



New Writing

The International Journal for the Practice and Theory of Creative Writing

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: <https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rmnw20>

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To cite this article: Paul Magee (2021): The links between creative writing and traumatic thought, *New Writing*, DOI: [10.1080/14790726.2021.1891259](https://doi.org/10.1080/14790726.2021.1891259)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14790726.2021.1891259>



Published online: 19 Mar 2021.



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The links between creative writing and traumatic thought

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ABSTRACT

The paper considers the personal determinants of quality in writing, by exploring poet Ted Hughes's proposition that 'psychological crises' are necessary 'to awaken genius in an otherwise ordinary mind.' Inspiration for this exploration is provided by the author's work as a creative writing mentor on a rehabilitation programme for injured and ill servicepeople. The experience of that programme is that participants will often produce compelling writing on the topics that have scarred them. Hughes's book *Poetry in the Making* provides some insights into why this might be the case, by suggesting that poetic composition is not a matter of close and professional consideration of the right words for any given topic, but rather emerges through an intensely-embodied imagining of one's subject matter. Hughes argues that when one acts out some subject matter vividly in one's mind, the words emerge as if of their own accord, and with far more mimetic aptness. My argument is that the traumatized engage in such intense imagining as their very condition, and so end up doing the very thing Hughes recommends, when taking their trauma as their topic.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 29 October 2020
Revised 23 December 2020
Accepted 11 February 2021

KEYWORDS

Creative writing; trauma;
poetic composition; thinking;
acting; pedagogy

All the things I know but of which I am not at the moment thinking. (Robert Barry)

1. Then there is screaming

While it is correct, or at least pedagogically useful, to 'assume that the latent talent for self-expression in any child is immeasurable', it is also the case that 'no teacher could arrange for the psychological crises and the long disciplines that awaken genius in an otherwise ordinary mind' (Hughes 1967, 12). Ted Hughes's theory of genius, or, if you like, poetic talent, insists on the link between creativity and crisis. I am citing from the introduction to his 1967 volume *Poetry in the Making*, and will have more to say about that compilation of Hughes's radio talks for children shortly. But it will be worth adding that Hughes expresses the idea in more general contexts as well. So in a 1970 symposium on Plath's art, Hughes stated:

It is my suspicion that no poem can be a poem that is not a statement from the powers in control of our life, the ultimate suffering and decision in us. It seems to me that this is

poetry's only real distinction from the literary form that we call 'not-poetry'. (Qtd in Bate 2015, 178)

The idea that there is a necessary link between the flowering of literary talent and the experience of 'psychological crises', and 'suffering' is pervasive, and the article that follows provides some initial testimony to it. I will start by referring to my work teaching short story writing, poetry and other literary forms to injured and ill servicepeople, the majority of whom suffer from post-traumatic stress and often write particularly well when taking that as their topic. The point of the writing that follows will be to try to work out why the link between talent and suffering appears to be so strong in the production of literary work more generally.

Q.

What about the miraculous one percent?

A.

Yes. Sometimes you recognise it at once. Sometimes it takes several pages, but that's unusual.

Q.

How do you recognise it?

A.

You immediately feel that you're dealing with a different quality of goods. You feel an immense joy; you tremble. You can't imagine what it will turn out to be. You read on in fear that the quality will turn off, will suddenly disappear. (Anon., interviewed by Duras 1986, 54)

This transcript is from Marguerite Duras's 1957 interview with an anonymous reader for a major French publishing house. The interview was published under the title 'One out of a Hundred Novels makes it to Publication'. In such manuscripts, Duras's interviewee comments, the 'author writes what he is rather than what he knows' (1986, 54 [sic]).

These comments name for me the experience of reading Roger's description of driving past a group of children playing soccer with an improvised ball in Afghanistan, on what turned out to be a minefield. Key to the story was Roger and his fellow soldier's inability – due to orders relating to the likelihood of snipers – to stop, leave the armoured vehicle and help. The child was calling out to them. I was assisting Roger (a pseudonym) with his attempt to put these and other memories on paper – not that they needed more than a light copy-edit. I would not say I felt an 'immense joy' reading such devastating scenes, but the technical side of me knew I was encountering writing of great power. You feel the writer is right there, in the experience – or is it in the moment of writing? The two things come across as one.

Roger was one of five participants my colleague Owen Bullock and I were working with that November, in our role as creative writing mentors in one of the month-long *Arts for Resilience, Recovery Teamwork and Skills* (ARRTS) programmes that have run at the University of Canberra twice-yearly since 2015, as a joint project between the University and the Australian Defence Force. The idea is to teach creative arts to the ill and injured, so as to help them find new ways to be with themselves and others.

So many of the stories I have worked on in the programme concern the trauma of failing to intervene in another's suffering, which might be due to personal risk, to orders, or to the more general imperative not to violate rules of engagement (i.e. not to commit a crime). Trauma, for this group, is regularly a matter of what one has powerlessly witnessed. At other times it manifests as a sense of guilt at being the one left behind. I am thinking of the limericks Craig (again, a pseudonym) composed, which took that one-expects jocular form as vehicle for visceral grief at the loss of a friend, who had been at his side in combat. Rachel's writing (not her name), on the other hand, involved redacting a letter of spectacularly inhuman officialese from her service, blacking out every word but the four phrases that most seared. The effect was to put one right in the shoes of its receiver.

The 'immense joy' referenced in the Duras interview might seem a little out of place in this context. But it gets at something that is otherwise quite delicate to raise. For it is also the case that the quality of the work we elicit in the ARRTS programme does often 'turn off' and quite 'suddenly disappear', when the participants shift their focus from those moments of maximal personal impact to topics that did not damage them so deeply, whether those other topics be from real life or fiction. This is by no means invariably so. But it has happened often enough in my experience to confirm the salience of the question tabled above: what explains the strong link we keep finding between creative talent and the prior experience of 'psychological crises' and 'suffering'?

2. 'When you do this, the words will look after themselves, like magic'

I wish I could provide case-studies on the work of the three ARRTS programme participants I have just mentioned. Ideally, I would cite closely from that work, showing just what I was getting at in my references to quality above, and specifically in those references to how it slackens off when the topic is less 'close to the bone'. A key aim would be to cite at sufficient length to allow the reader to decide for themselves. I would try to arrive at a general theory of what is going on in the process.

Privacy considerations preclude that approach. What I propose to do instead in this article is to engage in an act of textual exegesis, in relation to a book that has strongly jogged my thoughts on these matters. I hope those of my readers who teach creative writing will have examples of their own to bring to the table, and will test what follows thereby. I will focus on that one text, Ted Hughes's *Poetry in the Making*, but the desire to illuminate it will lead me to the works of other thinkers (Aristotle, Benjamin, Heidegger, Wordsworth, Kierkegaard) who have speculated on the themes of composition, play-acting and personal transformation. I will at times digress accordingly, but always with the ultimate aim of trying to crack open what Hughes's text can tell us about the links between creative writing and traumatic thought.

Published in 1967, *Poetry in the Making* comprises Hughes's BBC radio talks for children. It went on to become one of his bestselling books, going through five editions in its first eight years (Bate 2015, 37; fn.3 571). Though directed to children, the talks provide some useful answers to the question why creative talent and suffering seem so closely linked. They do so because Hughes's theory of composition is based on the idea of working with thoughts whose compelling power one cannot ignore.

Happily, Hughes's strategies for eliciting poetry from children do not involve traumatising them. Rather his juvenile listeners are to engage in a species of play-acting, and the right words will arise in the process. But what are the right words? In prose Neil Corcoran describes as 'mesmerising ... almost as though he is back in the creative place itself' (2011, 123), Hughes starts his first talk ('Capturing Animals') by comparing the writing of poems to the ways he used to capture mice as a small boy, then foxes, and finally fish. The thing has to feel like it is beating and kicking. It is about finding 'words that live':

Words that live are those we hear, like 'click' or 'chuckle', or which we see, like 'freckled' or 'veined', or which we taste, like 'vinegar' or 'sugar', or touch, like 'prickle' or 'oily', or smell, like 'tar' or 'onion'. Words which belong directly to one of the five senses. Or words which act and seem to use their muscles, like 'flick' or 'balance' [...] 'Click' not only gives you a sound, it gives you the notion of a sharp movement ... such as your tongue makes in saying 'click'. It also gives you the feel of something light and brittle, like a snapping twig. Heavy things do not click, nor do soft, bendable ones. In the same way, tar not only smells strongly, it is sticky to touch, with a particular thick and choking stickiness [...] So it is with most words. (1967, 17–18)

This description of the kind of diction which poets aim for is not of course new with Hughes. We can trace it as far back as Aristotle, for whom poets 'do their *mimesis* with rhythm, speech and melody' (1997, 44 [1447a]). That is to say, for Aristotle, poets act the world out in the texture of their words, just as sculptors do so in shapings of stone and dancers in the movements of their bodies. The difference Hughes has to offer to prior commentators on the matter is in his sketching a practical method for how such *mimesis* might be achieved. This is where we will see close parallels to the phenomenology of traumatic memory.

Hughes's way in involves raising the question of how one could possibly achieve such vivid effects amidst all the other demands of composition. It is not just a matter of alighting upon 'click' and 'tar' and 'sugar' and all those other perfectly right names for things. The poet has the additional, cursedly difficult task of getting all those words to hang together, in some kind of almost living (or so it feels) entity. Is the poet a kind of super-calculator, with perfect a sense of finesse? It cannot, after all, be easy to stop 'the side meanings of the word "feathers" getting all stuck up with one of the side meanings of the word "treacle"', one line away (1967, 18). Actually, this is what characterises bad poetry. In bad poetry, Hughes notes, 'the words kill each other' (1967, 18). So how does one stop that from happening?

Hughes's solution is surprisingly simple. Do not pay the matter any attention. You 'do not have to bother' about the words you are generating for your poem,

so long as you do one thing. The one thing is, imagine what you are writing about. See it and live it. Do not think it up laboriously, as if you were doing mental arithmetic. Just look at it, touch it, smell it, turn yourself into it. When you do this, the words will look after themselves, like magic. (1967, 18)

Shortly on from here Hughes stresses how little control he wants budding poets to take over their actual language. You are to use 'any old word that comes into your head so long as' – a crucial proviso – 'it seems right at the moment of writing' (1967, 19), which is to say, right in relation to the phenomena you are concurrently imagining.

What one crucially avoids in this fashion is the determining force of an ideal:

All falsities in writing – and the consequent dry-rot that spreads into the whole fabric – come from the notion that there is a stylistic ideal which exists in the abstract like a special language, to which all men might attain. (1967, 12)

That true poetic diction eschews abstraction is of course a long-held critical position, traceable back to the Romantics who largely formed our current aesthetic canons. Its *locus classicus* would seem to be Friedrich Schiller's late eighteenth century insistence on the artwork's quality as 'living shape' (2012, 76), but one finds it in slightly earlier formulations as well (Rancière 2013). The reason Hughes's version strikes me as more than repetition of this now wide-spread stance, is once more for the way he ties it into a method.

Students are, as we have seen, to imagine intensely, allowing words to come to mind, and to keep engaging in that kind of allowing until some of them seem true to the experience. These are the compelling words I referred to above, when suggesting that Hughes's approach to composition involves working with thoughts whose sense of rightness one cannot ignore. At which point one writes them down and starts another line. And after that another. Far from any statement of formal criteria, this strategy effectively allows the line-break to distinguish units of imagining. (Or remembering, the two being hard ultimately to distinguish from each other, as linguist Wallace Chafe points out (2018, 116).) The whole writing thus comes to amount to a succession of mental focusses, none determined by a striving for the most 'poetic' word, but all predicated upon the intensity of one's engagement in bringing whatever matter to body and mind. For when one composes this way, 'the words will look after themselves, like magic' (1967, 18).

Such is the key message of the radio talks gathered in *Poetry in the Making*, one of the most successful of all of Hughes's books, as noted above. Part of the reason for that success, it seems to me, is that what Hughes puts into a neat set of practices here is more than mere child's play. If you've never taught the technique, I advise you to do so in your next class, to see how sharply it cuts through those clichéd ideas of what a poetic line is supposed to be (e.g. a string of words bounded by pure-rhyme, with occasional resort to archaism, syntactic inversion and other apparent marks of heightened or comic speech; or a line-by-line separating out of more or less striking images, in a language otherwise indistinguishable from prose; or a dutiful speech from the heart of a socially desirable type of personality; or a constant series of incongruous phrasings, in the manner of a word jumble ...). Instead, students start to see what words unintentionally arise when their attention is on something other than the words themselves. They find themselves transcribing the ones that feel true to the force of that imagining, burst-by-burst. Each new line thus becomes, as any new line should be, window to yet another vivid thought.

The links between what Hughes is advising and the experience of trauma will doubtless already have started to suggest themselves. The point is that the deeply traumatised do not need Hughes's advice on determinedly working their mental way into the immediacy of some past or imagined moment, till it all arises vividly before them, and the words rise to meet it. They are already there, through the virulence of the memories that repeat. Scenes like that make-shift and deceptive soccer-field in Uruzgan are already all too present, hyperreal in their minds and taking up all the space that might otherwise be self-consciously directed to thinking about how 'a poet' or 'a proper writer' would

describe it. That, to cut straight to the chase, is what I think happens in the cases of the war-scarred and otherwise profoundly impacted writers we work with in the ARRTS programme. They have a kind of short-cut in to the compositional strategies Hughes recommends.

3. An ever-present magic?

As for why just the right words often seem to result from the process he recommends, Hughes does not say. His term for how words like 'click' and 'sugar' and 'tar' manage at the right moments to come to mind is, as we have seen, 'magic' (1967, 18). He is of course speaking to children, in a context requiring practical advice much more than the philosophy of mind or of judgement. But Walter Benjamin perhaps sheds a little light on the matter, in his discussion (1999) of 'the mimetic faculty'. Benjamin refers in that brief essay to the human 'gift for seeing similarity' (1999, 720). This sounds like an allusion to Aristotle's discussion of the skill uniting theorist and artist alike – for, as in philosophical enquiry, so when inventing fresh metaphors, 'an acute mind will perceive resemblances even in things far apart' (Aristotle 1984, 2523) – and may well be just that. But Benjamin puts a further spin on the matter, suggesting that this 'gift for seeing similarity' is 'a rudiment of the once powerful compulsion to become similar and to behave mimetically', which he links to the origins of dancing – speculating among other things that dance once served to imitate the stars. He also, and rather more convincingly, links the mimetic faculty to the theme of youth:

Children's play is everywhere permeated by mimetic modes of behaviour, and its realm is by no means limited to what one person can imitate in another. The child plays at being not only a shopkeeper or teacher, but also a windmill and a train. (1999, 720)

Both of these primitivist and juvenile motifs are tied into the theme of repression. I am referring to Benjamin's subsequent claim that in spoken and written language the regimes of similarity binding signifier and signified are no longer sensuous and mimetic, but conventional. For although language has brought 'nonsensuous similarity' to its greatest point of development – it is 'a medium in which the earlier powers of mimetic production and comprehension have passed without residue, to the point where they have liquidated those of magic' – traces of those ancient/younger mimetic powers 'flash' through language all the same (1999, 722).

Allow me a brief speculation at this point. In his late essay 'The Nature of Language', Martin Heidegger writes that 'to think is before all else to listen'. Thinking is a matter of 'listening to the grant' which language makes available (1971a, 76). The implication seems to be that the thinking we perform in our heads is really a matter of listening to something speak within us. In other words, it is not just the sort of 'headlong act of imagination' (1967, 23) which we have seen Hughes recommend above, that puts one in the presence of thoughts that are at once unplanned in form and fully composed. It is what it is to think, in general. After all, who can plan out the exact wording of their thoughts? Is it not rather that we train our mind on whatever phenomenon we wish to ponder and that that specific striving of the imagination towards a given thing somehow prompts the words about it to arise? They speak out in our heads and of course feel like our thoughts in the process. One might continue the speculation and

hold that speaking aloud involves a similar phenomenology. However firm our sense of just what it is we want to say, it is nonetheless true that the exact phrasing we utter is almost never present to us till the clause-by-clause process of actually uttering it. Rather we strive towards a more or less hazy idea, and the words get generated in the process. In short, all verbal production seems to involve a greater or lesser degree of the mimetic processes Hughes suggests we exacerbate so as to write poetry.

But why then – here I turn to the curious matter alluded to above – is it so difficult for our mentees to keep their writing at the same pitch, when transferring it onto other topics?

4. The fear of acting

I think the fear of acting has a lot to do with it.

It is worth noting that the *Arts for Resilience, Recovery Teamwork and Skills* (ARRTS) programme I mentioned above initially offered mentoring in acting as well. What is noteworthy here is the fact that this acting stream – despite excellent teachers, who often elicited fine performances – was some years later dropped. The enrolments were minimal, and then there was the fact that so many participants indicated that of all the arts on offer (music and visual arts are in the programme as well) acting was the one they would be least comfortable with *as their second choice*. The requirement to act in the living moment induces all sorts of fears. I have to add that this is not without reason. As Petr Bogatyrev reminds us, ‘One of the most important and fundamental features of the theatre is transformation’ (1976, 51). One might say, without too much fancy, that shying away from acting is for the soldiers a simple matter of self-defence.

As for the equivalent avoidance in the field of writing, I would say that a conventional phrasing is regularly to hand, to ward off the threat of the kinds of personal transformations the mimetic aspects of verbal production can always bring in their wake. Or could it be rather that the striving for such conventional phrases, in response to whatever intentional object one forms in one’s mind, is a mimetic act in its own right? One aspires to conventional speech, under the self-urged imperative to become like one’s broader environment, and its categories of established being. Disappear, blend in.

Sound like ‘a writer’.

Wordsworth was onto something of this threat as well. The phrase is much maligned for its supposed quietism, but Wordsworth’s reference to poetry writing proceeding from ‘emotion recollected in tranquillity’ is really all about the transformations an act of intense imagining can effect upon us as writers:

I have said that poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings; it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity; that emotion is contemplated till by a species of reaction **the tranquillity gradually disappears**, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced and does itself exist in the mind. In this mood successful composition generally begins. (1968, 42 [*my bold*])

One starts by play-acting, but the emotions in due course become real. Under their sway, one has little time for that ‘family language’ of poeticisms (syntactic inversion, abstraction, personification ...), ‘which from father to son have long been regarded as

the common inheritance of poets' (1968, 27). It is rather a matter of allowing whatever words will come to meet the 'spontaneous overflow' of emotion coursing through one (1968, 42). Note how the poet's established identity (the very thing that *would* pass from father to son, were the poet to adopt that less dangerous method on offer, the fake one) disappears in the process, to make way for an emergent subject.

That poetry writing so can take you to some estranging places for the self is a key message of Hughes's text too. What again distinguishes Hughes's version is that he conveys the point by way of a much more explicitly operationalisable method, in this case an exercise.¹ I will describe that exercise now – it is from the fourth of Hughes's radio talks, the one provocatively titled 'Learning to Think'. The exercise is less about the writer assuming (and then being assumed by) an emotion than simply holding an object in mind, but the upshot is the same as that hinted at in Wordsworth's 'Preface', in terms of the diminishing of one's established self, to make way for something new. As such, the exercise provides a further illumination of what our mentees seem to shy from, when trauma is no longer blasting them into that space beyond defence and/or intention, from which they can do no other than allow the words that will to come to mind.

Stating that he wants to bring his juvenile charges to a realisation of how their thinking really proceeds, the better to show them how to corral it into poems, Hughes suggests they imagine that they have been given the instruction to 'Think of your uncle'. Imagine what it would be like, Hughes continues, to think of nothing else for as long as you can. You are to hold him in mind, focusing on whatever quality or detail you like, and to push the thoughts back toward him whenever your thinking seems to stray from the topic. This turns out to be much harder to do than one might expect.

If you were told, 'Think of your uncle' – how long could you hold the idea of your uncle in your head? Right, you imagine him. But then at once he reminds you of something else and you are thinking of that, he has gone into the background, if he has not altogether disappeared. Now get your uncle back. Imagine your uncle and nothing else – nothing whatsoever. After all, there is plenty to be going on with in your uncle, his eyes, what expression? His hair, where is it parted? How many waves has it? What is its exact shade? [...] but you see straightaway that it is quite difficult to think about your uncle and nothing but your uncle for more than a few seconds. So how can you ever hope to collect your thoughts about him. (1967, 58)

The pressure of trying to keep those thoughts on topic is almost palpable, my undergraduate students report, when I set them a 3-minute, timed version of Hughes's 'My Uncle' thought-experiment in class. I know of no more powerful demonstration of Heidegger's proposition that 'We never come to thoughts. They come to us' (1971b, 6). They come to us, on whatever topic we intend, and they head off on their own trails just as swiftly. Even the undergraduate students are at times a little freaked out by the experience. It underlines that our thoughts simply do not obey the kind of integral self we imagine that we ourselves possess. As for the soldiers, I have phased this very exercise out my teaching in the ARRTS programme, on the grounds that it freaks too many of them out, to the point of being counter-productive.

Yet for Hughes, this is precisely what we are to write with. For even though concentrating on a topic as obvious as one's uncle for a long block is difficult, and constantly defeated by the associative coursing of thought itself, one can in time, Hughes insists,

learn the 'trick' of greater focus, and with it the practice of writing down on the page the most vivid of those thoughts, including the oddness of the leaps or slides from one to the next. Hughes proceeds at this point to introduce a poem of his own, called *View of a Pig*, stating that 'In this poem, the poet stares at something which is quite still, and collects the thoughts that concern it' (1967, 59). The poem *Wodwo* provides a second example of that 'staring at' strategy. In other cases, Hughes adds, one might want to stare at a thing in motion, and collect the succession of thoughts that concern that. So Hughes echoes Wordsworth's 'Preface' ('I have at all times endeavoured to look steadily at my subject' (1968, 26)), and at the same time provides some operational clues as to how such looking 'steadily' might be practiced. In other places he makes clear, as we have noted, that poetic composition trucks in images from more senses than the metaphors of 'staring at' and 'looking steadily' imply ('look at it, touch it, smell it, turn yourself into it. When you do this, the words will look after themselves, like magic' (1967, 18)). Whether the mimetic dimension is heightened in this manner or not, it seems clear that the process of releasing oneself to the coursing of one's own ideas is not without risk to the subject one currently feels oneself to be.

The question of how to teach our mentees on the ARRTS programme and others like them ways to transfer the kinds of writerly excellence that at times flourish in relation to their trauma to other topics is, in short, tricky. I suspect the answers will involve our finding ways subtly to convey to the psychically wounded that their powerlessness in the face of imposing, vivid memory is key to the arrival of literary art more generally, through an inner speaking that is not quite one's own.

5. ARRTS Revisited

I have suggested, without being able to table the full evidence for this assertion, that the traumatised often write surprisingly well about the material of their trauma but just as often have difficulty carrying that aptitude over to other topics. The broad theory I have advanced here, via Hughes's *Poetry in the Making*, is that the involuntary immersion in memory and imagining associated with traumatic material is usually the very last thing our students in the ARRTS programme want to experience, when they turn to other topics. Yet the vividness of that kind of state is just what allows one's mimetic faculties free rein.

I do not, however, want to give the impression that participants leave the ARRTS programme which I have been meditating upon here in much the same state as that in which they entered it. Regardless of whether they head in the direction Hughes charts or not, the transformations we as mentors witness are often so rapidly to the better as to be startling. I will hazard a concluding speculation as to why such transformations so often occur, this time via a comment of Kierkegaard's.

In *This Sickness unto Death*, Kierkegaard notes that the cause of despair is not suffering per se, but rather the knowledge that one is shackled to the self the universe decided to visit that suffering upon:

In a deeper sense what he cannot bear is not that he did not become Caesar; what is unbearable is this self which did not become Caesar; or better still, what he cannot bear is that he cannot be rid of himself. (1989, 49)

When we as teachers provide honest reactions to our mentees' attempts to tell their story, we offer them a different judgemental relation to the self, it seems to me. That process causes a shift from the mentee's experience of their own harsh judgement for being worthless enough (or not, for those brief moments the cloud passes) to deserve this specific plight, this story. It becomes instead a matter of experiencing their own praise or blame for getting this particular presentation of their story right or wrong, this phrase, this rhythm, this image and so forth. A diminishing of that initial wound – why did I want to be Caesar anyway? – often seems to flow in the process. This kind of repurposing of the superego, and the fundamental narcissism fuelling it, towards something more socially rewarding may in due course open the way to a fully fledged tackling of those other less traumatic topics. Or not. In many ways that is not even the point. One finds a different way to live with one's story.

Note

1. There are of course other differences here too. For Wordsworth, the language dramatically induced in such moments is formed of one's own prior cognitions (for 'poems to which any value can be attached were never produced on any variety of subjects but by a man who, being possessed of more than usual organic sensibility, had also thought long and deeply' (22)); and yet it is also profoundly public, for what one obtains beyond poetic artifice through an act of 'spontaneous overflow' is that truly philosophical, life-experienced language which Wordsworth and so many of his peers attributed to the common man. A century and half on, Hughes is much more apt to regard the words that course through one as both unique to one's psychic plight and trauma-scored, in line with the epochal finding that the agency generating our associations is unconscious and repressed. That said, we would be wrong to downplay the personally transformative dimensions of Wordsworth's revolutionary aspiration to speak like labourers and peasants, given the extreme ethos of class-rule contouring the literary and political culture all around him.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Funding

This paper reports on research funded by the Australian Research Council, through the Discovery programme (DP1301004021), and the Australian Defence Force, through the Arts for Recovery, Resilience, Teamwork and Skills Programme (ARRTS).

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