SAM TRUITT

This Is Poetry: Phenomenal

1. *Voicing*

"…all language in its very essence is appearance…"[1]
—*Samuel Taylor Coleridge*

But what is—or isn't—"phenomenal"? The word was coined as a hybrid by Coleridge, with the Latin suffix *-alis*, "of the nature of," combined with "phenomenon," as a word in common speech meaning "fact, occurrence."[2] And now of course it also means "excellent," with an exclamation. That word is derived from the Greek *phainomenon*, "that which appears or is seen," or more simply "appearing." From the Greek verb *phainein* "to show," it survives in "phantasm," meaning "an apparition, specter." Further, all such derive from the Proto Indo-European base **bha-*, "to shine," as in the Sanskrit *bhati* "shines, glitters," which survived in the Old Iranian *ban*, "white," "light," and "ray of light." As all earthly appearances are not only "under the sun" but also take their origin in star-stuff—fire and light—that seems an apt philological lineage, and while not all moves at the speed of light (except at the sub-atomic level), nevertheless—and as is evident in the evolution of words—all phenomena from the atomic to the point of appearance are in flux. Being, namely, at its essence moves. Further, as all motion equates to vibration, which bears a sonic equivalence, we may say that all things possess "sound," from the Sanskrit *svanah*, "tone," as well as closer to home, the Old English *geswin*, meaning "music, song." From that cognate, one might imagine that the phenomenal world is singing—may take on as a whole a musical state. At any rate, song cannot be taken as an exclusively human activity, not least of which because swans sing (and "swan" is similarly an Old English word, meaning "sounding bird"). What does seem exclusive to the human condition, however, is voice, from the Proto Indo-European base **wek-*, "to give vocal utterance, speak," and surviving in the Sanskrit *vakti* "speaks, says" and *vacas-* "word."

What does it mean, "to voice"? The swan may be said to have a voice and is employed as a metaphor as in, "She has the voice of a swan." From that regard, as many animals as have mouths have voices: barks, neighs, croaks, hisses, etc. These seem to be connected to their immediate physical being and

appear to be involuntary: they occur spontaneously; namely, animals react. While not reducing the richness of such evocations in and of themselves, what seems to distinguish our human voices is that they are capable of more than reacting: they may be a vehicle for responding, with that word derived from the Latin *spondere* "to engage oneself, promise." This root survives in "spouse," that man or woman to whom another is "promised" in marriage. Its etymology further lies in the Greek *sponde*, "solemn libation," and the Proto Indo-European base **spend-*, "to make an offering, perform a rite." This root survives—or one might say is preserved—in poetry through the spondee, a metrical foot of two long syllables, which comes up to us from the Greek *spondeios*, the meter originally used in chants accompanying libations. At any rate, there is a sacred and poetic as well as sexual echo in a response: an acknowledgment of more than we ourselves are at any particular moment and in any circumstance. It involves a promise, which entails futurity, as sex may offspring.

Of course, not all we voice is ringed by the promise of poetry, divinity, and love—or "luxury, calm and voluptuousness," as Baudelaire ironically styled the haut-promise of life's passage. In fact, while in this world we dwell in voices, among which are mixed our own, most of what is voiced and we voice appears closed—engaged in reaction more than couched in a personal, caring, complete voice, as we would hope our promises to be heard in—if that is what is uniquely human in our voices. Indeed, most of our communication with each other and even with ourselves is unconscious, emerging out of instinctual, habitual and autonomic reflex. This would seem more like noise than voice. Such "communication" is lacking in the promise of a future together—of "communion"—which requires commitment, and so the whole of ourselves, which we are promising. Much of our communication is in fact animalistic, though in its sometime potentially combative, caustic and, at best, rude use, it is all too humanly destructiveness. Why?

In part in answer to this question, Heidegger responds: "The misuse of language in idle talk, in slogans and phrases, destroys our authentic relation to things," adding further that we must seek to "regain the unimpaired strength of language and words."[3] He states: "Words are not wrappings in which things are packed for the commerce of those who write and speak. It is words and language that things first come into being and are."[4] It reminds one that while Mallarmé wrote that all language is poetry, he included the proviso, "except advertising." But if the mass of language is employed as Heidegger suggests "for commerce" contrary to the "authentic relation to

things," than what is the place—the use—of poetry in our existence? What does poetry existentially voice?

In order to progress substantially in this question, it is necessary to distinguish further our voices, as well as determine their relationship to our selves: to the bundle of coincidences that promises. As commonly understood, humans have two voices: in our heads, which is usually termed the voice of thought; and out of our mouths, termed speech. Further, both use signs, words.[5] Most self-evidently, and tellingly, these two voices overlap in that they are both predicated on having bodies, and so have a sensual basis. In this, our bodies may be viewed as the origin of voices: indeed, like animals, much of our communication arises out of our bodily movements—autonomic, habitual or conscious—and while not "voices" in our strict use of the word (they cannot promise) they are our most engaged part in this world. They are how we are consciously in it. The link between our bodies and our voices might be further underscored by the prominence our mouths have in our physiognomies as their largest aperture, and while we are not like fish with mouths foremost, nevertheless they are our most constant and essential points of interaction with this world as we eat and drink with them as well as with our noses breathe. Our skins similarly breathe and so share with our mouths that vital and constant activity: in that, our tactility might be likened to an extension of our mouths. The skin as a membrane is of course more telling associated with our voices by way of the vocal chords that, stretched horizontally across the human larynx, expand and contract to make for the vibrating—trembling—which allows for phonation, an initial stage in forming words, among other human sound acts. Our motions are certainly full of aversions and desires and our most voluble constant soundings, though they also are those to which we may listen least. (For all we know, to the degree that we do not "listen" to our corporeality, the voices of our unconscious may in fact be those of our bodies.)

Along with the use of words and their embodiment, our internal and external voices both appear to have a dialogical dynamic: our voices are in dialogue with this world, including potentially our bodies, that in turn shapes and inflects how and what we voice, both internally and externally, according to circumstances. That bodily dialogue, particularly, may be complicated, as our physical, emotional and mental aspects each possess distinct impulses as well as forming between themselves combinations, as they may sometimes cross and fuse. For example, externally our bodies have a range of audible expressions (grunt, groans), while our hearts may

sigh; and yet in the yelp of ecstasy—that is, in the absence of desire arising out of its total sating—is it our hearts or groins that dominate the voice of our being? And at that pass, as volition flutters, may our selves themselves be said to lull, if not be nulled? Additionally, our internal and external voices share certain linguistic traits—patterns of articulation, for example, such as verbal tics and loops defining areas where concern or obsession bore in. In fact, it is in those redundancies—those returns—that the circle of our selves seems to be defined. It is a circle of effects: that margin keeps happening, reappearing, and so assumes at least the appearance of permanence. When the voices cease, so also do our normative selves.

But on examination our inner and outer voices are more distinct than otherwise. For example, to truly "speak our minds" would prove at best a disaster of tact, if not outright autistic, though perhaps with the "promise" of proving artistically so. In fact, rendering the mind's motion into a verbal rant—if it were possible at all to achieve, to speak our minds as they bear—might be the end of art, as in its attempt might be said to lie its beginning. What, for example, was it that we wanted to say as children which lead us in the first place to speak? The naked mature mind roiling in words would constitute an existential pornography—a sheet of fire, as related in the story of Zeus's true appearance to Semele, occasioning the gestation of Dionysus in his thigh, leading to that eventual—and eventful—birth, whether that be tragedy or comedy. But then would we be capable of reading, being, with such knowledge without, like Semele, dying of fright—of trembling? Or would that experience bore us to tears, as so dancingly close to our own naked mental being we would not be reading at all but silently caving through our heads' own roar?

But the relationship between our voices varies radically in terms of scale and substance. Our minds' voices may be likened to jumping beans with only locatable circumferences: their origins sensually cannot be ascribed past their ripples—their appearance—which in turn define the confines of our minds. (In those terms, to expand our minds we should seek those words that reverberate the farthest.) Speech, meanwhile, is planted: it is always a moment and therefore possesses only a center—to complete a refitting of Empedocles' apocryphal trope ("everywhere a center, nowhere a circumference")—off which dictions seems to trail into what is experienced, extending moment-to-moment into the past, though always along our body / mind meridian. But in fact words are still: we our selves, speaking, form around them, while in thinking our sensuality vanishes. Our inner and outer voices are qualitatively different in substance, as our

minds' voice is a phenomenon of our interiority, however contextually physical, whereas speech, among other human sound acts, is more tellingly outward: our speech effects immediately our situation, if at very least displacing the wind we draw and return reformed to the sky.

Finally, because our sense of inner and outer is so distinct—patent in the very sheath of our skins—much more divides these self-engendering voices than we are apt or would care to confess. It is present in the very roots of the word "self," from the same Old English meaning "one's own person, same" but derived from the proto-Indo-European **sel-bho-*, meaning "separate, apart." We have our selves in the very awareness of being apart; or as Hiene writes on observing a dog biting its tail: objectively it is eating and subjectively being eaten. To state where our selves lie in such a saying seems an impossibility of language itself—or, rather, languages themselves.

Namely, this mingling and layering of our voices in a construction of an appearance of our selves—in order, further, to appear to act as a whole—never quite gels because such occurs within the exigency of time. Our voices are experienced always in the present; this makes "to be" a self-conscious (hypothetical) possibility. When we are in our voices, we are in an existence of presence, of being, but when we seek to identify it, we fall apart: We gape. That gape is a function of space, which is realized by direction—as you need an act in order to find an "actual" location—which space is as experienced—and act is always a function of direction, or aim. Space in turn only exists in time, and time in the act of the moment. It is always here, and here our voices sound, as they define a sense of our selves, but it is as a realization of difference or of distinction—of separation. Again, "we dwell in voices," if a dwelling is defined as a structure, the essential definition of which is what possesses an inside and an outside. The gape is that they cannot abide at once, at now. That is the opening (the mouth) of the structure—it is an act (the mouth opening)—but as an act it can only exist in time and space—in moment and direction—not be them. As it is said, you cannot bite your own teeth.

But to say "self" and to mean something, ontologically implausible as it may seen, is not so much duplicitous—with our minds going one way and our speech another—but rather a marker—a "promise" of substantiality ahead—for a state that currently eschews sense. It is an insensibility. And yet that "insense," that *non sequitur*, is our selves.[6] That insense lies in the commingling of our voices, including our physical gestures—autonomic, habitual, and willed—wherein we have our "sense," a word derived from the Old English *sið*, "way, journey," and cognate in the German *sinn*,

meaning sense itself as well as "mind." It's in the forwarding together of our myriad voices that our selves may—may become—sound in a fragile and momentary sense of wholeness.

And yet for our voices there can never be presence: they can never be present. As soon as we seek to raise our voices in being, awareness is not of the moment but of a lag, the passing of time. Our voices leave us. Pride, conquest, envy, love—among the other dramatic signets of our existence—have no purchase in the moment of being but, erected ahead or behind, are constructions through which we interpret and lend "insensual" hypothesis to our selves in passage. We guess at meaning—at our selves. Any moment we seek to stand out as selves we become like survivors of a shipwreck who after many days—if not millenniums—adrift on an ocean continue to lean over the sides of life rafts scrambling for fish but only managing to churn existence's dark waters—scramble the reflections of our ravaged faces.

Namely, the disjunction, however infinitesimally slight we might narrow it, proves adamantine. Logic cannot close it. It is experienced—tried—as a gape. We are a hair's breadth away—a gasp—but we never "know" when we say we are. In this, we do not have a single self: we are multiple, and in an absolute sense we have as many selves as we have moments. We are open-ended, as our actual state remains undefined. We are unknown. In a negative way, that openness may be sensed as a wound: We are wounded. Our selves are "insensed" at the cost of being wounded, and that wound is what we hide when we default to an insense of our selves. That is our selves' seeking—to hide—and whole lives slide into and out of that crack we try to deny, avoid, obscure, complicate, disguise, decorate or trick not <u>to</u> but <u>by</u> our selves. We block our own way. This dichotomy is what too much of our curiosity—humanity's signal virtue—masks. Self is a mask: It is a curiosity at which we continually are without ever closing or opening on it. We are a gasp. It is a wonder.

The most obvious and telling difference between our inner and outer voices lies in sound: the distinction between the silence in which words pass through our minds versus their embodiment in sound as speech. To speak situates words in a body of external shape in audible vibration: in fact, that shape becomes reflected in our bodies. While the common understanding is that when we speak our voices extend into this world as a being of it, simultaneously they reverberate—though more as sensation than sound—into our own bodies themselves in this world: again, how we are here. Through speaking, the possibility exists of increasing our inhabitation of our bodies, if we are responding in a true way, which is with the whole of

our selves, compassed by our bodies. In a state of response, promising our selves, we remember our selves, because our words are felt, sensed—with our whole "mouths," extending over the sheath of our bodies—in our whole saying. This voice occurs in a state of our mythologies, the combining of the Greek words *mythos*, "speech," and *logos*, "word." Our mythological voices are heard when we are "speaking our word": when we speak our promise, which is itself our voices. We are responding to what is. This is poetry.

2. *Thinking / Thanking*

> "And only when man speaks does he think—not the other way around, as metaphysics still believes."[7]
>
> *—Martin Heidegger*

Heidegger, as quoted above and elsewhere, held that speech was the vehicle of "thinking," as he himself reckoned that act. In part he explains his rationale for this attribution of priority by relating thinking to a craft, and noting that "craft" means literally the "strength and skill of our hands."[8] He notes that hands, whose craft is "richer than we commonly imagine," do much that we would associate with thinking: they grasp, catch, push and pull, reach, extend, receive, welcome, hold, carry, design, and sign. Like voicing, thinking for Heidegger is a physical act: the body and its capacity to act proceeds reflection, the common attribute of thinking. Inimically, thinking for Heidegger links to the hands—and to their silence (except, perhaps, as they may applaud, which hands do when they praise)—rather than the mouth, as voice might be.[9] He also implies that thinking lies in an act as facile as the motions of hands—or as he states, "…thinking itself is man's simplest, and for that reason hardest, handiwork…"[10] So, thinking is both richer "than we commonly imagine" and simpler—therefore, curiously, "hardest."

Such might characterize the question "what is called thinking?" as flourished by Heidegger in his 1953 lectures and published as a book entitled *in*, not *by*, that question—as though all that the speaker Heidegger states through that series of talks occurred within that question—bristling around that unspoken gaping amid our voices among our selves. It is, as a question, necessarily *posed*, but its essence is *poised*: as before a brink, and before—both as "prior to" as well as "in front of"—our selves. For lack of a better word, it is a "koan" in the form of a question: being in question

itself the answer. One is called to embody the question. It introduces what is implicit in the definition of "question" as a "state of quest," with all the physical trial and conscious suffering, as well as dogged romance, of a quest.[11] In that embodiment, the poised "what is calling thinking?" evokes a state, a condition of being, which is beyond words: beyond the dilemma innate in words, which necessarily are a representation, not the state of the present, or presence. Namely, to pose an answer to such a question means what was asked was not understood: rather, to be in question takes us into the gape. We are open-mouthed. We gape. Words have left us. To be in the gape becomes us: we are unclosed and unopened.

Or, it is a question to which we each are our selves an answer. It evokes us: or, in Heidegger's lexicon, it *calls* us. We have "a calling," a thing to do. "To call" is to act[12]: it is to voice—make vocal, or to render sound. "Sound," along with its aforementioned meanings, implies health, as in "the bridge is sound," which requires solidity: it is tested, plumbed. "You can cross here." (Of course, in the meaning of "sounding," as in taking water depths in order to find passage for a boat, one is sounding a depth for absence, for a lack of seafloor and so sufficient lea to pass through. At any rate, "soundness" as a testing functions either way, both as absence or presence.) But in an absolute sense, as lands shift and weights sag, grossly speaking as well as in an absolute sense, you can only know once you have made the crossing—though, further, you only know it *in* it, in the act of the crossing. To say "it is sound" is a looking back: In fact, properly one is saying, "It was sound" when the crossing was made. While "what is called thinking?" is posed / poised "before," it is "called." It has been.

But the "is" simultaneously implies presence: A constancy, or continuing on. It has implications for the future, the "about to be," or what is before us, the question: "What is called thinking?" The "is" is a soundness in faith: "is" is always that. It recalls Augustine's saying (as I paraphrase): "If being were to withdraw its creative flow from all that it has created, all would return to its primal state, or nothingness." There is a presence in the created of the force of its creation—its voice—continuing on, sustaining. Passages are constantly being created, flowing. In liturgical terms, we are still in the openness of the six days of creation: if "is" is, there no ceasing, finality or pause. Or so only in the possibility of the withdrawal of that creative flow—its absence—which would necessarily occasion the collapse of all passages—all ways across all chasms or impasses.

And yet the question seems to posit a pause as on the brink—a distinction in its evocation between "what is called" and "thinking." There is a fact of

calling and then what is called: there is an interval, an implicit caesura, between the act of "the calling" and then what is called, "thinking," which is plumbed. The "thinking" has rings around it, quote marks as of ripples around an object dropped in water. It is a shift between two syntactical moves, but one that can only be called through an absence in writing—an ellipsis—though in speaking—in voce—a pause. It is invisible and soundless, but a presence awaited in absence. The pause would be written: "What is called [ ] thinking?" The "thinking" (*Denken*) over that pause is tied to "is": the participle "thinking" means "is" occurring, "continuing in" a state of thought, so the presence of thinking and a stillness, as of constancy.[13] Heidegger does not evoke "what is called thought (*Gedanken*)?" but rather an interiority: "*In* thinking, what is called?" Reversing that sense, one would write: "What is thought [ ] calling?" In its gape, it exposes a longing, an absence: it lies at the heart of the quest as of the question "what is called thinking?"

In this light, Heidegger says:

> …Calling is something else than merely making a sound. Something else, again essentially different from mere sound and noise, is the cry. The cry need not be a call but may be: the cry of distress. In reality, the calling stems from the place to which the call goes out. The calling is informed by an original outreach toward… This alone is why the call can make a demand. The mere cry dies away and collapses. It can offer no lasting abode to either pain or joy. The call, by contrast, is a reaching, even if it is neither heard nor answered. Calling offers an abode."[14]

Noting, "in reality, the calling stems from the place to which the call goes out," the calling, in that sense, is a going and returning, but it is not an echo, nor does "in" become "out." The call's syntactic structure, or "abode," does not turn inside out. In this saying, in and out are neither nor are they the same. Such a calling does not fold forward back into itself to posit a second structure, which the first might have presaged, but rather all concept of structure—and concept itself—is meaningless: there is no in-between. The calling is neither prior to nor in front of concept: is beyond concept. The call departs at the moment of arrival: "hello" and "goodbye" have the same feel. Listening and calling are one, the same. That is the crux of Heidegger's emphasis on speech, why he states: "And only when man speaks does he think." To listen as one speaks requires presence, requires the whole body. One is perforce embodying the saying. As Heidegger later posits: "In order to receive a clue, we must first be listening ahead into the sphere from

which the clue comes. To receive a clue is difficult, and rare—and rarer still the more we know, and the more difficult the more we merely want to know."[15] Thinking is beyond conceptual—representational—mind, because thinking is and "is" is being: "Let us note well—the presence of what is present and not what is present as such and not Being as such, nor both added together in a synthesis, but: their duality, emerging from their unity kept hidden, keeps the call."[16] More simply, he states: "…in the presence of what is present there speaks the call that calls us to thinking."[17]

What brings us into the present, where thinking is, is recalled by Heidegger in the common Old English root of "think," *þencan* and "thank," *þancian*: in the etymological yoking of these two acts lies for him the original slant of "what is called 'thinking.'" Indeed, these two words share a similar sound, and both words are derived from a common Proto Indo-European cognate in **tong-*, meaning "to think, feel." Heidegger in his examination further elicits the "root or originary word" for *þhanc*, meaning "thought," as "the gathering, all-gathering thinking that recalls."[18] He goes on to say, pointedly: "The originary word 'thanc' is imbued with the original nature of memory: the gathering of the constant intention of everything that the heart holds in present being. Intention here is understood in this sense: the inclination with which the inmost meditation of the heart turns toward all that is in being…"[19] He adds: "The *thanc* means man's inmost mind, the heart, the heart's core, that innermost essence of man which reaches outward most fully and to the outermost limits, and so decisively that, rightly considered, the idea of an inner and an outer world does not arise."[20] Thought is in original memory and presence: "Originally, 'memory' means as much as devotion: a constant concentrated abiding with something—not just with something that has passed, but in the same way with what is present and with what may come. What is past, present, and to come appears in the oneness of its *present* being."[21] The gathering of thinking—and its constancy—back into what must be thought, which is thanks. Heidegger: "Original thanking is the thanks owned to being."[22] To be in thought, in this light, is prior to dilemma: it is the dissolution of time, and therefore of syntax (subject and object) and perspective.

Heidegger thus articulates a triune structure of memory, thinking, and thanking as our primordial human dwelling, which according to him requires a leap to achieve, or as he writes: "The leap alone takes us into the neighborhood where thinking resides."[23] That leap, however, is not spatial—it is not out- or inbound—nor does it occur "later." It is now, amid our voices, which are the hearts of our existences, and our dwelling places: the

gape is our very physical bodies. What we forget is our bodies—that which memory must recall, recalling itself. Everything that we inhumanly do in this world goes to displace—hide—our bodies. Heidegger, following Nietzsche's profound insight, states that revenge is the Last Man's single motive—"the will's revulsion against time and its 'It was.'"[24] That revenge is most directly and profoundly directed against our bodies that, incised, sagged and pocked, record what we revolt against: namely our vanishing in and with time.[25] This is where metaphysic's insense, both its anger (cause) and insensibility (result), takes focus: our bodies, dying. It is touching, in some sense—poignant—though its touch is also cruel. We cannot face—go "face to face"—with this: our hands shrink from this touching, the acknowledging of our own fragility. Therefore we hate our bodies, though not directly—which would be a confrontation. Rather, we do not "re-member" (reconnect) our bodies or we fetishize them into an unattainable perfection: we de-part or ignore them at every opportunity, object to them (as in "objectify") or consign our selves to a recurring trauma / drama of inadequacy.

It is this touch, this primal craft of the hands, that we need to learn: as Heidegger points out, it is the "simplest" and therefore the "hardest"—though its "promise" is "richer than we commonly imagine." That touch, the antidote to revenge, is the leap. Further, the leap that can reach our bodies is stillness, the quiescence of our discursive minds, as we reckon them: that is the silence, the unspoken, to "heed."[26] To "speak"—call—and hear that voice simultaneously: "What is spoken in the word 'thinking,' *thanc* remains for us in the realm of the unspoken."[27] It is in this that we may inhabit our bodies, dwell in our dwelling. This is the silence of attention that, coupled with sensation—to feel our weight—may leap as a spark of light (a *ban*) to presence, dwelling.[28] Our voices respond thinking / thanking, a giving and keeping. It is the promise—voiced / heard out of the whole of ourselves—suffused by the light of memory, our "inner disposition, and devotion."[29] This is poetry.

3. *Praising*

> "Presumably we shall never properly think out what poetry is, until we have reached far enough with our question, 'What is called thinking?'"[30]
>
> —*Martin Heidegger*

> *…biþ in eorle indryhten þeaw,*
> *þæt he his ferðlocan fæste binde,*
> *healde his hordcofan*
>
> …it is in a man a noble custom
> to bind up fast in his heart
> secret thoughts
>
> —*Anon,* "The Wanderer"

Heidegger dedicates the balance of the lectures that comprise *What is Called Thinking?* to tracing *mythos-logos* to a point prior to the "omission, perhaps even a failure" of the Western tradition, which was its "per"-version. This leads to a thorough exploration of Parmenides' sixth and eighth fragments, which, after cleaning these "forgotten heirlooms of language" of their metaphysical build-up, again reveal "presence" and the "taking-to-heart." Tellingly, in his explication of ε*ov* ("being") itself, he states: "The word says: 'presence of what is present.' What it says speaks in our speech long before thinking gives attention and a name of its own to it. When thinking is expressed, this unspoken something is merely clothed in a word. It is not an invention but a discovery, discovered in the presence of the present already expressed in language."[31] Again, priority is given to voicing, allowing that "thinking"—in this case, its calculative sense—clothes (hides) the actual body of the word, its nude reality in presence's communion.[32] Similarly, evoking Socrates as the "purest thinker of the West," because he faced "what withdraws"—which Heidegger variously describes as the dismembering of language from its etymological trunk (and primordial origin), as well as, and perhaps in the same breath, of "God"[33]—he states: "This is why he wrote nothing. For anyone who begins to write out of thoughtfulness must inevitably be like those who run to seek refuge from any draft too strong for them."[34] Again, it is in speaking, which may necessarily be closer to the "presence of what is present," that our human being (embodiment) may manifest, which is the sole purpose

of thinking, the gathering and convergence of which is memory. Memory is of course anciently the "Mother of the Muses," and as Heidegger states: "…the thinking back to what is to be thought is the source and ground of poesy… Poetry wells up only from devoted thought thinking back, recollecting."[35]

Taking to heart that saying, with attention to what "speaks in our speech" and the understanding of the poetic voice's primacy in thoughtful achievement—in no small part arising out of the poet's tactility with words, versus a relationship of utility—it is useful to explore English literature's anthological beginnings in Anglo-Saxon alliterative verse. Most anthologies of English literature begin with either *Beowulf*—disclosing perhaps a editorial leaning toward narrative—or with what has come to be called "Caedmon's Hymn," a short lyric of nine lines. The origin of *Beowulf*—even the rough date of its transcription—is obscure: "Caedmon's Hymn," however, has a relatively clear provenance as its period of composition is recorded in the Venerable Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of England*—and in fact its survival in a variety of Old English dialects is due to its having been written as marginalia into three transcribed copies of Bede's book. Further distinguishing this lyric from *Beowulf*, Caedmon is the first historical "author" of English literature.

According to Bede, Caedmon lived in the latter half of the 7TH century in Northumbria and was a lay, necessarily "illiterate," laborer in an abbey in that land. Late in life, having never learned anything of song—though he had presumably attended many recitations—one night in the stable, sleeping, "one stood by him" in a dream and called to him: "Caedmon, sing me something." Protesting that he knew nothing of such, he said, "What must I sing?" The one who "stood by him" replied: "Sing the origin of creation."[36] It is recorded he did.

So, in a stable, presumably among cattle and horses, a few cats and the obligatory mice—and perhaps even an owl in the rafters—to a sleeping servant came a calling, a vocation: the "leaping" of immediate, full, sophisticated command of alliterative verse into "consciousness." To the fact that it was a Christian one, we may owe its survival. That is one unique aspect of the Caedmon story, at least as far as we may reckon: it marks a practical date to the transition from a Germanic heroic (pagan) tradition to a Christian one—though as the hymn itself is the telling of a creation myth, versions of which abound in other pre-Christian Northern European poetries, including the Norse sagas, one easily appropriated from Germanic verse—as was indeed the mode of Christian conversion, as prescribed by

Pope Gregory. Additionally, in historical terms, it is the first purely lyrical verse that survived to be added to the English poetic corpus, glimmering as in a twilight with the last breaths of an ancient oral poetic lineage in the west—and so with huskings of some tens of thousands of years of what "speaks in our speech." That indubitably is the most profound aspect: there survives in "Caedmon's Hymn" a taste of a primordial oral wisdom visaged in words. The poem goes:

Nu sculon herigean heofonrices weard,
meotodes meahte and his modgeþanc,
weorc wuldorfæder, swa he wundra gehwæs,
ece drihten, or onstealde.

He ærest sceop eorðan bearnum
heofon to hrofe, halig scyppend;
þa middangeard moncynnes weard,
ece drihten, æfter teode
firum foldan, frea ælmihtig.[37]

The poem is voiced in two grammatical sentences or moves, with the first, compassing the first four verse lines proving the context for the balance, which elaborates what is evoked. (I have underscored their separation through paragraphing them, though commonly the poem is typeset with no such separation.) That first move articulates a relationship between human beings and a creator, elaborated through a context—the earth—for that relationship. The earth as a structure for that is given further definition in the second move.

The first move requires close attention in order to touch its value (see footnote above for a translation), and one is alerted to this fact by the poem's beginning: "Now." It is immediate, here, where this word is, now. Where we are. It instantaneously evokes presence and calls our own. *Sculon* is the first-person present form of the verb meaning "will" or "shall": it implies a sense of obligation, as in the Goth *skulan*, as in an act of fealty. It could almost be translated "must" as it bears that urgency. The active part of the verb is *herigean* (with the "-ge" unpronounced) and it means "praise," though at the time it sounds "here," as in a specific location: right, as in where we are now, "here." That word in Old English is *hēr*, "where one puts oneself," pronounced the same as in Modern English. Such an auditory reading of *herigean*—which would be pronounced "har-e-on"—seems plausible, as in oral poetry such double hearings may easily play,

and this one in particular in its close proximity to *nu*, "now." In any saying, there are many levels being expressed, and certainly such is amplified as one approaches an evocation of the godhead—and how else better to do so than in calling the "now" and "here" together, the presence of the present?

But then what of the denotative meaning of *herigean*, "praise?" What is praise? In this one is reminded of Shakespeare's funeral oration in *Julius Caesar* delivered by Mark Anthony eulogizing that friend: "I come to praise Caesar, not to bury him." Praise brings out: It reveals, exposes. It "raises." It is the opposite of "burying." It does not blame or criticize, as that word is commonly understood. Praise means to extol, honor, congratulate, acclaim.

Of course praise is a form of thanks. Here we leap to *modgeþanc* in the off-verse (or second part) of the poem's second line: It means in Modern English "earth-thought," though following Heidegger's track simultaneously identifiable, eliding the silent *ge-*, as "earth-thanks."[38] This kenning thrusts way out: In fact, it expands and shifts entirely the frame of discussion. Following on the "think / thank" doubling, it brings that relationship into the very kin of the divine, as though thinking and thanking what is most essential were reciprocal and simultaneous between Being and being. Necessarily this is patent in Heidegger's saying, but in its connection to praise, it brings it into infinite verbal activity. Praise, as an attribute of thanks / thinking, opens the field. It introduces a specificity: you can praise this thing or that thing: to "thank" this thing or that thing lacks verve and élan. You can praise a tree—cause the tree to grow outward, exposed, through language—but to "thank" the tree is a stop. Praise, on the other hand, "promises" a future.

As Caedmon does, the *or*—the "origin"—is founded (*onstealde*), takes its ground, in praise: it grows outward. "Caedmon's Hymn" possesses the endlessness of thought / thanks as praise. Its very structure echoes that. While the first move of "Caedmon's Hymn" establishes a start based on praise in relation to each thing in "wonder"—a distinct attribute of a praiseful stance—the second move forms the earthly architecture of that form. The first move, in that sense, goes outward from the singer (as we may assume there must have been music in those halls) in thanksgiving and the second move is draw back like a breath—the breath of creation in this instance—in thought: in manifestation through things, which in turn may be praised.[39] It reminds one of Aristotle's critique of praise in his book *Rhetoric*: "Praise is the expression in words of the eminence of a man's [or Being's] good qualities, and therefore we must display his actions as the

product of such qualities."[40] The "product" in the case of Being is Earth. Here we are called to what it means to "dwell," as posited by Heidegger:

> To dwell, to be set at peace, means to remain at peace within the free sphere that safeguards each thing in its nature. *The fundamental character of dwelling is this sparing and preserving*. It pervades dwelling in its whole range. That range reveals itself to us as soon as we reflect that human being consists in dwelling and, indeed, dwelling in the sense of the stay of mortals on the earth.[41]

For Heidegger, that "sparing and preserving" is related to "freeing," which in the German *Frye* is related in turn to "peace," *Friede*. The abiding in the four-fold of the sky, earth, mortals and divinities "establish" that freedom and peace. It is this four-fold that is present in Caedmon's poem: the "roof" of the sky; the "middle-earth"; the "sons of men"; and the "Measurer." In this, Caedmon's poem while a mediation on "dwelling" is itself a dwelling. A poem can be a dwelling.

The Measurer, that last appellation for the divinities (for as evoked by Caedmon they are multiple), is particularly salient to the act of praise and to the voicing of creation, including ourselves. *Metod* ("measurer") takes its root from the Proto-Indo-European **me-*, meaning "measure," and shares cognates with the Greek word *mêtis*, meaning variously "wisdom, craft, skill, guile." The word is most often applied in that ancient tongue by Homer to describe wily Odysseus: among them craftiness was a primary virtue. It is further dignified by the fact it is also the name of Zeus's first wife and the mother of Athena, as though the craftiness / attention that underlies measure was the mother of wisdom. Similarly, the Anglo-Saxon sense of diety is likened to one who measures, like Odysseus. Is akin to a hero, echoing the old Germanic heroic tradition. A mortal can be (act) as a god.

To speak well is to speak in measure, as a poem may. But more than as a mode, to measure in words is to make distinctions: to define things—"each thing in its nature"—including the very names with which we set about that. To measure, draw the distinction—the lines—of things means to draw out their unique qualities, and so to evoke the measurer in its names. In each thing, including our selves, is the many-in-one, as Heidegger states: "…when I say 'a man,' and in saying this word think of a being who exists in a human manner—that is, who dwells—then by the name 'man' I already name the stay within the fourfold among things."[42] This is our selves as a

dwelling: in our voices, in our calling, is offered an abode. Through our voices in our bodies we are promised to touch Earth in praise, which is our apparent measure. This is phenomenal. This is poetry.

Notes

1 *Opus Maximus,* Vol. 2 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), footnote 233.

2 The etymologies cited here are aggregated from *The Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971) and the *Online Etymological Dictionary* (www.etymonline.com), ed. Douglas Harper, 2001.

3 *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959; based on Heidegger's 1935 lectures), p. 13.

4 Ibid., p. 13

5 Thoughts may of course occur in pictorial images, which are themselves signs, just as our speech may be made up of grunts, cries and coos, which also signal states, but predominately word forms seem to characterize our voices.

6 A word gone out of common usage, "insense" as a noun means "inner sense, essential meaning" and as a verb, "to inform."

7 *What is Called Thinking?*, trans. J. Glenn Gray (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), p. 16.

8 Ibid., p. 16.

9 As regards that silence, Heidegger relates in connection with man's place as revealed in language: "That language in a way retracts the real meaning of the word *bauen*, which is dwelling, is evidence of the primal nature of these meanings; for with the essential words of language, their true meaning easily falls into oblivion in favor of foreground meanings. Man has hardly yet pondered the mystery of this process. Language withdraws from man its simple and high speech. But its primal call does not thereby become incapable of speech; it merely falls silent. Man, though, fails to heed this silence." *Poetry, Language, Thought*, "Building Dwelling Thinking," trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1971). Acquired online: http://acnet.pratt.edu/~arch543p/readings/Heidegger.html.

10 *What is Called Thinking?*, op. cit., pp. 16-17.

11 As Heidegger states: "The question 'What is This that calls on us to think?', if asked with sufficient urgency, brings us also to the problem that thinking qua thinking is essentially a call." Ibid., p. 161.

12 "In the widest sense, 'to call' means to set in motion, to get something underway." Ibid., p. 117.

13 Recalling Augustine's afore-quoted "creative flow" passage, Heidegger states: "Without the 'is' in the phrase 'the tree is,' these statements would fall into a void, taking along with them the whole science of botany. Nor is that all. Every human

attitude to something, every human stand in this or that sphere of beings, would rush away resistlessly into the void if the 'is' did not speak. Without it, human nature could not even rush *away* into the void, because of the 'away' there must have been a 'here.'" Ibid., p. 174.

14 Ibid., p. 124

15 Ibid., p. 138.

16 Ibid., p. 242.

17 Ibid., p. 242.

18 While my own investigation has not turned up such a root, I would necessary defer to Heidegger's scholarship. As he states: "…the relationships between those words—'thinking,' 'thought,' 'thanks' and 'memory'—… gives us a direction, though the written account of that history is still incomplete, and presumably will always remain so." Ibid., p. 139.

19 Ibid., p. 141.

20 Ibid., p. 144.

21 Ibid., p. 140.

22 Ibid., p. 141.

23 Ibid., p. 12.

24 "We are trying to mark out the way of him who crosses over, that is, the passage and transition from the last man to the superman. We are asking for the bridge from the one to the other. The bridge, in Nietzsche's own words, is deliverance from revenge." Ibid., p. 88.

25 This is our connection with the sun, that other phenomenon (with our bodies) to which we peg outwardly "it was," but which ties all earthly beings to a sensibility of extinction.

26 Nietzsche writes: "It is the stillest words that bring on the storm. Thoughts that come on doves' feet guide the world" (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Part II: *The Portable Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kaufman (New York: Viking, 1954)).

27 *What is Called Thinking?* op. cit., p. 153.

28 In this "light"—*ban* meaning in the Old Iranian that as well as "ray of light"—it is thought-provoking to note the similarity of this word to the German word *bauen*, typically meaning "building," as Heidegger does: "*Bauen* originally means to dwell. Where the word *bauen still* speaks in its original sense it also says how far the nature of dwelling reaches. That is, *bauen, buan. bhu, beo* are our word *bin* in the versions: *ich bin*, I am, *du bist*, you are, the imperative form *bis*, be. What then does *ich bin* mean? The old word *bauen*, to which the *bin* belongs, answers: *ich bin, du bist mean*: I dwell, you dwell. The way in which you are and I am, the manner in which we humans *are* on the earth, is *Buan*, dwelling. To be a human being means to be on the earth as a mortal. It means to dwell. The old word *bauen*, which says that man *is* insofar as he *dwells*…" "Building

Dwelling Thinking," op. cit. Additionally, one may note Heidegger's discussion of the Latin word *animus*, translated by him as "that in which the spirit has its being." Here he "lightly" references "Master Eckhart's 'spark' of the soul" and Trakl's "O pain, thou flaming vision / of the great soul!" *What is Called Thinking?*, op. cit., p. 149

29 *What is Called Thinking?*, op. cit., p. 148.

30 Ibid., p. 162.

31 Ibid., p. 235.

32 It is in this sense that Heidegger distinguishes Homer, Sappho, Pindar and Sophocles as poets over producers of "literature," a word coined by Samuel Johnson, to mean "writing formed with letters": these were not writers but "makers" (the Greek *poein* "to make or compose"), with the cognate of "poet" going back to Old Slavic *cinu*, "act, deed, order."

33 "Out of the holy sway of the godhead, the god appears in his presence or withdraws into his concealment." *Poetry, Language, Thought*, op. cit.

34 *What is Called Thinking?* op. cit., p. 17. This text, of course, as most of Heidegger's published work since the early 1930's, was itself a transcription of lectures.

35 Ibid., p. 11.

36 It is an apocryphal tale, and no doubt in no small part informed by Bede's mission to officially ground Christian legend in English—though the fact that the "one stood by him" is not identified as angelic seems to lead greater credence to its very relative veracity. But then in each story there are many stories—as in us there are many identities, each with their own story, depending on location. This is true of reading as it is of sexuality—or any meeting or intercourse. It would be fascinating—and fastening— to link the passage from Bede relating the story of Caedmon's song-gifting to the "hymn" itself, amid the nuances of dream transmission and the question of spontaneous composition, but that remains outside the line of this inquiry. The relevant passage, in A.M. Sellar's 1907 translation, from *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of England*, (London: George Bell and Sons, 1907), is available at: http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bede/history.v.iv.xxiv.html

37 I have used the West Saxon version of the poem, based on the Northumbrian to foreground in some small way the commonalities to Modern English, however slight. An interlinear translation of the poem would be:

> Now I shall praise the keeper of Heaven's kingdom,
> The might of the Measurer, and his earth-thought,
> The work of the Father of glory, how each of wonders
> The Eternal Lord established in the beginning.
>
> He first created for the sons of men
> Heaven as a roof, the holy Creator,
> Then middle-earth, the Keeper of mankind,
> The Eternal Lord, afterwards made,
> The earth for men, the Almighty Lord.

38 Perhaps the "ge-" prefix in Old English is the most common morpheme, often attached to verbs, and sometimes to other parts of speech such as adjectives or nouns, as in this case. This morpheme is so common and used in such a variety of words that it is nearly impossible to determine what sort of meaning (silent or otherwise) it may have carried.

39 From this standpoint, namely connected to breath, it would seem that "thinking" might be more associated with a drawing (recalling), while "thanking" is outward—though noting Heidegger makes no accommodation for such a reading of the trope.

40 Aristotle, *Rhetoric and the Poetics*, trans. W. Rhys Roberts (New York: Random House, 1980), Book I, Chap. 9, online at http://www.public.iastate.edu/~honeyl/Rhetoric/rhet1-9.html.

41 "Building Dwelling Thought," op. cit.

42 "Building Dwelling Thought," ibid. In Heidegger's essay "Poetically Man Dwells," entitled from a phrase in a Hölderlin poem beginning, "In lovely blueness blooms the steeple with metal roof," the sky "weighted" nature of our four-fold residence on earth is further parsed. The full sentence from which Heidegger extracts his title reads: "Full of merit, yet, poetically, man /dwells on this earth" (as translated by Albert Hofstadter). The "on this earth" is a concern of the poem central to Heidegger's essay, in part posed by Holderlin's first line, for a steeple as a measure of sky phenomena with which "god" (in lightening and thunder) is linked may echo such "merit." The poem concludes: "Is there a measure on earth? There is / None". We cannot measure our selves absent our selves as dwelling fully known and so in an "unknown," or what gapes. Who is the knower? This is wonder. Heidegger says: "The poet calls, in the sight of the sky, that which in its very self-disclosure causes the appearance of that which conceals itself, and indeed as that which conceals itself. In the familiar appearances, the poet calls the alien as that to which the invisible imparts itself in order to remain—unknown." ("Poetically Man Dwells," *Poetry, Language, Thought*, op. cit.)