

The Listening Voice



The newsletter of the Equi-Phallic Alliance & Poetry Field Club
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"Neither Widley Walk Nor James Callaghan Drive"

RETURN TO PORTSDOWN HILL

Heritage detail - facsimile headline

In this issue **Emily Trig** considers aspects of Alan Morrison's heroic response to Andrew Jordan's poetic novel *Hegemonick* and previews our forthcoming field trip to Portsdown Hill, which is a re-enactment of our previous field trip.

Amongst the Henges of Hegemony

The events that occurred on the first field trip to Portsdown Hill, where each of the participants experienced the self as a series of "archaic structures in the landscape", must now be replicated and studied. Hence we will re-perform the previous field trip, going to the places visited by those people and re-enacting their experiences. Hopefully on this occasion it will not rain.

Those who attended the November 2012 event encountered an array of structures, installations and devices which they felt were functions of the self or devices located within the self that were not integral to it and had perhaps been implanted there by others. These things included henges, observatories, geometrical patterns, 'areas of visual plunge' (where one could see through the soil as if into a lit translucence below), geo-palpitations, disembodied sensations and oracular body parts, springs and fountains, musical trees lit by gold or silver lights, etc..

As Ralph put it, "We found that the boundaries of the self are hung with presences like a series of hermetic or military badges. Some physical features in the landscape were common to all our visionary states. For instance each of us experienced the northern escape portal of the underground oil storage facility as a kind of anus. It seemed odd that this might be the seat of the soul."

Somatic Imitations of the Past

One way to understand the aesthetic mechanisms, the engines deep in the ground, that drive Andrew Jordan's poetical novel *Hegemonick*¹, is to study their effects; from these we might reverse engineer the mechanisms themselves and understand what they do and how they work. It can be assumed that the signs and symbols referred to above correspond with powers concealed behind them; that through these signs those powers might be changed and their force diverted. Thus might their virtues be released and the horror at the heart of *Hegemonick*, the beast at the centre of the labyrinth, will sweat a virtuous balm.



The Lord and the Lady: The building and operation of monuments involves and creates a subtle change in perceptions of place.

An analogy might be drawn with memories and how they are altered each time they are recalled. The act of recollection is both destructive and creative and the rhythms of making and breaking, experienced simultaneously in any act of remembering, make recollection an act of negotiation. Signs and symbols, as they are read, are dismantled (literally, "stripped of what cloaks them") and thus are seen differently. With the reader in charge of what things mean there are no pasts but those which the virtues describe. So might we take control of our lives.

So, we will go once more to Portsdown Hill to generate the repetitions that mimic those detailed in a book about a militarised and eroticised landscape, a place that is forbidden and fenced off. The virtues that are fulsome and can be glimpsed within love and utopian ideas, that fill the self with wonder, are harnessed there. This is where love is made into work and its job is death. This is where beauty is made null. Peering through the fences we saw revealed the love that others would have us think does not exist.

Ectopic Eroticism & Love Besieged

Alan Morrison, in his review of *Hegemonick*, refers to the body as a shared space and his review is a journey into its interior.² *Heart of Darkness* or *A Journey to the Centre of the Earth* both came to mind, but it most resembles *Fantastic Voyage*. I saw him as a tiny Everyman swept through the interior of a human body. Morrison journeys in search of a gland containing virtues, a chamber unbearably filled with emotions. Where feelings formed tumours, Morrison unblocked the energies that got stuck in a book from whence he escaped via a teardrop seconds before he returned to normal size.

Here he struggles toward a pertinent and illuminating question: “The feminisation of the objectified perpetrator of the narrator’s psychical state is interesting, tapping as it does into the latent male fear of being somehow invaded, dominated, or, in Freudian terms, penetrated. Here the penetration is into the subconscious, but with an effect on physical sensation also, which suggests mental and physical penetration, or implantation with some foreign body or device. Then, after having made his ‘being subsidiary to hers’ and ‘stored her self in my own for safe keeping’ the narrator says ‘She left the map inside my body, so that I know my heart / is a location inside Portsdown Hill’. Is this also a physiologically displaced metaphor for being in love – what one might term ectopic eroticism?”

Erotic love, as it is built into *Hegemonick*, is a heavily defended ground. All manner of devices are employed to keep the reader away. Where love is referred to it is hidden or lost. To approach love directly within the text one must cross lines of taboo. You have to do what people say you must never do, you must go back. It helps to visualise the thing that you fear the most and then, in your mind’s eye, imagine yourself walking straight through it. In that way you can disarm the devices that prevent or bewilder love without having to locate them, or look at them directly.

When I realised what had happened to love, I thought that my task was to locate love and free it. Like an initiate of a mystery religion, my job was to enter a book through a portal just north of Portsdown West and to return with love that it might transform the world. But then I realised that *Hegemonick*, with its violence and horror, presents the problem of the protagonist through modes of erotic exchange experienced indirectly via secondary gains, that the body of the beloved, the primary source, cannot be directly known. The beloved is encountered through *things*. S/he is a metaphor of consumerism.

The Future Shape of Children

This circumstance is explored in Jordan’s recently published poem *The Future Shape of Children*, which has been described by its author as an addendum to *Hegemonick*; it relates “the context within which a notional Everychild, as found within the pages of my book *Hegemonick*, at large upon Portsdown Hill, might have lived; the forces at work within and around it . . .”³

The progress of this Everychild mimics the progress of the protagonist in *Hegemonick*; bewildered and swamped by contradictions, made an instrument of efficiencies, it is propelled upon a quest through a city that might also be the insides of its own body. It seeks an understanding and experience of love.

Through new forms of art centred on the self
the child transforms redundant productive spaces,
making them contingent upon the things the self needs;

seeking gratification, the child conforms and thus
gains access to the boredom of the bourgeois aesthetic.

The child enters a dull erotic realm.

It goes through districts formerly forbidden.

The child experiences arousal.

Beset by mysteries, the child learns how the
aesthetics of love and work are the same.

Love and work - both are aestheticised in the same way within capitalist relations because both involve alienated production tempered by a system of punishments and rewards. It is about efficiencies; the production, distribution and consumption of the eroticised self is one part of what appears to make life bearable; the secondary gains, the compensations, these are aspects of the subjugation of one self by another. Where fulfilment occurs, it does so despite the context within which it is achieved.

Strange Scenes within the Instrumentalised Self

Morrison, in his act of reading, goes around the cognitive loops that form conceptual earthworks close to the position occupied by love. “Jordan’s continual merging of topographical and psycho-physiological imagery generates a challenging ambiguity to the narrative of the poetry itself . . . This physiological wearing of a state-utilised, honeycombed landscape by the narrator grows more and more chilling in its mechanical descriptions of consciousness as a kind of construct tricked into believing it is natural, organic and autonomous, as the narrator personifies himself as the hollowed-out hill itself.”

The instrumentalised Cartesian self, it runs on scripts which it repeats. It is the little coincidence engine that cognitive-behavioural therapists tinker with to increase our productivity. In a kind of reverse providence, the emergence of this concept of selfhood ensured that one cannot bridge the space between one’s own consciousness and that of another. The process of atomisation, the rendering of a people and their culture into a series of particles, a resource rich sludge, began with the Enlightenment. The development of new markets required it. What we got in exchange was romantic love and consumer goods.

In *Hegemonick* Jordan appears to be suggesting that the way in which the mind is taught to conceptualise itself as a machine to do with thinking and feeling makes us vulnerable to systems that monitor space, protect property and enable the efficient distribution of goods and services. Post-Enlightenment, the following statement could easily apply to the human mind: “What the device distributes equally is not the positive assessment of the users with regard to the norm, but with regard to breaching it; they all become suspects and, most importantly, suspects that are no longer presumed innocent.”⁴

Were she to speak straight out of the horror of *Hegemonick* that is what the hypnotherapist might say. Automation began as a metaphor and then the machinery was constructed to produce the images required; there is no tyrant to overthrow, just a class of drones (they hover just below the elite) and a vast array of systems and organisations that replicate themselves (they hover just below consciousness). In that nobody knows what the results of this will be it is an ontological analogue of global warming; like junkies in their flight from pain, we have given up what power we had. We are the metaphor, the device - almost any device - is the objective correlative. For the divisible individual the reward is to do with efficiencies, the costs are counted as collateral damage.

The New Cult of Sex and Anarchy

The private person is compared with the personas they present, their observable behaviour. Strident or furtive, they are known. Outer compliance and inner withholding of compliance: this is the fracture the State must fill, into which it already extends.⁵

There might be better approaches, but we proposed radical inefficiency as one way of thwarting those effects of Capitalism, which, in conjunction with metaphors and external devices, lead inexorably toward the mechanisation of being. Walking about in an apparently purposeless manner, we grouped around social and/or sexual intercourse as the essence of being human, something that has become mystified behind symbols located within arrays of conventions that we are meant to feel obliged to conform to (queer theory deals with most of these). Opposing all those who know that they and their friends are really nice people, we will counter the ways in which 'hip' individuals get sanctimonious about their sadism. *We have a long way to go yet.*

Hence our interest in responses to *Hegemonick*, for the progress of the narrative undoes the Cartesian dilemma by recreating consciousness as a commons. The action of the book centres around those areas of Portsdown Hill that have been occupied by the State, the publicly and privately owned defence research facilities, the derelict forts, which are or were built around geo-erogenous zones - the giant Neolithic complexes of ditch, bank, cursus and barrow - where the erotic was fetishised into structures built of earth. Working these erectile tissues into needs, fears and desires, the defence science establishment embalmed the orgone rich body of Mary Millington, the embodiment of orgasmic potency, to develop new theories and forms of neurosis within her flesh.

As Jordan put it, "Mary Millington saw how repressed political impulses are expressed as 'displaced desires' or 'remote lumps' which appear to transcend gendered formulations - actually they ignore them - these emerge as 'ancient structures', primarily because they embody instinctual drives. Ancient peoples buried their dead in or around them because they associated them with life not death. Many round barrows are not funerary structures at all, rather they are manifestations of sex alienated by power within a political system that has become entirely morbid."⁶

The 'liberation of the sacred grove' referred to in *Hegemonick* is the liberation of Mary Millington's fetishised body, in particular the area around her clitoris and vagina, which - as foretold by countless sheela na gigs - was her one syllable reply to the notion of penis envy. This is where the gland containing virtues will eventually be found. We will locate Mary Millington's vagina during this re-enactment of the original field trip. We hope you are able to attend.

Iipseity, Shame & the State

One thread that can be followed through *Hegemonick* explores how the self was created that it might be observed. This aspect of the book fascinates Morrison and he returns to it repeatedly in his review. He describes it as "the being observed leitmotiv" through which an external entity (the State, with its many bodies and its many eyes) repeatedly peers into or out of the book. (It observes us as we read, monitoring our responses to the text.)⁷

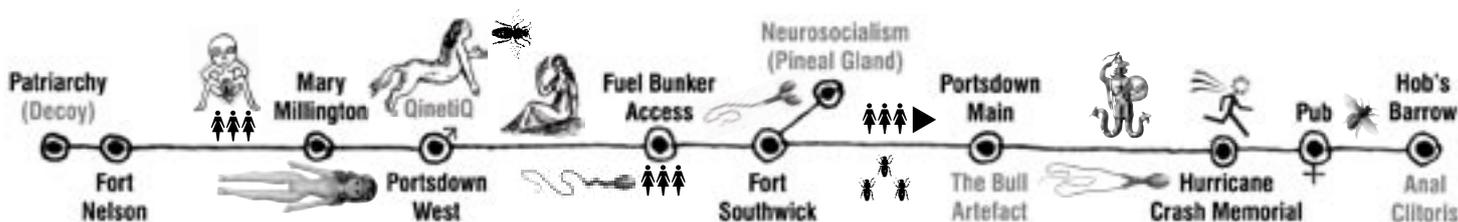
"Jordan also focuses on the possible perils of dissociation of self, the dislocation of individual authenticity or subjective inner-knowledge in a society which continually pressurises us to view ourselves objectively; at least, as beings acutely aware of their being observed, whether by other people, or by the ubiquitous invisibles of a CCTV culture - but perhaps more specifically, the dangers of an obsessive awareness of a monitored society, leading to an overt preoccupation with how others perceive one."

The space between 'outer compliance and inner withholding', it is of interest now because new technologies have been developed that can enter it, but this fissure has fascinated powers since the Enlightenment when it was noticed by such as Bernard Mandeville that "since apparently virtuous acts were rewarded by public esteem, it was in the obvious interest of the vicious to mime the conventional signs of Christian piety in order to win the approval of their fellows." This remains a defining feature of the vicious.⁸

Greed is a device for keeping order; once implanted, it is managed via flattery; combined, the two focus behaviour on work and consumption. "The origins of morality, and thus of the social discipline required by the rule of elites, followed from the discovery by these elites of what Mandeville called the "imaginary" rewards of praise to which complex animal organisms responded. Flattery was employed to tame men by generating . . . a conception of self constituted in part by the opinions of others. Only creatures instructed in the rhetoric of honour and the theology of shame could then internalise politically-fabricated ideals of virtuous conduct."⁹

Before networked technologies made peering into the gap between private and public routine, it was easy to cover up the wickedness of the powerful and the brutality of their cops. Cyber security is about protecting them from shame, and thus it is about protecting their privilege, whilst they pour shame and its punishments down upon those they instrumentalise and exploit.

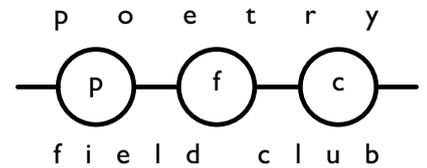
In a society in which power is wielded using rewards (flattery) and punishments (shame) political power is accumulated via the legitimising gaze of the greatest possible number of individuals; once gained, it is enacted in a theatre of regulation and normativity upon a theme of organisational effectiveness. The managerial politics we are all now familiar with is the culmination of a project that was begun in the 17th century. Meanwhile the soul is dispensed with, not because of materialism, but because as a piece of kit it no longer has a public function.



Heritage nostalgia: Portsdown Hill

A facsimile of the original graphic which first appeared in the previous *Listening Voice* newsletter. Note the movement from patriarchy to the anal clitoris.

Join the Poetry Field Club putting landscape in its place



Strap-on Technologies

Risks to data security might make it seem that the private passions of the elite are on the brink of being displayed; in fact they have always presented this appearance. Goodness imperilled and forever leaving, going from selfless moral conduct to the fully instrumentalised self, has been in this flux for at least 300 years. It means scandals tend to feel dated and thus wickedness obsolete. This inspires an uplifting sense of regret.

In an eternal present moral nostalgia feels like something we have just resorted to; it is the sentimental underpinning of the stand we are about to make. Returning to the essence, we will reject inauthenticity. To help ourselves to find ourselves we invest in the self of the past and call what this represents *tradition*, *universal values* or *common sense*. Thus sustained, we pursue the ironic future that our imagined past provides.

"I'm no good with technology, I'll get a teenager to do this for me," we say in the face of that which looks back at us from the future (it's that teenager, after they have been looted). They fell into the same machine as us, it drags them back into the past where we underpin their nostalgia; they travel back in fantasies about our values which they secretly uphold.

In a society composed of instrumentalised beings your neighbour is the most efficient and effective weapon of oppression wielded by the State, regardless of all those official cameras, computers and geeks. It goes against the nostalgia inducing narratives underpinning technophobia, but "There is in fact nothing more efficient than good old communitarian social control . . ." ¹⁰

Technology both enables transgression and mediates it; it builds data monuments and these are profound; it records our sublime depths and our potential as it memorialises them; it evokes lost worlds, the unmediated transgressions of the past. It measures them and so makes transgression into work.

Beyond the efficiencies, the effects of all this control is not the domination of the Eloi by the Morlocks, angelic innocence farmed and consumed by demonic creatures from beneath the earth, it is blandness, boredom, it is difference denied. The struggle is located here, at the edge of nulled vitality.

Pleasure & the Virtuous Gland

We fight for organotic potency, for vividness and force. We seek to liberate erectile tissues from the burden of fetishised work. This is our challenge to "the dominant system's imperious architecture and its deployment of signs" for it is only by way of revolt that we might have any prospect of recovering "the world of differences - the natural, the sensory/sensual, sexuality and pleasure." ¹¹

And so to the violence at the end of *Hegemonick*, which Morrison describes as a "conflagration of mass infant anarchy [that] grows more and more apocalyptic through the course of the poem . . ."

This is when children stormed erotic zones held as a fetish by the State. They unhitched love from work. In the final pages of the book unmediated emotion becomes an all absorbing form of play. When considering this outbreak of youthful exuberance Morrison concludes that "no matter how violently - it's fundamentally a Blakeian anarchy, a milk-letting . . ."

Thus is foretold the final victory of the child, it takes the form of the release of love from a discrete romanticised realm into the everyday, making life and pleasure one unified thing. The abolition of work and the release of love are one thing.

Emily Trig

Endnotes

1. Jordan, A., *Hegemonick* (Shearsman 2012) <http://www.shearsman.com/pages/books/catalog/2012/jordanHeg.html>
2. *The Recusant*, February 2013 <http://www.therecasant.org.uk/#/morrison-on-hegemonick/4573944199>
3. The poem can be found here: <http://internationaltimes.it/the-future-shape-of-children-2/>
4. The quote refers to the transformational potential of passive security devices. See: *Surveillance & Society* 1(3) : 412-430 Social Control after Foucault by Michalis Lianos (translated by David Wood and Michalis Lianos) <http://www.d.umn.edu/cla/faculty/jhamlin/4111/2111-home/CD/TheoryClass/Readings/AfterFoucault.pdf>
5. Jordan, A., *Hegemonick* (Shearsman 2012), p12
6. Email message to author, 14th October 2012.
7. If you are using an e-reader then its manufacturer is watching you from within the book. The device monitors your behaviour and reports

back. That information can be sold to other companies or given to State agencies without your knowledge. The Electronic Frontier Foundation's *E-Reader Privacy Chart, 2012 Edition* can be found here:

- www.eff.org/pages/reader-privacy-chart-2012
8. "Behaviour in public consisted of performances designed to win approval - performances whose success depended upon no genuine moral standard, but on how well social actors could satisfy their desires within established conventions of rewards and punishments." *Rewriting the Self - Histories from the Renaissance to the Present*, Ed. Roy Porter (Routledge 1997). See: European Enlightenment and the Self, E. J. Hundert (p. 73 and p76)
 9. An essay on Mandeville by E. J. Hundert http://www.martinfrost.ws/htmlfiles/pees_fable.html#essay
 10. See note 4.
 11. The quoted text is from Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (English translation by Donald Nicholson-Smith, Blackwell 1991), p50. The full quote appears on the final page of *Hegemonick*.

Field Trip Re-enactment

In Conjunction with The Committee for the Suppression and Realisation of the Umbelliferous Self

Saturday 15th June 2013
10.30AM — meet at
Southampton Central Station

Purchase a return ticket to Cosham. Our train will depart at 10.44am. We will alight from the train at Portchester at 11.23am.

nb Portchester Station has no car park. Those travelling by car should meet us at Fort Nelson (PO17 6AN). Fort Nelson is a Royal Armouries museum. Entrance and parking are free. There is a cafe and toilets.

We will walk in an unconvincing fashion to Fort Nelson and fail to capture the attitudes, behaviour and experiences of those who attended the field trip last November. We won't look like them either.

Having failed to embody the past we will proceed to The Churchillian (PO6 3LS) for some slightly anxious fake socialising.

We will return via Cosham Station. Trains to Southampton: **17.26, 17.39, 17.46, 17.51, 18.06, 18.26, 18.39, 18.46** &c. (**bold** denotes 30 mins journey approx, *italics* denotes 45mins approx).

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