

Solid Things and Slippery Words

Every thing exists twice. Once in its thingness and once in the name we give it. The two are simultaneously equivalent, yet different. Not word and word made matter (flesh), rather matter (thing), and our word(s) for it.

The thing (the object) is ostensibly stoic, but, in our frequently verbose engagement with it, is not entirely impervious to our beguiling whispers, our bellicose rhetoric. When we see a thing “in the flesh”, we see it for what it is, can verify (most of) its physical aspects and attributes; but the instant we try to apply a word to it — to name it, to describe it, to discuss it — everything changes. The word is all deception. It lurks, latent, waiting to feint with memory, with imagination, with potential.

Since Plato wrote his *Dialogues* in the fourth century BC, many words have been written (and spoken) about the relationship between words, things, their meanings, and our experience of them: scholarly, erudite, provocative, imaginative, playful, poetic words. In acknowledgement and appreciation of those I have read, and re-read¹, I present this somewhat idiosyncratic paper in which I will propose that, although things and words occupy different terrain and may appear incommensurable, the place where they can meet most congenially is the poetic realm.

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Though they might appear to exist at opposite ends of the spectrum, poetry and utility, or the utilitarian, are not mutually exclusive. Just as poetry has its own functional role in the playing out of our humanity, poetry inheres in the functional; and there is, as is amply demonstrated in exhibitions currently celebrating **Sydney Design 09**, a poetics of utility. Even the most exacting demands of functionality can give rise to a poetic approach to making for which the history of artefacts furnishes innumerable examples. And while a poem is a thing — an artefact — it is also a way of engaging with the world — an attitude — and it is the words of poetry — those words that lure or thrust us precipitately towards the unexpected that enable us to see below the surface of things, for:

In the very essence of poetry there is something indecent:
a thing is brought forth which we didn't know we had in us,
so we blink our eyes, as if a tiger had sprung out
and stood in the light, lashing its tail.²

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Although the thing (even if not a unique object) has a particularity – a specific thingness – which is indisputable, the word or words that name it have multiple existences as sounds and the configurations of marks which represent them, as well as in individual experiences and memories assigned to them. There are many words for table: table, tabla, tafel, tisch, tavola, asztal; and there are many adjectives to attach to the table-word: large, enormous, medium, small, square, round, oval, high, low, elegant, regal, rustic, clunky, wobbly, variously legged or leafed, made from wood, metal, plastic, stone; and tables are made and used for celebratory, joyous or sorrowful occasions, special or common everyday occasions. And there are squillions of individual and group associations with each of those words.

An individual table-thing may conjure up associations, but generally some feature(s) differ from the memories evoked. When I see a rectangular wooden table with a square leg at each corner, it may or may not remind me of the one in the kitchen of my childhood. An oval beautifully polished mahogany table with a subtly carved edge and shapely legs may or may not take me to my grandmother's dining table. (Whereas, the scent of roses inevitably will.) This is not the case with the word. When I hear the word table, any number of tables can be evoked from my memory or imagination: actual tables, archetypal or prototypal tables, mythic tables.

I have long harboured an ambition to make a table. I can see it my mind's eye: strong and elegantly proportioned, large enough to comfortably seat ten or twelve people, rectangular, a square leg at each corner, made from timber, stained the colour of the oceanic abyss. A colour for which there is no word.

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In the past, I have proposed³ that words have their own thingness, assigned to them by the things they name, which is determined associatively by each individual. But in the substantial presence of the thing itself this position is clearly untenable. The thing renders the word provisional, at best.

The thing (the object) resists prefixes, suffixes, adjectives. It is what it is. If you add to it, subtract from it, smash it, annihilate it, it remains what it is : the thing with additions, the thing with bits removed, the thing smashed, the thing annihilated. Just that, unqualified and still resistant.

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We love words, don't we? Well, I love words. I write them, watch them take shape on the page, observe how they change from my enigmatic scrawl to pixels on my computer screen to print on paper. I speak them, listen to their timbre, their resonance. I roll them around in my mouth like a stone, swirl and swill them like wine to catch their palate, bite them to test their tenderness or resilience, whether they bounce between my teeth, crunch or become a mouthful of mush. I attend to their consonance, their dissonance, their harmonics, their reiterative chanting, their dulcet and mellifluous lilt, their plangency, their abrasive edge. I endeavour to invoke their histories and their presentness. Try to apprehend their reverberations. And I value the spaces, the silences between them, which give them meaning.

We use words to interrogate, to try to understand and to tame our world. They also tame (or provoke) us — make us civil or combatant. And we do need words in order to experience things, because things are so far removed from our visceral, sensitive, emotional, intelligent, passionate selves. Words enable us to negotiate the gulf between the silence and unresponsiveness of things and their thingness and our human requirement for an articulate and sensate engagement with the world in which we live. They enable us to realise our human potential. How else can we seize and record and retrieve the fleeting moments of our consciousness, without words? Makers will say :
by making things

It also appears that we and our words need things. Lorraine Daston in her introduction to *Things that Speak* imagines “a world without things. It would not be so much an empty world as a blurry, frictionless one . . . there would be no resistance against which to stub a toe or test a theory or struggle stalwartly. Nor would there be anything to describe, or to explain, remark on, interpret, or complain about — just a kind of porridgy oneness. Without things we would stop talking. We would become as mute as things are alleged to be”⁴

Whatever the extent of my passion for them, I am forced to admit that words cannot of themselves change one thing. Things do not need our words. Some things — “made things” — need our agency — our action or our advocacy — in order to come into existence. Beyond that, is noise. This has been proposed and developed, studied and discussed since Plato’s time⁵; and Heidegger’s essay *The Thing*, first translated into English in 1962⁶ continues to elicit debate among his apologists, antagonists and others.

How many of our words are said or written simply to say “I am here”. “I exist”. And how much of our exchange of words, one with another, is spoken for the comfort of knowing that someone else is here, with us? Of course, some of us speak, silently or aloud, to ourselves when alone, others write a diary or journal in order to capture and develop for possible later retrieval our internal dialogue. I wonder how much of our speaking or writing, or any writing unless destined for sharing, differs from onanistic monologue. But without this internal (or external) dialogue how do we ascertain and cultivate our own consciousness? Again, I hear makers say: by making things. They may also assert that our things — our artefacts — provide us with companionship and acknowledgment of our existence.

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The thing, undergoing a transition, through our agency, from matter (material) to object or artefact is already endowed with words; is already part word. It has had words, either implicitly or explicitly, applied to its instigation, its production, its initiation into our world of artefacts and the discourses surrounding them. It has been thus for millennia. But, those of us who make things also know the need for silence. By silence, I do not mean absence of sound or noise, for most of our making activities are accompanied by some (sometimes excessive) sound (or noise). But there is a point at which words — our own or others’ — are un-welcome, un-helpful and downright counter-productive. They breach the reverie and rupture the close tacit and haptic relationship between mind and eye and hand and tool that develops during concentrated making. I remember a visiting English jeweller boasting that his wife would stand outside his studio door and listen, waiting for

him to finish filing the form he was working on before telling him that the lunch she had made him was ready. He was a sexist swine; but I know what he meant.

It can be both interesting and instructive to test our capacity for silence when making a thing or when contemplating a thing — whether that thing is a product of nature or culture. But, back to words:

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I have attempted to identify several modes — nine of them — in which it seems to me that words are applied to things — in this forum, to objects or artefacts — with implications for our perceptions and experiences of them.

But first, above and beyond these modes — words are applied to objects or artefacts in two discernable, though not necessarily exclusive, ways: to objects as things and to objects as experiences. That is to say, they may be applied to the thing (the object) purely as a thing-in-the-world, in a more or less objective manner, sometimes in a manner which deceitfully purports to be objective, or they may be applied to the thing as an experience or potential experience, which activates a more subjective approach.

This is an oversimplified dichotomy. It's rare to find the following modes used in exclusively one or other manner, as it is virtually impossible to eradicate our affective response to things and its resultant impact on our use of words. And those words, even if intended objectively, will have some affective or emotional impact on the reader or listener.

Nevertheless, the modes I have identified are :

- descriptive
- prescriptive
- designative
- contextual
- analytical
- critical
- advocatory
- incantatory
- poetic.

There are no hard edges. I acknowledge the slippage between and across modes. In avoiding more traditional categories of language use: discursive, declamatory, rhetorical, etc, I have developed my avowedly idiosyncratic assemblage as a response to Lorraine Daston's proposal that we need things to give friction to our world⁷. I have ranked these modes in terms of their adhesive friction — that is, according to the way in which words used in them seem to me to rub against, to adhere to, or to slip away from or slither across the thing. I am calling this quality traction, and have awarded each mode a traction rating on a scale of one to ten, one being the slipperiest and ten the grippiest.

The Descriptive Mode may include scientific and technical data and analysis of the appearance of the thing (the object or artefact); its intended function; data regarding its dimensions: height, length, depth, weight; the materials from which it is made and the processes technologies/ crafts employed in its production; and more specific data relating to its ability to perform its intended function. The use of words in this mode is apparently entirely determined by the artefact in question. It has a traction rating ranging from five to nine depending on the on the clarity of information or evocation. (I'd award nine to Francis Ponge descriptions in *The Nature of Things*.)

In the Prescriptive Mode, informative or instructive words fall into three categories: what the thing is for; how to make the thing; and how to use and/or to care for the thing. Anyone who has ever given or received instruction on how to make or use some thing knows how slippery these words of instruction can be. Ideally, its traction rating would be ten; but, from experience I can only award it seven-and-a-half.

With the Designative Mode I think of the imposition of posited taxonomies, of definitions and denotations, of titles and tags — tags such as awkward, unwearable, unbearable, untouchable.

Some words, in their designatory role, clarify: beaker, bowl, brooch, chair, coat, cup, hat, jug, lamp, ring, shoe, table. This can be useful. When confronted with an object it can help to know whether to put it on your head or to sit on it.

Some words are thugs — helmet-wearing, baton-brandishing, with Tasers in tow. They bully. They intimidate. They taunt. They attempt to regulate. At best, they goad. Provoke.

Take *awkward*.

The Macquarie Dictionary describes the adjective thus: lacking dexterity or skill; clumsy; bungling; ungraceful; ungainly; uncouth; unhandy; somewhat hazardous; dangerous; embarrassing or trying; deliberately obstructive; difficult; perverse; oblique; backward; inverted.

Awkward Objects? There are no awkward objects; only words which render us awkward in the presence of objects so designated. But perhaps, also, words which goad us to enquire where awkwardness inheres. Words which might make us resistive, defiant, rebellious, revolutionary.

And what about those un-words?

Un as a prefix is a denial. It negates the word to which it's attached. An un-word can imply prohibition or it can stimulate insurrection. It challenges us to question it. To argue with it. To defend the word. Liberate it. Strip it of its un-ness.

Un-wearable! Un-bearable! Un-touchable!

How much more challenging than the leniency of wearable, bearable, and almost cuddly touchable!

Unwearable: I could go on for hours. It's been well covered, so I won't, except to say that it is meet that each generation of jewellery makers feels the need to re-engage with the debate. It attests to an earnest contract with the genre. In any case, decisions about wearability are for the most part determined by jewellery wearers, on a prescribed or collectively determined cultural, sub-cultural

basis and/or more idiosyncratically. In short: if somebody will wear it: it's wearable. If not: it's not.

I think here of *unworry* — the NRMA's clever little jape. It attracts attention because, until a few months ago, there was no such word. So from the start: you're in their hands. Notice; they don't say relax. That would achieve nothing. But unworry "Oh, is there something I should be worrying about? ooops: my insurance." Very effective

My favourite use of un-words is Oscar Wilde's description of fox-hunting "the unspeakable in pursuit of the uneatable".

(Oh . . . and I am commissioned to mention unmentionable. Consider it mentioned.)

I award this coercive, manipulative and sometimes, whether intentional or not, provocative mode a traction rating of between three-and-three-quarters and eight, depending on whether it is taken as gospel or with a grain of salt, as it deserves.

The role of the Contextual Mode is to provide an historical, cultural, social, context for the object. A level of fantasy, delightful or disturbing according to your perspective, is often invoked in this mode, which leaves its traction rating on the slippery side of six.

The Analytical Mode is closely associated with the Contextual Mode. It also postures as critical, even descriptive, but often digresses from dealing with the visual arts and design into linguistic theory more appropriately applied — yes — to language, to words. I think here, but not exclusively, of Twentieth Century French theory which is notable for its erudition and is frequently inventive, lucid, even playful at the source, but so often lapses into arcane and turgid obfuscation in the mouths of apologists. The traction rating for this mode ranges from one to nine, depending on the degree of translucency. (I'd award Bergson seven-and-a-half and Barthes about nine.)

The Critical Mode — usually easy to identify — is less constrained than some of the others and frequently incorporates elements of the descriptive and the contextual. Critics, whether their words are adulatory, derogatory, censorial, or merely descriptive, often appear to speak — to pass judgement — with the voice of objective authority. They are, as we know, expressing a personal view. There is no other.

Reviewing⁸ the John Brack exhibition at the National Gallery of Victoria, Christopher Allen expended many words bemoaning the fact that Brack was not a more expressionistic painter, citing Brack's "hardness of line, which makes the painting look like a coloured-in drawing" which . . . "is reductive, mechanical and closed to real perception of the world" as well as his "generally unsympathetic approach to the subject where . . . a fundamental want of human feeling mars even his most memorable compositions."

It is easy to see how the words of one writer, if accepted as an authority, could skew the experience for an acquiescent viewer.

Here is part of John Freeland's review of the exhibition associated with Sturt Woodfire 2008⁹.

On a domestic scale, in the traditional and continuing realm of ceramic art, which some mistakenly deride as concept free functional vessels, there were a number of pieces which clearly demonstrated the blinkered poverty of such notions. Among the best of the bowls were Gwyn Hanssen Pigott's wonderful two-tone *bowl 1996* . . . Ian Jones's tea bowl and Don Court's *Nattai Track*.

Daniel Lafferty's small charcoal grey vase, Kwi Rak Choung's cylindrical vase with natural ash glaze deposits . . . provide strong testimony to the aesthetic and conceptual riches available in the vase and bottle form if those forms are approached and created with awareness, patience and a quiet known competence.

And . . . a number of quite exquisite platter forms were exhibited . . . which demonstrate the quiet unpredictable beauty, power and wonder of wood-firing.

I award the critical mode a score of eight. This may seem generous; but it appears that many critics do attentively view and consider the objects of which they write.

The Advocatory Mode includes what we call spin. Those who use it are more or less frank about their promotional intentions. This mode sometimes masquerades as adulatory criticism, often purchased at the cost of a bit of flattery and a good dinner. In a spirit of generosity, I give it a traction rating of three.

Incantatory — This is a bit of an outsider; but I'm thinking of the way in which artefacts are addressed in their roles as accessories in public or private religious, mystical, or emotional rituals and ceremonies. Chalice, crosses, rosaries, prayer-beads, love tokens and the like are actually spoken to, as well as spoken about and used as surrogates or prompts for words addressed to the one who is absent. I am at a loss to know how to rank this.

What I'm calling the Poetic Mode may take the form of poetry or prose. It leans towards a more experiential, imaginative and affective use of words in speaking of the object, thus rendering it within an inherently more subjective context. This is not to assert that subjectivity is absent from the other modes, and certainly not to claim that an imaginative element is lacking, either, as fictive fantasy is notably present in the advocatory mode, where anything may be claimed on behalf of the object being promoted. But the other modes, with the possible exception of the incantatory, have about them an authoritarian air. The voice speaking or writing those words is that of one who knows, or who purports or is alleged to know.

In the poetic mode words gain their traction from the writer's experience of the object whether real or imagined; not only their visual and intellectual experience, but their emotional — sometimes quite demoniac and visceral — interaction with things.

With its less authoritarian demeanour, the poetic mode gives the thing and those who would engage with it more generous imaginative scope in which to manoeuvre. And while offering an originatively experiential take on the object, it encourages the reader/viewer to do the same. Poetry plays. It encourages — literally gives us the courage — to do likewise.

The gift of the poetic mode is that of the oblique view — the view through and beyond normal and often predicable discourse. It can furnish fresh insights, make unexpected connections, can delight, devastate, jolt or shock us into a new way of seeing, hearing, smelling, feeling, thinking. It offers a new way of experiencing the artefact through a kind of fusion between the thing, which becomes the poetic thing, and the poetic word as another thing-in-the-world-of the imagination. And, whether framed as poetry or prose, as a guide to our potential experience of and engagement with the object, it succeeds because it shifts the emphasis away from the impassive thingness of the thing to a human experience of it.

I award the poetic mode a traction rating of nine-and-nine-tenths.

Let us consider some of the eloquently passionate and poetic words written about things. Which of us, as object makers in particular, can remain unmoved by the first words of Keats' *Ode on a Grecian Urn* which begins:

“Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness!
Thou foster-child of Silence and slow Time”

(Silence and Time both merit capital letters)

Or delight in Pablo Neruda's *Ode to My Socks*:

Maru Mori brought me
a pair
of socks
knitted with her own
shepherd's hands,
two socks soft
as rabbits.
I slipped
my feet into them
as if
into
jewel cases
woven
with threads of
dusk
and sheep's wool.

Audacious socks,
my feet became
two woolen
fish,
two long sharks
of lapis blue
shot

with a golden thread,
two mammoth blackbirds,
two canons,
thus honoured
were
my
feet
by
these
celestial
socks.

. . .

I resisted
the strong temptation
to save them
the way schoolboys
bottle
fireflies
the way scholars
hoard
sacred documents.
I resisted the wild impulse
to place them
in a cage
of gold
and daily feed them
birdseed
and rosy melon flesh.
Like explorers
who in the forest
surrender a rare
and tender deer
to the spit
and eat it
with remorse,
I stuck out
my feet
and pulled on
the
handsome
socks,
and
then my shoes.¹⁰

Here is Margaret Atwood's *Carved Animals*

The small carved
animal is passed from
hand to hand
around the circle
until the stone grows warm

touching, the hands do not know
the form of the animal
which was made or
the true form of stone
uncovered

and the hands, the fingers, the
hidden small bones
of the hands bend to hold the shape,
shape themselves, grow
cold with the stone's cold, grow
also animal, exchange
until the skin wonders
if the stone is human

In the darkness later
and even when the animal
has gone, they keep
the image of that
inner shape

hands holding warm
hands holding
the half-formed air¹¹

And Dorothy Porter's grandfather's cigarette case:

has a battered elegance;
his civilised friend
 who'd slid so smoothly
 into a pocket
over . . . his . . .
 heart
when the shelling started
 up again
in the trenches of Amiens

now sits
stained but cool
in my hand —¹²

We can feel the wool of the socks, the warming of the stone “grown animal”, the chill of the metal. This is apt. Most of the objects in the three exhibitions here, as well as other objects associated with *Sydney Design 09*, are ultimately intended for our physical participation. They are meant to be used — handled, lifted, cupped, drunk or eaten from, stacked, arranged, worn, sat on. As exhibited items they may be un-touchable; but, through poetic evocation of them as experiences rather than mere things, and through our haptic and tactile memory derived from a lifetime of bodily interaction with such objects, we can invoke sensations of a granular or nobby surface, a smoothly rounded corner, a jagged edge — what Loraine Daston calls the friction of things.

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I have estimated that some fifty to sixty thousand words will have been spoken in the official proceedings by the conclusion of this day, not to mention the many bandied about in catching-up chit-chat and inevitable gossip as well as some serious discourse, over coffee and lunch. That’s something like twenty thousand “official” words for each of the three exhibitions. In the meantime, the objects sit in their allocated places on walls or plinths or in showcases in the galleries, entirely dependent on our agency for their existence and location, but indifferent to our verbiage, and somehow inviting us to put our hands over our ears and over our mouths, and to look — to look and to touch (unless un-touchable) and to imagine what they might have to say in the silence of our looking.

This is not to denigrate the words that have been and will be spoken, today or any other day — thoughtful and thought-provoking, perceptive, insightful, scholarly, imaginative, and at times poetic words — essential words — words for which I am profoundly grateful as they have so enriched my experience of the world; but I question the status of the things — the objects in the exhibitions — after all the words have been spoken and written about them. Are they still able to arouse in us a sense of wonder and curiosity, to stimulate our imagination? I hope so, for so much of our knowledge — our so-called experience and understanding of things is derived from words — from reading about them, rather than from really encountering them. And today, much of our exposure to things is derived from consumption rather than genuinely intimate interaction — particularly virtually digitised consumption, which leaves us increasingly pixilated and spun out with even less genuine first-hand, hands-on experience and understanding. As we spend more and more time speed-reading about things, in print or pixels — being informed about them — we spend less and less time actually encountering and experiencing them. And rather than read a novel, a poem, go to a play or even a movie, rather than listen — really listen — to music, rather than take time to look at intently, to consider and handle (if possible) the artefacts and objects of art, craft, design, we read or view telecasts that celebrate the lives of the writers, composers, artists, designers. It’s easy!

Octavio Paz speaks of the poem as a thing : “All the things that man (sic) touches are impregnated with meaning. Perceived by man, things exchange being for meaning: they are not, they mean. . .

Ambivalence of meaning is the fissure through which we enter things and the fissure through which being escapes from them.

Meaning ceaselessly undermines the poem; it seeks to reduce its reality as an object of the senses and as a unique thing to an idea, a definition, or a “message”. To protect the poem from the ravages of meaning, poets stress the material aspect of language. . .

We can make fun of meaning, disperse and pulverise it, but we cannot annihilate it; whole or in living fragments and wriggling like the slices of a serpent, meaning reappears.”¹³

Words which undertake to implant meaning into things, rather than interceding and facilitating an encounter between our being and the thingness of things, can constitute an intervention which limits the potential of our experience by rendering the information about the thing in such detail and with such apparent authority that, sated to the point of nausea with often indigestible data, we retreat from what is evidently occupied territory. This is where the poetic mode comes into its own. In the absence of an authoritarian attitude and with its more experiential and imaginative approach to the thing, it encourages us, stealthily and by example, into a more contemplative state, where we can attempt to experience the thing itself on its terms and on ours.

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In 1937, Samuel Beckett declared “More and more my own language seems to me as a veil, to be torn apart to approach the things (or the nothings) behind it . . . A time, let’s hope, is coming when language will be best used when best abused. Since we can’t eliminate it all at once, let’s not neglect anything that might contribute to its corruption. To bore hole after hole in it, until what cowers behind it begins to seep through. . . “¹⁴

There has been such an over-abundance of fatuous, grandiloquent gobbledygook written about things, it is no wonder that we might sometimes like to “bore hole after hole in language until what cowers behind manages to seep through”. Un-surprising, too, that we sometimes crave silence.

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In spite of the resistance of the thing to the word, the word reigns supreme. But, as I have suggested, although apparently sometimes so didactic, one of the most frustrating things about words is their slippery quality. Perhaps it is in this very lubricity that their magic for us lies, as we strive for clarity, for exactitude of expression, in the knowledge that even the shift of a comma can entirely change their purport. We attempt to use words with the precision of a surgeon’s scalpel, in the knowledge that the implement can so easily slip from the grasp of either writer or reader. This keeps us alert to the potential and subtle nuances of both words and things.

So, yes, by all means, let us enrich our experience — our lives, with words; and yes, as I am advocating, let us embrace the poetic as our guide; but let us remember also, as viewers and makers, to arrest the noise and allow things to speak to us in their own language. Let us stop for a little while the chatter from our mouths, the clatter and the ringing in our ears, the flashes that

dance before our pixilated eyes. Let us shut out the static created by the plethora of potential possessions we are coerced to want. Let us still our minds and our being in the genial presence of the solid thing in readiness for the slippage of words.

I finish with Pablo Neruda's *Too Many Names*:

Mondays are meshed with Tuesdays
and the week with the whole year.
Time cannot be cut
with your exhausted scissors,
and all the names of the day
are washed out by the waters of night.

No one can claim the name of Pedro,
nobody is Rosa or Maria,
all of us are dust or sand,
all of us are rain under rain.
They have spoken to me of Venezuelas,
of Chiles and Paraguays;
I know only the skin of the earth
and I know it has no name.

When I lived amongst the roots
they pleased me more than flowers did,
and when I spoke to a stone
it rang like a bell.

It is so long, the spring
which goes on all winter.
Time has lost its shoes
A year lasts four centuries.

When I sleep every night,
what am I called or not called?
And when I wake, who am I
if I was not I when I slept?

. . .

let us not fill our mouths
with so many faltering names,
with so many sad formalities,
with so many pompous letters,
with so much of yours and mine,
with so much signing of papers.
I have a mind to confuse things,
unite them, make them new-born,

mix them up, undress them,
until all light in the world
has the oneness of the ocean,
a generous, vast wholeness,
a crackling, living fragrance.¹⁵

Margaret West
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1. To list but a few: *Dialogues of Plato; Philosophical Writings*, by Renée Descartes, edited by Elizabeth Anscombe & Peter Thomas Geach, Nelson, 1954; *Poetry, Language, Thought* by Martin Heidegger, 1962; *Ecrits*, by Jaques Lacan, translated by Alan Sheridan, W.W. Norton, 1977; *Matter and Memory* by Henri Bergson, Zone Books NY 1991; *The Bachelard Translations*, Dallas Institute 1988; *The Optical Unconscious*, by Rosalind E. Krauss; MIT Press, 1993; *Downcast Eyes*, by Martin Jay, University of California Press, 1993; *Things that Speak*, edited by Lorraine Daston, Zone books, NY 2004; *The Craftsman* by Richard Sennett, Allen Lane, London, 2008; numerous essays by Roland Barthes, Umberto Eco, Jean Baudrillard and others; essays, poetry, novels, by John Berger; a broad selection of writing by poets from early Sanskrit to the present day; and last but by no means last, the writing of my students in the Jewellery & Object Design Studio, Sydney College of the Arts, the University of Sydney between 1979 and 1999.

2. From *Ars Poetica*, Czeslaw Milosz *The Collected Poems (1931 - 1987)*, Penguin Books, London 1988)

3. Klimt02 website forum, *Matilda Discovers the Thingness of Words* and other posts by Margaret West, <http://www.klimt02.net>

4. *Things That Speak* edited by Lorraine Daston, Zone Books, New York 2004

5. Athens circa 427 BC - 347 BC

6. *Das Ding*, translated as *The Thing* by Albert Hofstadter, in *Poetry, Language, Thought* 1962

7. *Things That Speak* edited by Lorraine Daston, Zone Books, New York 2004

8. *The Australian Review*, May 30 2009

9. John Freeland, *A More Assured Maturity*, Craft Australia, http://www.craftaustralia.org.au/library/review.php?id=a_more_assured_maturity

10. Pablo Neruda *Elemental Odes* translated by Margaret Sayers Peden, Libris London 1991

11. Margaret Atwood *Eating Fire, Selected Poetry 1965 - 1995*, Virago Press, London, 1998

12. Dorothy Porter *Cigarettes*, from *Crete Hyland Hose*, South Melbourne 1996

13. *William Carlos Williams: The Saxifrage Flower* from *On Poets and Others*, Octavio Paz, translated by Michael Schmidt, Paladin, London, 1992.

14. Samuel Beckett, Letter to Axel Kaun, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett*, Volume 1 1929-1940, Cambridge University press, 2009.

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