *The Philosophy*:

> I saw that I could make the first query propounded by the lover--the first query to which the Raven should reply "Nevermore"--that I could make this first query a commonplace one--the second less so--the third still less, and so on--until at length the lover, startled from his original *nonchalance* by the melancholy character of the word itself--by its frequent repetition--and by a consideration of the ominous reputation of the fowl that uttered it--is at length excited to superstition, and wildly propounds queries of a far different character--queries whose solution he has passionately at heart--propounds them half in superstition and half in that species of despair which delights in self-torture--propounds them not altogether because he believes in the prophetic or demoniac character of the bird (which, reason assures him, is merely repeating a lesson learned by rote), but because he experiences a frenzied pleasure in so modelling his questions as to receive from the *expected* "Nevermore" **the most delicious because the most intolerable of sorrow**. Perceiving the opportunity thus afforded me--or, more strictly, thus forced upon me in the progress of the construction--I first established in my mind the climax, or concluding query--that query to which "Nevermore" should be in the last place an answer--**that query in reply to which this word "Nevermore": should involve the utmost conceivable amount of sorrow and despair** (pp. 486-7, my bolding).

And here is the climacteric stanza, which, as Poe says, should not be surpassed in rhythmical effect towards creating that fatal *dénouement* wherein the fantastic tone is replaced by the most profound seriousness:

"Prophet!" said I, "thing of evil!--prophet still, if bird or devil!
By that Heaven that bends above us--by that God we both adore—
Tell this soul with sorrow laden if, within the distant Aidenn,
It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore—
Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore."
Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore." (ll. 86-91)

"The profound seriousness" of tone Poe claims for the remaining two stanzas is surely capable to produce a cumulative, disintegrating terror of agoniser, agonised, creator and observer. The poetic discourse then iconically enacts its meaning through minute handling of versification and application of the principles of rhyme and alliteration—Poe so pedantically explains in *The Philosophy.* The "revolution of thought, or fancy, on the lover's part," is intended, Poe tells us, "to induce a similar one on the part of the reader," who by now has realized that there is more to this story than a mere fantasy about a bereaved lover-in-mourning entertaining a talking bird. The "suggestiveness" of meaning, which Poe also calls the "under-current of meaning" producing richness in a work of art (491), becomes pervasive throughout the narrative with the lines: "Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off my door!"/ Quoth the Raven "Nevermore!" (ll. 96-7).

Poe concludes his essay, by pointing out the discursive power of the metaphoric expression "from out my heart," which eventually permits the suggested meaning—that of the Raven as emblematical of *Mournful and Never-ending Remembrance*—to come in the open.

And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting,/ And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon's that is dreaming,/ And the lamplight o'er him streaming throws his shadow on the floor;/ And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor/ Shall be lifted—nevermore. (ll. 98-103)

In the vein of my demonstration on fictional pain assuagement, I take Poe's essay as an exemplary textual face-saving device, which, paradoxically, reenacts the poet-theorist's dramatic vacillation between reality and infinity, between two modes of thought or "discussion"—the ascendant and the descendent —, to use Poe's own jargon with reference to the choice he has in discussing his thesis— *the Universe —,* in *Eureka.* If *The Raven* is the work of the soul in pain, *The Philosophy of Composition* is the work of reason which strives, through paradigmatic discourse, to bury those places that cannot be found out by means of reason, and thus bring some comfort to the endangered reader.

In 2009, Stephen Dunn, a contemporary American poet, writes and publishes in *Midwest Studies in Philosophy,* a re-visitation of his poem *The Guardian Angel*, written in 1989, titled "The Poem, its Buried Subject, and the Revisionist Reader: Behind "The Guardian Angel." While acceding to the adage "Trust the tale, not the teller," Dunn voices in the essay his old and new allegiances to a poem he, like Poe or Coleridge before him, had certainly not written "without guile or strategy" (2009, p. 6). But unlike Poe, for instance, he still allows his poem to surprise him, and, twenty years later, confesses to having come across "the buried subject—hiding like much of the world itself, not far from the surface" (p. 5).

What I find compelling and in tune with my argument in Dunn's re-visitation of his own poem is his admittance to the element of the unconscious that the poetic form/discourse brings to the poetic content, which may take over/deter the poet's best of intentions. Thus, the series of allegiances, old or new, the poet endears are subject to modification and refinement as soon as the language starts to make its own demands. Starting from this premise, the poet's "retrospective foray into the making of a poem" becomes "a *recreation*, thus a *fiction*, which is to say it's interested in *approximating the truth*" (p. 6, my italic). The revisionist poet-reader's argumentation also builds on the assumption that eventful events are performed in a world, in which there are multiple possibilities, in which some things that could happen do not. The poem then becomes the result of false starts and false bottoms until poetic discourse finds its way into a yet to be disclosed meaning. A "what if" poem, as Dunn calls it, *The Guardian Angel* enacts the drama of choice, first, of the angel, and, then, of its writer, who cannot set up their minds to pre-established truths. The poem thus starts in disaffectedness: "Afloat between lives and stale truths,/ he realizes/ he's never truly protected one soul" (ll. 1-3), continues in reformation: "The angel of love/ lies down with him, and loving/ restores to him his pure heart" (ll. 13-16), and ends in the angel's return to duty, which proves no more effective than before: "Yet how hard it

is/ to descend into sadness once more" (ll. 1-18). The hard choice the Angel makes is given an extended explanation in the poetic discourse:

> When the poor are evicted, he stands
> between them
> and the bank, but the bank sees nothing
> in its way. When the meek are overpowered
> he's there, the thin air
> through which they fall. Without effect
> he keeps getting in the way of insults.
> He keeps wrapping
> his wings around those in the cold.
> Even his lamentations are unheard (ll. 19-28)

As the poem is dragging its way into inevitable closure, the poet — creator and responder in one — chooses, consciously or not — upon his confession —, to have the guardian angel live with his ineffectualness, which might well mean, acceptance, resignation, or desperate hopefulness. Leaving the difficult choice to the Angel, the poet is admitting now to new allegiances: "to the poem's adjusted original impulse; to the texture, sounds, and rhythms of the language used so far; and to the unknowns of this new, governing drift" (2005, p. 8). Whatever the new governing drift is, it has to do with that illusion of orderliness and authority arising from some concordance between the "poem's surface felicities" and the "pulse of its undercurrents;" that is, the poet's determination to let the poem as a whole hold up "its revelations and concealments" (p. 9). The poet confesses, in retrospect, that he "only half-knew where [he] was going," which allowed him to "avoid the perils of purposefulness," or to "ride some uncodified energy" (p. 8).

It is this "uncodified energy" or purposefulness avoidance which allows for as many "buried subjects/stories" as readers are. Such an example is the poet's own story of the "buried subject" he discovers while reading the poem to some undergraduates: "I remember smiling as I told the class that the poem is an analogue of the poet's condition in America. The poet does his job, I said, and hardly anybody listens or cares. All his life he lives with his ineffectuality, his invisible presence, the reality that there's little evidence that he makes anything happen" (p. 9) — just one story, among so many other stories, of: "ineffectuality," disaffectedness, desperate purposefulness.

I take Dunn's re-visitation as instrumental in my demonstration inasmuch as it functions as a defuser of subjectivism in the sense Bernard Williams (1972) gives to the concept, namely, it emphasizes the distinction while rejecting the supposedly consequences of it, by trying to show either that they are not consequences, or that they are not disquieting. In Dunn's vein of thinking, buried subjects — the most elusive, opaque narrative —, whether the products of inattention or avoidance, can give poems a "behind-the-scene radiance" (p. 6), which a re-visitation — a paradigmatic type of writing — can bring to the fore. However, Dunn's re-visitation, like Coleridge's glosses, or Poe's genetic writing, works as a reminder of Socrates' words to Phaedrus, that a text is repetitive, unaddressed and unprotected, its author (father) being unable to reclaim his words once they have gone from him. Plato's words, paradoxically, encapsulate the two directions my argumentation has followed: (1) the poetic/narrative text says its *tale*, holding up its revelations and concealments; (2) the author/*teller*, always well meant, strives to *recover* it, and the putatively endangered reader.

Epilogue

Truth is, irrespective of how well an author blends his intentions with his discoveries, the reader always completes his poem, as a poem like a person emerges along with the world and it reflects the historical emergence of the world itself. This is to say that each paratextual solution, or textual face-saving device, as I call it, to the problem of fictional pain (i.e. pain caused by/through fictional discourse) we looked into can bring illumination not only to fictional aesthetics, in terms of the present-day philosophical and psychological debate on narrative vs. paradigmatic discourse, but it can say something about human nature/life too.

Trust the teller/writer, not the tale/poetic discourse, and then you can keep safe from fictional pain.

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