P's and Q's of Poetry

An Examination of Contemporary and Historical Conceptions of the Value of Quotidian Language in Creative Writing

Prepared for
Professor Edward Tietz
Department of English
Georgetown University
37th and O Streets, NW
Washington, D.C. 20057-5040

Prepared by
Joshua DeMinter
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A growing chasm exists between the world of poetry and contemporary culture. As Christian Bok posited during a seminar hosted at Georgetown University, "Poetry has become the art form you do when you can't do anything else." In an attempt at self-preservation, poetry adopted an isolationist motif and now stands as a cultural bubble enclosed upon a static image of itself, a bubble whose surface tension restricts its form and serves as a surprisingly strong barrier between itself and the greater population. Some argue that the bubble has grown too small and the forms that once kept it afloat have become stale and can no longer sustain its social altitude. Fortunately, these individuals supplement their accusations with tangible theoretic and creative treatises that hold the potential for not merely the perpetuation of poetry but the evolution of it.

In an interview conducted by Erik Belgium for *Readme*, Kenneth Goldsmith remarked that, "Poetry is such a non-profit economy that it functions outside the general traffic of capital," a grave missive in the light of the modern age's capitalist sensibilities, best typified by the writing of Ayn Rand *Atlas Shrugged*. In *Atlas Shrugged*, the character Francisco d'Anconia's defense against the claim that "money is the root of all evil" adds devastating import to Goldsmith's remark. Francisco argues that:

> Money permits you to obtain for your goods and your labor that which they are worth to the men who buy them, but no more… Money demands that you sell, not your weakness to men's stupidity, but your talent to their reason; it demands that you buy, not the shoddiest they offer, but the best your money can find…Money will not buy intelligence for the fool, or admiration for the coward, or respect for the incompetent…Money is the barometer of a society's virtue (Rand 387).

Francisco places a weighty value on money and those who posses it. If money and the system of trade for "worthy goods" it promotes is a social barometer of virtue and societal value, then

Goldsmith's observation places poetry on the lowest spectrums of Francisco' barometer and in clear congruence with Bok's observation.

Goldsmith's statement that:

> Poetry generally is so off the beaten track in this culture that if the producers of it don't set up the distribution channels, no one will. And since it lacks the capital and market of painting, it's of no use to museums who might actually be able to fund adventurous poetries which move along similar intellectual tracks as the art they're showing, (Belgium)

imposes negation upon poetry if viewed from the capitalist mindset. In light of Rand, poetry's failed marketability is symptomatic of its remoteness from the capitalist ideals that influence mainstream society and furthermore serves as a denouncement by the masses of poetry's societal value. An equally bleak image of the reception of poetry by the mainstream is found in Susan Stewart's critical writing.

Donald Wesling argues that Stewart's *Poetry and the Fate of the Sense*, is a "struggle against loss through grief, prayer and ceremony, and the restitutions of art." In her critical piece, Stewart charts the steady decline of the poetic practice and reception in contemporary culture. During a seminar lecture given at Georgetown University, Stewart commented that poetry is not as popular in contemporary times as it once was and it was struggling to keep up with new technologies, but the works of conceptual poets was not going to restore it.

Despite Goldsmith and Stewart's theoretical divergences on how to reconstitute poetry, their conclusions on the place of poetry in contemporary culture are the same: it lives on the outskirts of society beyond the interest of an increasingly capitalistic culture. The congruent perceptions of the conceptualist camps, as represented by Goldsmith, and more traditional poetic notions, as typified by Stewart, regarding the decline of poetry are enough to merit pause, especially on as important a conversation as the place of poetry in the contemporary landscape.

Yet, not all is as harmonious as the initial agreement of the usually conflicting parties would suggest. It appears they have painted their landscapes of poetry with different brushes that only have the illusion of similar conclusions, but the process and reasoning behind Stewart and Goldsmith's finished products are significantly different and result in different prescriptions to reconcile poetry and the mainstream.

Tension exists between Stewart and Goldsmith's poetics regarding the value of the quotidian; Stewart expresses suspicion of quotidian language, whilst Goldsmith embraces it whole-heartedly. Goldsmith implicates quotidian linguistic patterns and vocabulary as rejuvenating elixirs of the English language. For Stewart, the quotidian carries with it the seeds of confusion and a depreciated poetic value that threatens the erosion of language, a view that is historically rooted in the annals of English.

Jonathan Swift wrote on the erosion of English in a 1710 publication of *The Tatler*. In his letter, he claimed:

> There are some Abuses among us of great Consequence, the Reformation of which is properly our Province…These two Evils, Ignorance, and want of Taste, have produced a Third; I mean the continual Corruption of our English Tongue; which, without some timely Remedy, will suffer more by the false Refinements of Twenty Years past, than it hat been improved in the foregoing Hundred.

In his letter, Swift vehemently rails against early experimentations with compound words like couldn't and can't, citing that these abbreviations are employed, "only to make one Syllable of two, directly contrary to the Example of the *Greeks* and *Romans*…and a natural Tendency towards relapsing into Barbarity, which delights in Monosyllables, and uniting of mute Consonants; as it is observable in all the *Northern* Languages." Swift's discontent with the language of his day was not limited to new grammatical practices of conjunction however, but includes the incorporation of new words.

In his article, Swift's cites the expansion of the vocabulary of the English language to be another false refinement. "The third Refinement observeable in the Letter I send you," writes Swift, "consisteth in the Choice of certain Words invented by some *pretty Fellows*, such as *Banter, Bamboozle, Country Put*, and *Kidney*, as it is there applied; some of which are now struggling for the Vogue, and others are in Possession of it." Swift continues to state that, "I have done my utmost for some Years past, to stop the Progress of *Mob* and *Banter*; but have been plainly born down by Numbers, and betrayed by those who promised to assist me." Not only did Swift view these "false refinements" as repugnant, but he also argues that:

> These are the false Refinements in our Style, which you ought to correct: First, by Arguments and fair Means; but if those fail, I think you are to make Use of your Authority as Censor, and by an annual *Index Expurgatorius*, expunge all Words and Phrases that are offensive to good Sense, and condemn those barbarous Mutilations of Vowels and Syllables.

Swift calls for a veritable crusade against these refinements and despite what lessons history has taught about the wisdom of crusades Swift's call to arms still reverberates in our current culture in writers like Edwin Newman.

Edwin Newman's *Strictly Speaking* is a modern elongation of Swift's earlier arguments. As Swift did, Newman begins his attack on current linguistic practices by focusing on evolving grammatical practices of word and phrase condensation. Newman turns to the federal government's fuel conservation campaign, which "showed Snoopy on top of his dog house, flat on his back, with a balloon coming out of his mouth containing the words, 'I believe in conserving energy!' while below there was this exhortation: savEnergy," (2). Newman sarcastically asserts that, "an entire letter e at the end of save was savd. In addition, an entire space was savd," (2). Interestingly, the one of the reasons Newman and Swift are so vehemently

set against the expansion of the English lexical database and linguistic practices is because they fear it is too receptive toward misrepresentation and confusion of interpretation.

In Newman's eyes, the conservation of letters and space is not noteworthy. Instead, he, like Swift, asserts, "Language is in decline. Not only has eloquence departed but simple, direct speech as well, though pomposity and banality have not," (4). Direct speech and the conveying of ideas are essential to Newman's concept of language; he finds the evolving condensations as impediments to understanding. "Language used to obfuscate or conceal or dress with false dignity is not confined to politics and did not burst upon us," Newman argues. "In our time, however, it has achieved a greater acceptance than ever before, so that stiffness and bloat are almost everywhere," (9). Swift was fearful of this same confusion of language more than 200 hundred years earlier.

In his analysis of the decline of language, Swift was also fearful of how emerging linguistic practices were muddling English's ability to properly convey ideas. After providing a letter exemplary of the linguistic practices prevalent in his day, Swift's article asks, "If a Man of Wit, who died Forty Years ago, were to rise from the Grave on Purpose; how would he be able to read this Letter? And after he had got through that Difficulty, how would he be able to understand it?" Stewart shares Swift and Newman's concern with contemporary linguistic practices ability to articulate ideas.

In *Crimes of Writing*, Stewart explores Edmund Husserl' s *Origins of Geometry* as an analogy for comprehending language in general. Stewart quotes Husserl as stating that, "The important function of written, documenting linguistic expression is that it makes communications possible without immediate or mediate personal address, it is, so to speak, communication made

virtual,"[1] (143). Stewart sees, "the transformation of the intrapersonal (these forms in their transcendent objectivity being free, from the beginning, from an existence as 'something personal') to the interpersonal, in that they are "objectively there" "for everyone" and hence are taken up by tradition," in Husserl's pure forms of communication (142).

"In other words, (and other words have now become the problem)," Stewart writes, "The writing form itself comes to awaken its own familiar significations and thus take the place of an active experience with the ideality," (143). The danger Husserl identifies here, and Stewart seems to support, is that "the originally intuitive life which creates its originality self-evident structures through activities on the basis of sense-experience very quickly and in increasing measures falls victim to the *seduction of language*," (143). As a result, the personalization of language impedes commutation to the point that the meanings behind expressions are no longer easily exchanged. The solution to which Stewart supports is univocity.

Stewart indicates Husserl as the original proponent of univocity, citing that, "Husserl recommends not a return to the primacy and privacy of sense impressions, but a commitment to the rigors of univocity," (143). "This occurs," Husserl notes, "when one has a view to the univocity of linguistic expression and to securing…the results are to be univocally expressed," (qtd. in Stewart 144). Stewart further postulates that, "the impossible balancing act of univocity is always a matter of assumed historicity, an assumed subjectivity, an assumed translatability," (144).

The balancing act of univocity insights "an anxiety regarding language's ideal objectivity…This anxiety attaches itself to the problematic relation between subjectivity and socialization, on the border between the megalomania of an inarticulate yet replete universe of

[1] Edmund Husserl, "The Origin of Geometry," trans. John P. Leavey, ed. David B. Allison (New York: Nicolas Hays, 1978). Original text.

sensation and a fully articulated, lend themselves to taxonomy, and consequently empty universe of the purely symbolic," (144). Furthermore, Stewart claims, "we must exam the grounds for this split as the impossibility enabling the very possibility of writing: 'a subjectless transcendental field' as 'one of the conditions of transcendental subjectivity'." Stewart finds that universal association, "enables the recognition of originality; it is an anxiety regarding ontology that establishes the grounds for an assumption of grounds," (145). It is to traditional forms of expression, linguistic patterns, and vocabulary that Stewart turns for universal association as tradition implies rooted meaning. It is for this reason that on a lexical level, Stewart parallels Swift and Newman, yet she steps beyond a rational argument for tradition into more qualitative affinities.

During a lecture at Georgetown University with Stewart, an attendee exclaimed that Stewart's poetry and "poetic language" in general, provided a welcome escape from the drudgery of the bureaucratic language her job inundated her with, to which Stewart agreed (Stewart, *Poetry and the Feeling*). Both the woman's exclamation and Stewart's consensus relegate languages ability to communicate to a secondary attribute in the face of some language's (poetic language which relies on tradition rooted univocity) ability to elevate meanings and individuals. According to both women, the quotidian resides at the lowest thresholds of English's linguistic hierarchy.

The question of English's linguistic hierarchy is not one limited to the realm of poetry, however, linguist linger over the lexical as well, though they seem to have reached a consensus still debated within the realm of poetry. Surprisingly, though their conclusions are strikingly different from Swift, Newman, and Stewart. Simply put, "linguists reject the view that languages attain a state of perfection at some point in their history and the subsequent changes

lead to deterioration and corruption" (O'Grady 10). In fact, linguists have posited rebuttals for many of Swift, Newman, and Stewart's claims that evolving quotidian practices are without merit and serve only to misdirect traditional linguistic practices.

Where Swift found compound words to be false refinements that ask writers to, "cram one Syllable, and cut off the rest; as the Owl fattened her Mice after she had bit off their Legs, to prevent them from running away; and if ours be the same Reason for maiming of Words, it will certainly answer the End, for I am sure no other Nation will desire to borrow them," (*Tatler*). Compounds have undergone actual refinement, regulation, and codification. Furthermore, compounds have escaped the void of personalized meaning and have reached a state of standardized and regulated universality.

According to *Contemporary Linguistics, "c*ompounds are used to express a wide range of meaning relationships in English," (O'Grady 149) which can be subdivided into endocentric and exocentric characteristics. "In most cases, a compound denotes a subtype of the concept denoted by its head (the rightmost component). Thus," *Contemporary Linguistics* contends, "*dog food* is a type of food, a *cave man* is a type of man…" (O'Grady 149). In the case of exocentric compounds, "the meaning of the compound does not follow from the meanings of its parts in this way. Thus, a *redhead* is not a type of head; rather, it is a person with red hair," (O'Grady 149). Here, the "saved space" Newman found so exacerbating, is not with out purpose and does not impede effective communication and yet, these expressions have evolved and entered language through the expansion and gradual elevation of the quotidian into the heart of English's lexicon.

According to the linguist, language is continually evolving on a number of levels, from morphological changes to phonological shifts. Take that fact that, "during the M idle English period, many French words containing the suffix *–ment* (e.g. *accomplishment, commencement*)

made their way into the language" and "eventually, *-ment* established itself as a productive suffix in English and was used with bases that were not of French origin (e.g., *acknowledgement*, *merriment*)" (O'Grady 307). What is interesting to note is that rather than confusing existing meaning within the language, the changes deposited new meanings that previously were absent in the language or found alternative expression for linguistic associations that became *institutional* and *standardized*. It is amongst the linguist that we find Goldsmith lurking.

In an electronic interview with A.S. Bessa, Goldsmith wrote, "over the past decade we've seen language renewing itself at a remarkable rate. For example, compound words forming URLs have become common parlance (my favorite is Modell's: gottagotomos.com: It's something right out of *Finnegans Wake*)." Unsurprisingly, considering the historical trend surrounding discourses on the English lexicon, the condensation of words comes up, though this time not with dread but joy. In the interview, Goldsmith recalls first noticing this trend, "in the early 90s when rappers started slamming words together to create compounds like 'funkdoobiest'."

Goldsmith remarked that rap, especially the "Daisy Age" movement typified by Jungle Brothers and A Tribe Called Quest, was a rich lexical base that built on traditional structures linguistic patterns and musical forms, but also transcended them. "It was as if they took classic musique concrète and added beats to it, not to mention radical Burroughs-esque cut-up and John Oswald-like plunderphonic practices," (Bessa). As Goldsmith put it, "it was an amazing confluence as modernism and pop culture worked together to stretch and twist the parameters of language," (Bessa).

Goldsmith was not the first to look to Black forms of cultural expression and speech; poets have looked towards parochial and ethnic linguistic patterns for material for years. Two

writers engaged in such linguistic structures and lexicons were Paul Laurence Dunbar during the end of the 19th century and Zora Neal Hurston during the first half of the 20th century. These two figures are particular interesting comparisons to Goldsmith because they like he, were inspired by Black linguistic patterns, although they focused on provincial forms whereas Goldsmith focused more on urban patterns.

Dunbar's "Little Brown Baby," is an excellent example of his fusion of parochial speech and traditional poetic structure. The poem begins:

> Little brown baby wif spa'klin eyes,
> Come to yo' pappy an' set on his knee.
> What you been doin', suh-makin's san pies?
> Look at dat bib—you's ez du'ty ez me.
> Look at dat mouf—dat's merlassess, I bet;
> Come hyeah, Maria, an' wipe off his han's.
> Bees wine to ketch you an' eat you up yit,
> Bein' so sticky an sweet—goodness lan's! (1223)

The musicality of the southern dialect has been effectively transposed to print in these lines, though the translation from page back to tongue is not a task for the unprepared. The poem captures the persona of the southern father by capturing the very patterns of his speech. Yet, at the same time, Dunbar provides familiar poetic elements like clearly distinguished eight line stanzas, which each utilize an ABABCDCD rhyme pattern. He also regulates each line to ten syllables. Hurston uses the same blend of parochial language and traditional artistic representation in her short story "The Gilded Six-bits."

In "The Gilded Six-bits," Hurston gives the characters, particularly Joe, distinctive southern dialect reminiscent of that used in Dunbar's "Little Brown Baby". In response to the questioning of Missie May, Joe replies, "Don't be so wishful 'bout me. Ah'm satisfied de way Ah is. So long as Ah be yo' husband, Ah don't keer 'bout nothin' else," (79). Again, by representing the unedited speech patterns of the regions her stories depict, Hurston imbues her

work with a tangible persona that resonates with contemporary readers. Yet, she contains the language as well within traditional syntactical structures and unlike her characters, the narrative portions of her text do not end in prepositional phrases.

Nearly a hundred year before Goldsmith found the quotidian infused into artistic expression, Hurston and Dunbar had already been executing it to a science, with results that fused tradition with the contemporary. Yet, where Dunbar and Hurston still adhered to traditional forms of artistic representation, Goldsmith's notion of conceptual poetry asks for the abandonment of those forms as well as receptivity to the quotidian. *Soliloquy* stands out as Goldsmith's publications most heavily invested in quotidian language, unedited, and free of traditional poetic structures.

In a review of *Soliloquy*, Doug Nufer states that, "this book is less refined than his earlier transcriptions…Yet *Soliloquy* is perhaps the purest example of Goldsmith's transcription methodology," and as such, it is the best example of Goldsmith's methodology for infusing quotidian language into writing. *Soliloquy* is an unedited transcription of everything Goldsmith said in a week. According to its back cover, *Soliloquy* is "in the tradition of Andy Worhol's *A* and David Antin's talk poems" that "ups the ante on real speech as poetry."

The provincial slang and diction of Goldsmith's New York life saturates the book. Take for instance an excerpt from a conversation Goldsmith had on the second day of the project:

> Hey! It's SoHo pal! It's so ho. Hah! Do I look like hell? You know you look dookey. Shit. You look like shiiiitttt. So what's up, baby? How was Iggy? Was he? Huh. Really, I in other words, he hasn't lost it, mmmm? Oh boy, When is the Füehrer's birthday? It's the 23rd. (141).

Though not as taxing on the tongue as some of Dunbar or Hurston's southern dialects, the chaos of the language is almost overwhelming. The subject's of sentences are elusive, thoughts are left unconcluded, and the language is saturated in variations of shit, all of which threaten the

confusion and impediment to communication Stewart and her cohorts fear. "Sentences veer all over the place, crashing into fragments as they're jammed one after another into long stretches that break only at the end of the day," (Nufer). Despite this threat, "Soliloquy leaves the reader with a convinced sense that language, no matter how un-artful, does the heavy lifting in our lives, and has encoded the entire registry of our being," (Publishers Weekly).

Molly Schwartzberg argues that, "redundancy is a kind of weariness, an exhaustion that in Goldsmith's case tilts over to a decadence" and that "many critics have noted that Goldsmith's recent books seem compellingly appropriate to our own *fin de siècle* moment." Yet, "that moment of exhaustion," she continues, "seems also to be a moment of epic: countering Goldsmith's calculated irrelevance/irreverence is the fact of his tomes' serious weight, both physical and conceptual." Juxtaposed to Goldsmith's tomes is the more conventional lexicon employed by Stewart in *Columbarium*.

In *Columbarium* is not as restrictive in establishing parameters of "poetic language", as Ray McDaniels cites, "there are contemporary references aplenty in *Columbarium,* and enough colloquial speech to save the lines from ever adopting the wide-eyed Gloria Swanson stare of Importance!," but there are contained and predominate by antiquated references and verbiage. In her poem "Forms of Forts", she begins:

> Hay Fort
>
> A labyrinth. A pencil shaft of light
> wherever four bales couldn't squarely meet.
> The twine tight, lifting as abrading.
>
> A twinge, the prickly collar rubbing
> a scratching rash along the forearm.
> The heaviness of the hay in the hot dark. (42)

The poem has an elegant balance of language that spans both traditional and quotidian language. Even urban readers who have never seen bales of hay or traversed a labyrinth can relate and understand the images, because they are still resonant in our culture. The same conveyance of meaning is not as easily accomplished in her poem *O*.

> In *O*, Stewart writes:
> Toi, toi, toi, said Peleus.
> Grieving, Hecuba
> barked like a dog.
> *O* said the woman
> who spoke only English,
> who cast an English
> zero out, a wreath
> on the battering waves.
> *O* the teeth clenched.
> *O* a fistful of hair. (68)

Though the image of the woman's spoken "*O*" battering on the waves is tangible, for many the reference to Hecuba and Peleus goes unmarked and misunderstood if understood at all. It threatens an adherence to what David Orr cites as the traditional perception that, "Academic poetry is intelligent but dull; non-academic poetry is dopey but exciting."

Although as Orr cites, "Stewart manages to convey a sense of risk that is no less energizing for being detached from the everyday world of hot dogs and bicycles and divorces," it is questionable if her ability to excite the reader is more noteworthy for its ability to transcend a dependency "on citation either to Stewart's experience or the reader's own." In his article for *The Tatler*, Swift expresses extreme distress at the prospect that if the educated dead of previous generations were to exam the literature of his day, they would be hard-pressed to understand what authors were discussing in their works. Yet, is their understanding really necessary considering they are not alive to understand what is being written anyway and attempts to allow their understanding must come at the potential sacrifice of the understanding of the living.

In his book, *The Sacred Wood*, T.S. Eliot cites that, "the dead writers are remote from us because we know so much more than they did. Precisely and they are that which we know," but this was not a suggestion that writers blindly give into the "traditions" that have emerged around the knowledge of the dead writers. Eliot argues that, "if the only form of tradition, of handing down, consisted in following the ways of the immediate generation before us in a blind or timid adherence to its successes, 'tradition' should positively be discouraged." He follows this assertion with the clever insight that, "we have seen many such simple currents soon lost in the sand; and novelty is better than repetition," but his prescription is not a free license to abandon all tradition as useless, it is merely a declaration that, "tradition is a matter of much wider significance," including lexical traditions.

Stewart expresses a similar suspicion of blind tradition in her book *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses*, in which she cites that, "Emancipation is precisely what is promised falsely by the formalist method in its claim of literary transcendence and by any historicist method claiming contextual explanation" (253). Despite her concession that dated language is not liberating, Stewart's work only lightly dives into the quotidian and there is a reluctance to allow it the same level of freedom exhibited in Goldsmith's work that limits the accessibility of her work for contemporary audiences. Goldsmith is not without fault either however and his work is sometimes equally alienating to contemporary writers.

In "Paragraphs of Conceptual Writing", Goldsmith states that, "There is no reason to suppose, however, that the conceptual writer is out to bore the reader. It is only the expectation of an emotional kick, to which one conditioned to Romantic literature is accustomed, that would deter the reader from perceiving this writing" (Paragraphs on Conceptual Writing). Nonetheless, even Goldsmith himself must concede that antagonistic "emotional kick" his work threatens, is

not pleasantly received by many and often prohibits his expressions the quotidian from registering and thus reconciling poetry with contemporary audiences. In order reconcile poetry and the mainstream, Goldsmith's conceptual forms must be tempered by Stewart's ability to link past and present while knitting a complex metaphor into a handful of lines (Orr).

The balance of traditional language and the quotidian that will reconcile poetry to the mainstream is rooted in Eliot's understanding of tradition and:

> involves, in the first place, the historical sense, which we may call nearly indispensable to anyone who would continue to be a poet beyond his twenty-fifth year; and the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order (*Tradition and the Individual*).

Poet's seeking to reconnect with contemporary audiences must retain the lessons and ideas of past poets, but not be shackled by them.

A man cannot own a word any more than he can own the air in the sky, none of it belongs to him alone, it is the birth right of all creatures. We cannot own and thus cannot contain our language; it exists outside of our control. Instead of fearing languages trajectory, whether it be a decline or improvement, or how its implementation differs from past conceptions, poets should exam and make use of the new mode of communication and metaphors evolutions in our language deposit into our collective lexical database. Poets like the deceased Dunbar whom can utilize both traditional poetics as well as contemporary language are those whose works will be most easily accessible to mainstream audiences.

There is value in the challenges that Stewart's academic allusions and archaic language invoke. As Eliot stated, "this historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional. And

it is at the same time what makes a writer most acutely conscious of his place in time, of his contemporaneity," (*Tradition and the Individual*). In his review of Stewart's *Poetry and the Fate of the Sense,* Donald Wesling argues:

> There is a strong historical consciousness, evinced …of coherence distributed across Stewart's book: the transformations of Christian descriptions of the world, increasingly a struggle not to cast out the natural world from Cynewulf through the metaphysicals (Crashaw and Thomas Traherne) to Gerard Manley Hopkins, down to agnostic Thomas Hardy still half ready to credit a ghost in his poem "The Voice"; changes in relations between the senses and temporal abstraction that make it harder for us in the twenty-first century to apprehend the Renaissance aesthetics of the ratio, the numerical theologies of metaphysical mystics like Traherne, and the strictness of eighteenth-century rules of poetic meter."

Conversely, there is value in Goldsmith's transcriptions of the unabashed quotidian lexicon, even if when "confronted with the matter of 'real' speech (not to mention its stammers and mumbles), we realize that we all sound a bit like Bush," (Tapper). As Gordon Tapper's noted, "Goldsmith could have generated an equally comprehensive snapshot of the language and the cultural moment it embodies with a sound installation, filling our ears with his week-long *Soliloquy*. The translation from speech into writing was, evidently, pivotal, since it thereby produced something to see."

The contemporary quotidian is equally deserving of textualization and preservation as those lexical forms that have proceeded. Poetry can preserve the mainstream and imbue it with value and in respecting the malleability of language; poetry makes room for the incorporation of new metaphoric and poetic potentials of modern language. At one point, all the traditional forms were not historic, but were rather innovative, on the forefront of linguistic expansion. Shakespeare's sonnets are lexically rooted in the middle English of Beowulf, but also transcends and builds on it, yet none would argue for Shakespeare's exclusion from poetry, for we are blessed with hindsight and see Shakespeare's language, the language of Elizabethan English as

not an attack on the English lexicon but a metamorphosis of it. I for one wish to see our linguistic practices recognized and added to the annals of history for future generations to build upon and am convinced that in doing so a bridge will be built between the past and present that will usher poetry back into to contemporary praise.

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