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CONFERENCE REPORT

'Allowing One's Metaphors to Mix': Performances and Perspectives at the Peter Manson Symposium

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Conference Report for The Peter Manson Symposium, organised by Ellen Dillon, Tom Betteridge, Colin Herd and Nicky Melville, which consisted of an informal evening of performances, and a day of panels and discussions in response to Manson's work.

Keywords: Peter Manson; poetry; sourdough mutation; adjunct; scottish; Mallarmé; contemporary; glasgow; translation; conference

The Peter Manson Symposium and Poetry Reading, University of Glasgow, 27–28 October 2017

The Peter Manson Symposium, organised by Ellen Dillon (Dublin City University), Tom Betteridge (Independent Scholar), Colin Herd (University of Glasgow) and Nicky Melville (University of Glasgow), was the world's first symposium dedicated solely to the work of Peter Manson—a truism oft-circulated throughout its participants with characteristically Mansonian, bemused relish. Matching the diversity of Manson's oeuvre, the event offered various speakers, poets, performers and critics, who responded in eclectic ways to Manson's scintillating, constantly off-shooting experimentalism—promising 'a carnival of epistemophilia, pareidolia, deciphering and decoding'. A two-day event, taking place in both the Pollok Ex-Servicemen's Club and the University of Glasgow, the symposium bridged academic perspectives with more creative engagements. With funding and support from The Andrew Tannahill Fund for the Furtherance of Scottish Literature, The W.P Ker Fund, the Scottish Network of Modernist Studies and the School of English, Dublin City University, the

symposium represents a significant acknowledgement of Manson's position as both one of the foremost exponents of contemporary avant-garde poetry and a respected translator of Stéphane Mallarmé. The symposium aimed to trace the myriad threads of Manson's extensive output, teasing out thematic and structural links within his work. Manson's tricky and cryptonymic poetry was done suitable justice by a range of speakers, friends, colleagues, students and scholars who sought to draw out established and emerging positions on his work.

Friday 27th October

The first day began as an informal evening event at Pollok Ex-Servicemen's Club, in Glasgow's South Side. Amid twinkling lights, and the familiar tinkle of change being exchanged for pints at the bar, a variety of performers channelled the Manson spirit in their poetic or sonic delivery. In between performances, the room was filled with the Lynchian vowel stammers of recorded Manson poems, alongside music curated by Vicky Langan—who provided a playlist including the suitably haunted moans and shivers of Arthur Russell's star-bright cello. Readings were interspersed with breaks for lively discussion and the purchase of Zarf Editions pamphlets (including Manson's *Factitious Airs*), or acquisition of free cacti that Manson cultivated especially from seed in the months leading up to the symposium, and brought along with an air of ritual.

After a warm introduction from conveners Tom Betteridge and Ellen Dillon, Jow Lindsay Walton was first to take the stage. Walton's surreal, form-leaping piece – written specifically for the night – was read deftly from a laptop balanced in one palm. He delivered punchy lines with typically Mansonian humour, the likes of 'those who can't/tenure' drawing a good chuckle from a room of academics, fans and other poets. With a background that spans editorial roles to experimental writing and science fiction, Walton's reading was sharp, glitzy and culturally engaged, chiming with the dizzying politics of the contemporary: 'Why must we ever repent in the tents/Where Russell Brand repaints his taint?'. With a kind of shoulder-shaking, Joycean scatology, Walton went for pithy, often ironic climaxes and estranged imagery that lops off logic in a surreal grammar of the body: 'pissing in a violin my arms fell off'.

Walton's performance was seamlessly followed by nick-e melville, who delivered his Sad Press pamphlet *ABBODIES* in its entirety: a sublime and streetwise channelling of ABBA through references to Nigel Farage, subway suicide announcements and *Oor Wullie*. Using ABBA's European identity as a springboard to reflect on Britain's recent tide of nationalism, Melville made irresistible connections between politics and pop culture, bringing everything from *The Great British Bake-Off* to *I'm a Celebrity...* into the equation. The result was a form of disorientated longing: that rare and graceful fusion of the experimental and vernacular which glisters with amusing and/or alarming childhood anecdotes, reflections on death and timely puns on Brexit.

Ellen Dillon read aloud Jane Goldman's poem, 'L'Après-midi d'une fan du Pierre L'Hommefils (après Mallarmopodelaire)', in her absence—a picnic of modernist references written in response to Peter Manson's *English in Mallarmé*. Tom Betteridge then read Goldman's homage to 'Sourdough Mutation', 'for peter mallarmanson', a typically sparky, disarming affair, by way of references to Kurt Schwitter's *Ursonate*. This was followed by a captivating reading from John Hall, who presented a curated selection of poems from his previous works with Peter Manson in mind, one of which, 'Still Learning to Read' is available in the latest *Hix Eros*. The pieces chosen—'Song', 'Mouthpiece' and 'I'm on the Train' amongst others—probed issues at the heart of Manson's own writing: presence and absence in language, and the fluidity, materiality, and desire that live at its crux. Taking a softer though no less engaging approach to delivery, and peppering his reading with references to J. H. Prynne and Emily Dickinson, Hall's work stood as an ekphrastic commentary on the process of reading itself, channelling its industrious energy through autobiographical 'rumours of delirium'. There was a sense that these poems were about moving towards the possibility of reading Peter Manson as much as they were about Peter Manson himself, or indeed his poetry. Language became autonomous material to physically inspect: 'speech like stone', 'verbs that unsettle'; a quiet climax of intensity, as Manson-rich lines like 'refractory airs of fake facticity' bloomed for the audience.

Sarah Hayden introduced her piece—a faux presentation, part narrative poem, part essayistic exposition on constraint—as the afterimage of giving a 'disastrously bad lecture' on Manson's work. Her performance was thrillingly disorientating, existing

in a positively anxious state of constant interruption and resumption, marked by fake endings and guttural pauses. Hayden both performed the piece and narrated her own performance, being simultaneously within and without her own delivery, positing language as a necessary compromise between fluidity of experience and staticity of form. There was a sense of employing *fugue* as a verbal possibility, writing within constraint and from this space of difference collapsing into expression. We were reminded, somewhat, of Iain Morrison's 'Art Talk Notes', a process of non-linear transcription in which poetry is generated within the space of resistance—a lecture or artist talk—combining free association with collaborative procedure and personal reflection. You can read 'A Lecture (2)' in the latest *Hix Eros* for a sense of how this works on the page. Hayden considered how form and constraint are 'liquid magnets' producing off-kilter content. As Hayden warns, 'witness the perils of allowing one's metaphors to mix'.

We are met with a litany of sweat, jellyfish, buckets, disco; Hayden wittily channelled the perspectives of those observing her lecture: 'she's rhyming like a fever now'. Amid such playful linguistic meta-games—the lecture staged as poem and vice versa—various surprising and sensuous images arose. There's a Steinian quality to Hayden's self-engagement, that pointed suggestion that 'a sentence, then, might be a single blood vessel', or 'punctuation as wormhole'. Indeed, it's easy to slip down the cavernous passages of Hayden's lines, as she delivers her work defined by difference, repetition, imbrication. Highlighting the performative artifice even more, her words were uncannily accented by the authentic transactional punctuations of the bar next door, with its low-level laughter and jingles of glasses, as the surroundings seemed to mimic her register of choice—a bouquet of academic formulations obsessively interrupted by a frustrated 'FUCK'. With its self-deprecating, sharp expression, Hayden's was perhaps poetry for the pub as much as for the academy.

Hayden's reading was energetically followed by Mendoza, under the persona of 'Linus Slug: Insect Librarian'. Their work was intensely physical, every word measured according to its internal movement, its plosive possibility. There were bird sounds on the empty tidal array of a beach, a setting of territories and nonhuman voices 'pierced and starved with cold'; a sense of spaciousness collapsing in the odd and

fragmentary. Mendoza's voice oscillated between soft viscosity and snarling, sharp and visceral. There was a definite hunger, a lingering on boundaries. They articulated an abrasive landscape, hostile to its dwellers and visitors, and yet one which contained certain places of shelter. While rich in sounded variation, this is poetry you crave to see crawling all over a page, making its strange, oozing trajectories in that excessive, Mansonian manner of gaps piling up against words, or words making mounds upon space. Occasionally alliteratively guttural, sometimes sounding like a maritime wildlife glossary, Mendoza's poetry appropriately relaid Manson's interest in things nonhuman—a theme picked up later in the symposium, especially with Samantha Walton's talk.

Nat Raha's poetry was delivered in dialogue with Mendoza's, offering stuttering bullets of sound against Mendoza's more tentative, soft and spiralling discourse. Raha slowly unfurled fragments and clauses, her work (both soothing and alarming) sometimes sounding like somebody hacked the Shipping Forecast. There was a dramatisation of corporeal unravelling, a 'gullet constricted' as it strains at the words that can't quite come out. Botanical imagery threatens to flourish amidst these 'delicate pieces of scream', a politics held precisely in its stuttering discourse, its emphasis on silence as much as on sound. Words accumulated, sticky and dense, presenting a gross assault on morality, as interior anatomical imagery regurgitated sheer life in the visceral air. Raha deftly scattered into a trash heap the nasty detritus of our culture: those scorned politicians, fascists and rape apologists whose identities are annihilated in her awkward, physical choreography of voice. There was trauma there, but also a kind of re-enacted fury, that insistent repetition recalling Samuel Beckett's *Not I*.

After a break, the evening closed with a performance from the apparently ungooglable 'Food People', who delivered a musical-text piece titled 'Sourdough Mutation Mutation'. Food People comprise the motley poets, Lila Matusmoto, Greg Thomas and Matthew Hamblin, and their discography includes a tape called 'Animal Work' from Beartown Records and recent CDR, *vetch*, available via Chocolate Monk. As Manson's own work crosses the medial platforms of sound, image, structure and sense, it was appropriate that his sprawling sequence, 'Sourdough Mutation',

found itself happily in the hands of a musical collective. With violin, loops, shruti box, guitar, alongside visuals from Matt Wright, Food People experimented in the complicated, highly-niche art of converting vowel sounds to audio. Taking Manson's eclectic original and slowing it to half-speed, Food People performed some colour-coded grammatical alchemy to translate the audio samples to musical notes, the enunciation of Manson's poem providing a guide for rhythm, speed and note length. More improvisational live elements, including drones and palindromic guitar/violin riffs, evoked an immersive pool of esoteric, musical perplexity, drawing us into and out of distraction, pondering the space between image/text/sound. The score that emerged carried its traces of process, unfolding tonal clusters in orbit around a major chord, exacting a latent melodic quality. What seemed to the untrained ear/eye a cut-up of musical and literary score soon blossomed as something far more complex, its haunting twangs and resonant air emphasising the tactility of Manson's fragments, strung as they are with an air of infinitude. Temporarily, the room is held in suspense, hypnotised by the contrapuntal tension between meaning and sense: a cacophonous landscape of intricate sound, organised around Manson's gorgeously orchestrated chaos.

Saturday 28th October

Taking place in University Gardens at the University of Glasgow, the second day began with the most exhilarating and meaty of keynotes, 'A Plenary Talk' by Robin Purves (University of Central Lancashire), peppered with colourful Manson anecdotes and centred on 'Fungus Chicken': a visual piece included in *Between Cup and Lip*. 'Fungus Chicken' serves as the idea for a transitional object of plural identity, gleaned from Bob Cobbing's mushroom poems to forge a new logic of playful, metamorphic self-portraiture in Manson's work, in particular within the cornucopia of sprawling subjects and selves that is *Adjunct*—a text whose very cover comprises the visual portmanteau of Manson + the Mona Lisa. Purves' experience as co-editor of *Object Permanence* alongside Manson made him well-poised to interrogate Manson's exploration of hallucinogenic poetic and visual intersections, and to do so with holistic irreverence. His talk was rich in wordplay and syllabic humour, considering the merits of the

psychedelic trip as an aperture to introspective discovery through infant eyes and ears, and exposing the process of replacement as fundamental to Peter's writing as much as it is at the epicentre of the hallucinatory experience. 'Fungus Chicken' replaces 'Peter Manson', quite literally, word by word, in what Purves calls a 'trochee by reduction': the work of the poet becomes the uncontrolled movement of the headless chicken, a means harnessed into writing and aimed at new semantic possibilities through seamless synthesis with the magic mushroom. Such forms of synthesis invite thinking through objects in transition through play, the paraphernalia of the daily made available as transitive poetic 'toys'. Purves expressed special admiration for the effects of such processes of transitional objectivity especially as they manifest themselves in Manson's Mallarmé translations, which Purves confidently esteems as 'the only consistently brilliant Mallarmé translations that exist'.

'Fungus Chicken' is a funky composite of two clipart renditions of a mushroom and, ostensibly, a chicken's body and feet (Purves will later reveal the original clipart bird to be an owl). With an accompanying handout recalling a web 1.0 attack to the clipart database with salvia-inspired flair, Purves vividly unveiled the narrative anamnesis within Manson's experimental poetics, and his recreation of sensory experience in which personhood is abstracted from the scene itself. This is less about drawing direct connections between poetry and psychedelics, so much as discerning the interdimensional capacities of an already psychoactive, glitch-ridden language. The Fungus Chicken handout presented several emails from Manson to Purves, in which Manson reflects on the arduous, yet sparkling process of cooking up poems while pursuing the strange time-space of affective substances, marking myriad impressions. In the Q&A, Manson suggested the influence of Gertrude Stein's *Tender Buttons* in his own portraits of objects, a lesson in how to make sequences aligning with the 'experience of absolute destructability' experienced on acid. Overall, the talk productively highlights mycological strains throughout Manson's work, drawing attention to a synaesthetic potentiality that refuses singular objective position.

Panel 1 began with Edinburgh-based poet and researcher Stewart Sanderson (Independent Scholar), whose talk on 'Peter Manson and Contemporary Scottish Poetry' sought to restore focus on Manson's Scottish heritage. While the majority

of Manson criticism places his work in relation to North American and continental contemporaries and international movements in experimental poetics, Sanderson considers Manson's significance within the contemporary Scottish scene: the potentially productive outcome of situating Manson's work this way, and whether this geographical significance comprises an 'anti-canon' of Scottish experimental poetry. Throughout his talk, Sanderson draws astute comparisons with a vast array of Scottish poets, as well as the editorial and publishing context which shaped the production and reception of their work in local and global contexts—especially given the cultural pressure to seem less parochial. The likes of Tom Raworth, Ron Sullivan, Richard Price, Thomas A. Clark and Iain Hamilton Finlay, Sanderson contends, attempted to internationalise Scotland's literary scene.

Building on a point already made by Alice Tarbuck in her review of Manson's *Factitious Airs*, Sanderson argued that what distinguishes Manson from the experimental American poets he is often read in comparison to are: his trust of the reader, his attention to Scottish speech rhythms, his interest in place, the high value he places on aesthetics, and his commitment to a modernist Scottish tradition of poetic translation in the manner of Edwin Morgan. *Adjunct: An Undigest* was read as reflecting Manson's often playful and subversive orientations towards Scottish poetry, foregrounding the space and time of its composition. As various Scottish poets make their caricatured appearance throughout *Adjunct*, Sanderson wryly noted that the poem is Manson's self-proclamation as the 'bad boy' of Scottish poetry. Sanderson warmly related a dynamic network of authors in historical context; reminding us, for example, that Morgan submitted to Manson and Purves's magazine *Object Permanence*. The talk as a whole cemented Manson's curatorial as much as creative role within contemporary Scottish literary history.

Following Sanderson's talk, Essex-based Greg Thomas (Independent Scholar) of Food People presented 'Sourd-Muet: The Poetics of Non-communication in Peter Manson's "Sourdough Mutation"'. Listening to the talk after Food People's performance the night before, Thomas' generative, multiplatform approach to interpreting Manson acquired particular creative and critical significance, drawing a lineage between Manson's compositions and the sonic and visual poetics of the

English and Scottish concrete tradition, alongside earlier symbolist works. Focusing on Manson's 2014 collection, *Poems of Frank Rupture*, with particular attention to the long central poem-sequence 'Sourdough Mutation', Thomas highlighted the work's significance to Manson's Mallarmé translations, also honing in on the semantic effects of the poem's play with absence and non-communication, contained in the title's pun on the French phrase 'sourd-muet' (deaf-mute). Noting a Bergsonian 'tragicomic materialism' in Manson's work, Thomas argued that the body emphasised in the piece is that of language itself—'assailed by curious grammatical structures'.

Thomas attended to the physical textual effects which distort the reader's access to meaning, operating at the level of the phoneme and grapheme. Letters and sounds are echoed, reversed, repeated; syllables are swapped around, first letters are swapped around; these are not only grammatical changes but also visual: verses seem repeated because they look similar, thus highlighting questions of translation, semantic expectations, and 'explosion of the subject' similar to those Manson approaches in *English in Mallarmé*. There's a sense of straining at the boundaries of subjective perception, and Thomas linked this to the global financial crisis of the late 2000s which provided the political backdrop to the composition of 'Sourdough Mutation'. It makes sense that this fragmented, resistant poetic friction takes place alongside the sudden disintegration of faulty systems, becoming the response to the clashing and crashing of global financial organisations and producing a vertiginous sense of distorted base and scale.

The final speaker of Panel 1 was Rebecca Varley-Winter (University of Cambridge), there to present on 'Colouring *écriture féminine* in Peter Manson's translations of Mallarmé'. While Julia Kristeva was mentioned in Thomas' talk in relation to Manson's explosion of the subject into Freudian drives, Varley-Winter picked up Kristeva's reading of Mallarmé in her central discussion of colour in Manson's Mallarmé translations. Colour's capacity for diffused sensation, Varley-Winter suggested, shifts the reader beyond purely symbolic ways of reading, so colour becomes something purely experiential to be read in dialogue or even contrast with the possibilities of symbols. Drawing from Audre Lorde's 'Uses of the Erotic', Varley-Winter made an argument for considering the uses of *écriture féminine* in Manson's Mallarmé

translations, especially 'Don du Poème' and 'Les Fenêtres'. Varley-Winter references existing links between feminist theory and colour, with visual artists and writers such as Pipilotti Rist and Meiling Cheng indicating the liberating possibilities of colour's undecidable status between lightness of image and material weight of desire, and reasserting *écriture féminine's* power to speak the body in a way that masculine writing cannot.

While previous mentions of translation focused mostly on semantics and method, Varley-Winter reminded us of the translator's relation to the sensual dimensions of source language, drawing parallels with interpretive engagements with chromatic vision. Manson's translations don't 'imagine a greater degree of purity and abstractions' in their conversion process like many English translations often do; they are sensuous in that they do not obscure the turbulences inherent to both source and target language. If, as Kristeva argues, Mallarmé's work invites the reader into a pre-linguistic state, a *chora*-like space of maternal communion, then colour in Manson and Mallarmé's work also channels bodily and material qualities and forces. With adept close readings, Varley-Winter argued that Manson's translations particularly emphasise the dialogue between 'light' and 'heavy' combinations, resulting in 'colouring and challenging symbolic language systems'. This reading offers a pleasurable critical method, by which we might read blue as a textual medium itself. Swirling with aporia and ellipsis, saturation and concentration, Manson's poetics offer a very Barthesian textual pleasure, discerned in the Q&A as a kind of 'colour noise': a bleeding of the visual and sonic, enabled by Manson's loosening of Mallarmé's tightly woven rhymes.

A short break gave time to anticipate Samantha Walton's (Bath Spa University) dazzling paper on ecological and new materialist thinking in relation to Manson's recent work: "'things go beyond words'/'Slow Motion Cucumber Decay in Fridge': Ecological Thinking, New Materialism and *Adjunct: an Undigest*". The key focus for Walton's talk was thinking about *Adjunct's* formal features as a springboard for considering critical possibilities offered by new materialism. Alongside close reading, Walton also delivered an arsenal of contemporary critical theory—including Donna Haraway, Jane Bennett and Timothy Morton. Walton began with Robert Sheppard's

assertion that linguistically innovative poets often foreground 'the artificiality of the forms and discourses they employ', estranging us from familiar things and suspending the 'inevitable' ideological 'naturalisation' that occurs within dominant cultural and social discourse. Taking a new materialist, ecological lens to *Adjunct*, Walton unpicked the ways in which Manson destabilises familiar binaries and the discourses underpinning them. Such binaries include nature/culture, human/nonhuman, organic/inorganic and inside/outside; disturbing these binaries involves unsettling the ideological assumptions that put humans in a dominant, active and separate position, when actually the material world presents a far more enmeshed and destabilising vision of action, relation, transformation and cause and effect. It was fascinating to see such recent theoretical discourses being deployed in relation to Manson's formal interventions, to the point that Walton's argument itself became part of *Adjunct's* voracious 'textual recycling'.

Walton draws a lineage for *Adjunct's* trash aesthetic from the Dadaists, who recycled the streets for repurposed art. Since Manson unifies apparently disparate elements in ways which foreground form and materiality, the reader is prompted to notice previously unseen operations of our material enmeshment or interrelatedness. Language, in a sense, is treated as matter itself: the debris of culture and physical experience, the off-slew of our mammalian identity within ecosystems of vibrant matter, the distorting space-times of what Morton calls *hyperobjects*. Indeed, Walton's attention to similarities between Jane Bennett's *Vibrant Matter* and *Adjunct* was particularly productive in revealing the text's role as an assemblage, or an 'undigester register' of 'recycled detritus', rather than mere transparent communicative medium. The interpellative strategies of *Adjunct* make us aware that we are all part of this active reconstitution of language and matter, a chiasmic impulse of repurposed text in which the self's agency is minimised in the sheer scale of material debris. Borrowing a sentence from Irene Gammel and John Wrighton, Walton reminded us that 'within the ecology of recycling and sustainability, language itself is a cultural litter to be recycled and renewed, while culture as a rich compost for poetry is subject to the ecological laws of decomposition and recomposition'. Walton also astutely pointed out that the idea of culture as a 'compost' becomes not only challenging to

the fragmentation so central to modernist aesthetics, but also problematic for more postmodern assertions of language's intertextuality, manifest in techniques such as collage and pastiche, by necessarily implying barriers between subject and nature, and suspending naturalisation. Insofar as it wears the traces of its essence of material accumulation on its sleeve, tentative labels for *Adjunct* could then be 'posthumanist', or even 'compostist'.

Fruitfully, Walton positioned Manson's work in contrast to more 'ecomimetic' (Morton's term) forms of ecopoetry, such as that employed by Kathleen Jamie or John Burnside. Her argument for an 'Outsider' poetics adds to Sanderson's mention of a potential Scottish anti-canon, except here the outsider quality pertains not just to the rejection of political and aesthetic hegemonies, but also the poetic illumination of interdependence between human centrality and the 'othered lives and forms of nature'. Although the specific Anthropocene context of this reading transcended the scope of Walton's talk, her critical vocabulary opens many avenues for further probing the linguistic interplay of Manson's detritus aesthetic of resistant, tactile ecopoetics, in relation to broader sociopolitical and geologic concerns.

Following Walton's talk, poet and lecturer Josh Robinson (Cardiff University) attempted to theorise a 'conceptual repertoire' in response to *Adjunct*: 'Trying to Be a (Better) Materialist: Matter, Materialism; Media, Meditation; *_Adjunct_*, disjunctification'. Robinson's aesthetic focus lay upon modernist cinematic techniques of collage and montage, drawing such elements into the talk's own critical intervention within a famous disagreement between Adorno and Benjamin as to surrealism's political and poetic potential. The focus on *adjunctification*—the process by which a thing is added to something else as a supplementary rather than essential part—allowed Robinson to explore *Adjunct*'s resistance to 'sense', playing instead on the dynamics of cultural familiarity, parataxis and modulation, making aesthetic parallels with montage and raising questions about surrealism's anti-organic impulse. The reader approaches *Adjunct* as a sequence, but distrusts the order of such sequence: the paratactical conjunctions are never truly paratactical; there seems to be a strangely unified logic to the whole, but it is not that of coherence.

While Adorno claims that surrealism never loses sight of its materialism, statically employing montage and thus uncritically accepting bourgeois materialist ideology, Robinson probed how the 'technical repertoire' of *Adjunct* offers an invigorating alternative to the outdated images of commodity fetishism which Adorno identified as ideologically compliant. Perhaps most compelling about Robinson's talk, and certainly most provocative, was their argument about academic feudalism within contemporary universities and associated institutions, playing on the connotations of 'adjunct professor'. Robinson asserted that the conditions in which critical thought is inspired and supported are quickly being eroded, but luckily their own talk provides a model through which to think through critical theory, contemporary aesthetics and material contexts of work and labour within the academy and beyond.

Next up on Panel 2 was Rob Kiely (St Mary's University), with his paper 'Actually, literary criticism is bookkeeping'. Kiely's talk sprung inventively sprung from Manson's claim in *Adjunct* that 'Actually, literary criticism is bookkeeping'—a claim that in turn responds to 'Literary criticism is not book-keeping', from Samuel Beckett's 'Dante...Bruno, Vico...Joyce'. Beginning with an exposition of Samuel Beckett's latent ideas about accountancy, narrative and surface-reading, Kiely asks whether we can read *Adjunct* itself as a work of accountancy, insofar as it consists of a 'quantitative overview of economic activity'—a kind of credit within the literary ecology in which both Manson and Beckett's texts exist. The first part of Kiely's paper offered a brief history of accounting theory for the uninitiated literary academics in the room. The words of early accounting—'externalising', 'recording', 'mechanisms of distribution', 'commensurability'—already seemed drawn from *Adjunct* before the connection with Manson was made explicit.

Sliding effortlessly between Vico's temporalizing of the extra-temporal, ideas of financial precariousness, and B. S. Johnson's *Christy Malry's Own Double-Entry* (1973), then, Kiely reads Manson's *Adjunct* as a clear refusal of the historically dominant double-entry bookkeeping system, in which every entry to an account requires a corresponding and opposite entry to a different account. This symmetric methodology (which Kiely speculated might have been historically successful

especially for its aesthetic, in keeping with the taste of the Renaissance, as well as for its functionality) is refused in *Adjunct* in favour of a series of single poetic transactions, standing alone and devoid of correspondence. In Kiely's words, this choice in Manson draws attention to the inherent 'processes of valorisation which precede acts of accounting', and thus places creative and accounting methodologies side by side within a critical and formal context. The paper then acutely suggested two questions that lie at the very core of this relationship between accounting and poetics. Firstly, what the role of commensurability is in a system based on language, and what such things as 'a common unity' or 'equivalence' can look like in poetry writing. Secondly, whether or not literary criticism itself also necessarily engages in this economy of relations, as a managing of entries and units, as a two-way transaction between author and critic to take place over the text—and indeed what the poetic and political consequences of this revelation are.

Following a productive lunch (appetites for which were somewhat bewildered by Panel 2's focus on the *undigestive* aspects of *Adjunct*), Panel 3 began with symposium organiser Ellen Dillon (Dublin City University), who delivered a paper in the absence of Alice Tarbuck. Titled "Blessed by a thousand flecks of foam": flotsam and foam in Peter Manson's *Mallarmé* in English, and *English in Mallarmé*, Dillon's talk examined the history of Manson's work in translation, and how the translating process itself can affect our subsequent readings of *Mallarmé*. In the *anti-translations* of *English in Mallarmé*, Manson eliminates everything that is not also an English word, playing with the implications of cognates and false cognates, and the connections sparked in negative space between different signification systems. Examining the visual detritus of poems such as 'Toast Fun', Dillon lucidly demonstrated the 'constellatory reading' inspired by Manson's formal process: 'a suspension between arbitrary constitution of meaning and meaning's temporary constitution', crystallised in 'white spaces [that] make room for the music of silence'. With reference to Derrida's 'seminal whiteness' of the blank page, Dillon explored the controversies and creative potentials of presenting Manson's translations as the creation of parallel text, contextualised within a greater evaluation of the politics and poetics of translation

itself as an inscribing of the dynamics of desire in the field of abstraction—another (re)mark of black lines on a white page.

The final speaker of the day, aside from Manson himself, was Callie Gardner (University of Leeds), editor of *Zarf* magazine. Titled "'falling awake": Peter Manson's Catachresis', Gardner's talk focused on Manson's characteristic use of catachresis: the deliberate usage of 'wrong' words, when a closer byword is available. Beginning with a quote from Roman rhetorician Quintilian, Gardner established Manson's weighty poetic legacy in the manner of deliberate elusiveness: a kind of 'productive irresponsibility' in the use of language that allows a more polymorphic channel of meaning, as well as a 'responsibility to make fresh use of the language'. Gardner examined how often the use of catachresis in Manson might simply be playful, but how at other times is disarming, resulting in deep reconfigurations of a text's internal grammar. With attention to both *Poems of Frank Rupture* (2015) and the neo-Oulipian texts of *Factitious Airs* (2016), Gardner compellingly presented catachresis as a key critical tool for thinking through the slippery manoeuvres of Manson's work, those which evade our conventional poetic vocabularies.

A particularly arresting element of Gardner's argument involved reference to Gertrude Stein's metapoetics, which Manson returns to. In both Stein and Manson, these syntactical interventions are the most evident mark of the author's deliberate agency over form: just like Stein's rose *en abyme* requires that we stop to pick over the grammar of each rose in the looping chain, Manson's catachresis invites a certain obsessional yet pleasurable deferral. Gardner also returned to Kristeva's *Revolution in Poetic Language*, arguing that Manson reconfigures phonemes as matter which itself does not require re-semantisation, or realignment with phallogocentrism. Their talk was followed by a particularly productive Q&A, bringing in the significance of Contraband Books' *Glitter Is A Gender* anthology and discussing the grammatical poetics of theft, interpretation and structural principles of exception, the erotic order of semantic resistance.

Part of the strange enchantment of what quickly acquired the affectionate term 'Mansonfest' was of course the presence of Peter Manson himself. A diligent

listener, he also contributed many a word during the panel Q&As, offering snippets of anecdotal intrigue, humour or reflection on how his work related to that of other authors, with the effect of almost organically melding together the readers' perspectives. Manson's responsiveness to the papers and openness to critical discussion throughout the day allowed several strands of readerly interest to become apparent: from the significance of his work, formally and thematically, within the context of the Anthropocene; to the question of Scottishness and anti-canoncity.

After absorbing so many thoughts and responses to Manson's oeuvre, it was a real treat to conclude the two-day event with Manson himself giving a generous reading of career-spanning poems: beginning with selections from *For the Good of Liars*, *Between Cup and Lip* and *Factitious Airs*, and concluding with a twenty-minute section from *Adjunct: an undigest*. Among fading October light and emptying glasses of wine, Manson filled the heart of Glasgow University Gardens with his meditative, careful delivery, taking side-turns for surprise and allowing the linguistic cornucopia to speak for itself with magnetic intonation. Some of the highlights included 'Familiars', dedicated to Maggie Graham in the audience, and 'Canzon—(for singing), after Calvacanti', dedicated to organiser Ellen Dillon who has published critical work on the poem's approach to lightness. The audience was electrified to see the critical sequence finally and intriguingly looped: from poems to criticism, to the poems again.

The feedback loops bared by the symposium clearly indicate a thriving critical and creative community firmly rooted around the critical depth and formal variety Manson's work. Organisers Ellen Dillon, Tom Betteridge, Colin Herd and Nicky Melville more than did justice to the eclectic, mind-altering capacities of Manson's poetry, supplementing the traditional academic conference—or in this case, a rather lively and convivial version of it—with the inspiring exuberance of a reading night. The cleverly curated array of innovative and enthusiastic responses offered across the weekend, by performers and critical presenters alike, truly captured the playful experimentalism of Manson's work. The rooms of the symposium acted like an echo chamber for all the literary dichotomies that Peter Manson's writing stands for:

academic rigour as well as poetic mischief, deadpan facetiousness, and measured self-awareness against ebullient performativity.

Competing Interests

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

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