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Blind Seeing: Deathwriting from Dickinson to the contemporary

Peter Boxall

I

Light and Shadow in the World picture

I want in this essay to explore the possibility that, in our time, a set of distinctions that have helped us to frame and understand being have entered into a state of quite profound transition. Our understanding of the relationship between the living and the dead, between the human and the nonhuman, and between the visible and the invisible has come under a certain amount of pressure, I will argue, as we enter into a contemporary period dominated on the one hand by the imminence of eco-catastrophe, and on the other hand by info-technological revolutions that have transformed the place of the human in the world. The traditions of thought that have allowed us to associate the human with life and with light, in opposition to a world of animals and things which do not share our world view, and which come to visibility and thinkability through reflected human light – these traditions, I suggest, look precarious or exhausted, as humanism itself enters into a crisis, and as our wasted environment is flung clear of its alignment with any given human world picture. As these traditions of thought, philosophical as well as theological, enter into crisis, it is possible, I will further suggest, to discern latent counter traditions, other ways of thinking about the relation between the enlightened and the benighted, between the human and the non-human, that have stretched through our literary and intellectual histories, but that have remained thus far difficult to articulate. More specifically, I will argue, one can trace a thread of what I will call ‘blind seeing’ running through the poetic and literary tradition, a way of thinking and seeing that recasts the relationship between the visible and the invisible, and that can allow for a shifted relationship between life and death, one which does not conform to the demands of the humanist tradition, and which allows us to glimpse the possibility of a differently configured life world.

The writer whose work might most immediately come to mind, when thinking about the possibilities of a literature which brings death into the sphere of the thinkable, is Franz Kafka. Take, for example, the diary entry of the 9th December 1914, in which Kafka speculates that his own death might afford him a certain happiness, and further that it is this welcoming relationship with death that enables him to write. ‘On the way home’, he writes,

told Max that I shall lie very contentedly on my deathbed, provided the pain isn't too great. I forgot – and later purposely omitted – to add that the best things I have written have their basis in this capacity of mine to meet death with contentment.¹

In an inversion of Woody Allen's famous witticism ('I don't want to achieve immortality through my work, I want to achieve it through not dying'), Kafka imagines a fundamental connection between the capacity to write, and the capacity to die; his work grants him not immortality, but the very possibility of dying.² As Maurice Blanchot puts it, in his discussion of that same diary entry, Kafka's work is propelled by a peculiarly circuitous and contradictory relationship with the death that enables it – 'write to be able to die – die to be able to write'.³ Kafka's protagonists, Blanchot writes, 'carry out their actions in death's space, and [...] it is to the indefinite time of 'dying' that they belong' (p. 92).

In his discussion of Kafka's deathwriting, from 1955, Blanchot suggests that there is something anomalous about this discovery of a kind of generative principle in the experience of death. 'Naturally', Blanchot writes, Kafka's thinking here is 'in conflict with generally accepted ideas about art and the work of art'. 'To write in order not to die', Blanchot goes on, 'to entrust oneself to the survival of the work: this motive is apparently what keeps the artist at his task' (p. 94). It is a mark of Kafka's singularity that he should refuse such a fundamental principle or motive, that he should so effortlessly evacuate the weighty idea that art is about the prolongation or affirmation or consecration of life. This may be so; but what I want to explore in this essay is the possibility that Kafka's work, whatever its singularity, belongs to a literary tradition which has found in the approach to realised death not only a form of negation, but also a means of producing a new kind of possibility, a means, as Emily Dickinson puts it in 1862, of inventing 'another way – to see'.⁴ This shadowy tradition may stretch as far back as writing itself, may simply be a darkling version of Harold Bloom's 'western canon' or Erich Auerbach's 'western literature'; but I will trace it here only as far back as the beautifully deathbound verse of Emily Dickinson. There is, I will suggest, a line of influence or affinity, reaching from Dickinson to Beckett to a body of contemporary deathwriting, that evokes this counter-tradition, and that allows us to imagine a way of thinking about death, and its relationship to life, that might work against the 'generally accepted ideas' that Blanchot talks of in 1955; that might allow us to picture a different kind of life world, in which the 'survival of the work' rests not on the eradication of the dark and the deathly, but on a radically reconceived relation between the dark and the luminous, between the quick and the dead. At a time when our conception of the life world is in an unprecedentedly deep crisis, when our capacity to picture the world as an environment in harmony with human modes of life is most attenuated, it is perhaps an urgent task to read for such a counter-tradition, to find new ways to see without the aid of human light.

Indeed, I shall start by addressing the question of our picture of the world in terms of the relation between the visible and the invisible, between light and dark. For Martin Heidegger, famously, what marks the birth of what he calls the ‘modern age’ is the transformation of the world into a picture. He writes, in his essay ‘The Age of the World Picture’ (first delivered as a lecture in 1938), that ‘the fundamental event of the modern age is the conquest of the world as a picture’.⁵ In contradistinction to the medieval and ancient conceptions of the world, the ‘modern age’ is characterised by its conception of the world as pictorial representation, and what is more by human representation. ‘The essence of the modern age’, Heidegger writes, is that the world becomes a picture which is projected by ‘man’. With the arrival of the world picture, he writes, ‘man becomes that being upon which all that is, is grounded as regards the manner of its being and its truth’ (p. 128). When world becomes picture, ‘Man becomes the relational center of that which is as such’. In casting the world as a picture, ‘man sets himself up as the setting in which whatever is must henceforth set itself forth [...] Man becomes the representative of that which is’ (p. 132). It is for this reason that the rise of humanism, for Heidegger, coincides with the modern age, and with the age of the world picture. ‘It is no wonder,’ he writes, ‘that humanism first arises where the world becomes picture’:

It would have been just as impossible for a humanism to have gained currency in the great age of the Greeks as it would have been impossible to have had anything like a world picture in that age. (p. 133)

For Heidegger, the conquest of the world by the human is intricately bound up with the emergence of a form of pictorial representation which allows us to shape the world that we inhabit, the world which ‘is normative and binding for us’ (p. 129).

Now, it is easy to see that this conjunction between the human and the very conditions of seeing, the very conditions of ‘worlding’, rests on a quite radical anthropocentrism. Heidegger’s correlation between man and world is part of what Giorgio Agamben, in his 2002 work *The Open*, calls the ‘anthropological machine’ – the organising of the world around a human centre that has been, he argues, at the heart of western metaphysics, and that has provided ‘the motor for man’s becoming historical’.⁶ To produce a picture of the world, Agamben’s work suggests, we have been required to banish the nonhuman from the sphere of the human, to banish darkness from the light, to banish death from life. This exclusion, this banishment, is what has allowed us to make a picture of the world. Ontology, anthropogenesis, the ‘becoming human of the living being’, has required us, repeatedly, to enforce distinctions between ‘the human and the animal, between nature and history, between life and death’ (p. 79). If this is so, however, it is central to Agamben’s project to recognise that our own age sees the winding down of the anthropological machine. ‘The end of philosophy’, Agamben writes in *The Open*, and ‘the completion of the epochal destinations of being mean that today the machine is idling’ (p. 80). To think about the world now might require us to adapt a different

kind of seeing, one that is not structured by Heidegger's world picture, and that does not posit the human as the 'relational center of that which is as such'. It might require us to learn to see with the eyes of what Agamben calls, in 2009, the 'true contemporary'. To rise to the challenge of the contemporary, Agamben writes in his essay 'What is the Contemporary', requires us to see not only the world picture, to see not only what is made visible and brought into the light, but also to see what is banished from the visible, what is excluded from representation. 'The contemporary', he writes, is 'he who firmly holds his gaze on his own time so as to perceive not its light but rather its darkness'.⁷ 'The ones who can call themselves contemporary', Agamben goes on,

are only those who do not allow themselves to be blinded by the lights of the century and so manage to get a glimpse of the shadows in those lights, of their intimate obscurity [...] The contemporary is the person who perceives the darkness of his time as something that concerns him, as something that never ceases to engage him. Darkness is something that – more than any light – turns directly and singularly toward him. (p. 14)

Our own contemporary moment, Agamben suggests, requires us to overcome those distinctions that have separated life from death, human from animal. It requires us, perhaps, to conceive a different way of thinking about how death relates to life, how the pictured relates to the unpictured. But, if we are to glean a connection here between this contemporary requirement, and the tradition of deathwriting I am proposing here, we have to address a paradox that is at work in Agamben's understanding of contemporaneity, and that complicates any perception that Agamben's project is involved in simply dismantling or overcoming a Heideggerian anthropocentrism, or in discomposing Heidegger's world picture. This paradox lies in the perception that the experience of contemporaneity has always involved the discerning of a darkness within the sphere of the visible, a deathliness within the province of the living. 'All eras', Agamben writes, 'for those who experience contemporariness, are obscure. The contemporary is precisely the person who knows how to see this obscurity, who is able to write by dipping his pen into the obscurity of the present' (p. 13). Indeed, the no doubt correct idea that Agamben's project, in *The Open*, is devoted to overcoming the distinctions that have separated human from animal, is troubled by the possibility that, in Heidegger's own work, in his exercising of his own contemporaneity, these distinctions are already under a certain kind of erasure. Agamben writes in 2009 that 'the contemporary is the one whose eyes are struck by the beam of darkness that comes from his own time' – that seeing one's own time requires one to see outside the precincts of the word picture, of the world as it is made visible to us, as it binds and normalises us. But Heidegger, even as he outlines the conditions of world picturing in 1938, is already cognizant of the conjunction between light and dark which is part of the picture itself. The picture of the world includes a glimmer of what Heidegger calls the

‘incalculable’ – the latent possibility of world picturing itself that cannot be contained within any given picture of the world. ‘This becoming incalculable’, he writes, ‘remains the invisible shadow that is cast around all things everywhere’ when the world has been ‘transformed into a picture’ (p. 135). To know our historical moment, to ‘safeguard into its truth’, requires us, Heidegger writes, to see into this shadow, as it is ‘by means of this shadow’ that ‘the modern world extends itself out into a space withdrawn from representation’ (p. 136). ‘Everyday opinion’, Heidegger writes, ‘sees in the shadow only the lack of light, if not light’s complete denial. In truth, however, the shadow is a manifest, though impenetrable, testimony to the concealed emitting of light’ (p. 154). To look only at that which is illuminated or pictured – to be, in Agamben’s terms, ‘blinded by the lights’ of one’s own time – Heidegger writes in 1938, ‘can bring about nothing in itself other than self-deception and blindness in relation to the historical moment’ (p. 136).

II

Blind Seeing and Deathwriting in Emily Dickinson

So, the tradition that I am seeking to trace here is one that has grounded itself in this peculiar fusion between the light and the dark – in this conjunction between the living and the dead that has been at work within the very forms that have allowed us to conceive of the human, and to conspire in the rise of humanism. And I have chosen to locate the beginning of this tradition in the writing of Emily Dickinson because it is in her verse, I think, that the aesthetic embrace of death comes closer than in any other writing to the obsessive tracing of a failed distinction between the visible and the invisible, between blindness and sight. Across the range of her poetry, it is possible to see that her chief literary and philosophical preoccupation – the aesthetic encounter with death, the conjunction between death and writing that Kafka describes in 1914 – is thought through a repeated, obsessive concern with what we might call a blind seeing. It is as light itself darkens and darkness glows, as seeing shades into and mingles with unseeing, that Dickinson’s poetry reaches towards a conception of death as possibility. As Dickinson most famously puts it in 1862, she is committed not to picturing the world, but to a particular kind of unpicturing, a kind of ungraven poetics, what Harold Bloom calls a ‘passion for unnamings’.⁸ ‘I would not paint – a picture’ (348, l. 1), she writes, dedicating herself to what she calls ‘bright impossibility’ (l. 3), to a writing which can only illuminate a failure of the possibility of vision or luminosity – a kindling of the impossible which remains unthought, even as it comes forth into brightness. It is through this unpicturing, through the dismantling of the mechanics of vision, that her poetry penetrates the shadows in which Heidegger discovers the ‘concealed emitting of light’, and in which she approaches Blanchot’s ‘death’s space’. To read

Dickinson now, I think, is to attend newly to this unpicturing, and to acknowledge the challenge that her poetry presents to reading and to seeing – a challenge that is perhaps not met, in Paul de Man’s resonant phrase, by any existing ‘rhetoric of blindness’.⁹ It is to recognise that de Man’s own deconstructive approach to the conjunction between blindness and insight – in which, he writes, ‘critics’ moments of greatest blindness with regard to their own critical assumptions are also the moments at which they achieve their greatest insight’¹⁰ – cannot bring the visual and epistemological terrain of Dickinson’s poetry into focus. Where for de Man, as for Derrida and for Blanchot, blindness is the empty content of any act of seeing or thinking – the ‘negative movement that animates the critic’s thought’, the ‘unstated principle that leads his language away from its asserted stand’¹¹ – the poetic tradition I am trying to trace here suggests that the relation between blindness sight opens onto something less epistemologically evacuated, something like new kind of ground to being, one which can only glimmer forth under intense poetic pressure, and which does not yet have a vocabulary in which to express itself. Paul De Man writes that ‘a certain degree of blindness is part of the specificity of all literature’,¹² as Derrida suggests that a certain ‘invisibility [...] inhabit[s] the visible’, or ‘come[s] to haunt it to the point of being confused with it’.¹³ To gain access to the ways in which blindness is attached to sight in Dickinson, and in which the invisible is attached to the visible, requires us, I think, to develop a new mode of critical reading, one that is not contained within the rhetoric of deconstruction.

To gather a sense of this conjunction between deathwriting and blind seeing in Dickinson’s verse, one can draw on examples from across her oeuvre. Take, for example, the opening of poem 869:

What I see not, I better see –
Through Faith – My Hazel Eye
Has periods of shutting –
But, No lid has Memory – (869, ll. 1-4).

As readers of Dickinson have pointed out, this reads as a response to William Shakespeare’s Sonnet 43.¹⁴ Dickinson’s speaker finds that seeing well involves the failure of sight, as Shakespeare writes that ‘When most I wink, then do my eyes best see’. ‘For all the day’, Shakespeare’s sonnet continues,

They view things unrespected;
But when I sleep, in dreams they look on thee,
And, darkly bright, are bright in dark directed.¹⁵

Shakespeare's sonnet continues to play with this paradox to its end. The effect of looking on beauty is to make shadows bright, and to make brightness shadowy so that, in the concluding couplet,

All days are nights till I see thee,

And nights bright days when dreams do show thee me (ll. 13-14).

There is a light play of oppositions in Shakespeare's sonnet, in which the overcoming of the limits of daylight can only be expressed in terms of the conditions of seeing which the poet is seeking to supersede. To see the object of this poem is to stage a reversal between bright and dark; but as bright becomes dark, and dark becomes bright, the very opposition that drives the poem is peculiarly cancelled, and the difference between 'winking' and 'seeing', the difference upon which the poem depends, yields to a kind of unity, a poetic fusion between seeing and unseeing. The poet looks upon his loved one here with 'unseeing eyes' (l. 8), with 'sightless eyes' (l. 12), and the collapsing play between opposition and identity that the poem enacts allows for a kind of looking which can at once maintain and overcome this difference between blindness and sight.

Dickinson's poem performs a similar operation, and moves in step with Shakespeare's sonnet, towards a climax in which Dickinson's poet, like Shakespeare's, suggests that the seeing demanded by the loved one involves a more perfect kind of light, a brighter kind of brightness, than that which allows for conventional seeing. She beholds the 'Features so beloved' (l. 8), in the light of 'Faith' (l. 2) and 'Memory' (l. 4), she writes at the poem's close, 'Till jealous Daylight interrupt – / And mar thy perfectness' (ll. 11-12). Normal daylight, in Dickinson and in Shakespeare, seems like night, like dimness, in comparison with the pristine light by which the loved one is beheld. But if there is a close accord between Dickinson and Shakespeare here, there is also a deep chasm between them, one which opens around the way that the two writers understand the oppositions that drive their verse. Shakespeare balances the opposition between bright and dark against their apparent sameness; but Dickinson's verse, here and always, produces a bottomless gulf between seeing and unseeing, a borderless zone of non-knowing, that is the signature of her thinking and of her poetics, and which opens onto a kind of deathly writing that is uniquely her own. The first line, 'What I see not, I better see –', forces a schism within the idea of seeing itself – that 'internal difference', as Dickinson puts it in poem 320, 'Where the Meanings, are' (320, ll. 7-8). She sees well when she is not seeing, so seeing, at its best, contains and emerges from unseeing; and the poem can do nothing to sustain or overcome this contradiction, this internal difference. It is only in a kind of living death – only, she writes, with 'all my sense obscured' (869, l. 5) – that she is able to achieve her blind seeing, because the gap that opens, within seeing itself, between seeing and not seeing, can only find itself

thought, or poetically realised, in the space of Dickinsonian death – the space of the dash, when words are gone, when thinking outlives itself.

This relation between deathwriting and blind seeing emerges repeatedly in Dickinson's verse – so much so that it becomes the motor and the medium of her thinking. Take poem 428, in which death is imagined as a process by which 'We grow accustomed to the Dark', and learn to see in the night of nonbeing. 'The Bravest', she writes, 'grope a little',

But as they learn to see –

Either the Darkness alters –

Or something in the sight

Adjusts itself to Midnight –

And Life steps almost straight (428, ll. 16-20).

Death is here imagined as an alteration of the dark, an alteration in which life itself impossibly persists, learning to hold itself 'almost straight' in the province of a poetically lit dark. Or take poem 484, 'From Blank to Blank –':

From Blank to Blank –

A Threadless Way

I pushed Mechanic feet –

To stop – or perish – or advance –

Alike indifferent –

If end I gained

It ends beyond

Indefinite disclosed –

I shut my eyes – and groped as well

'Twas lighter – to be Blind –

Here, the groping encounter with not being – with the blank that stretches before the beginning of existence and after its end – takes place, as in 'We grow accustomed to the Dark', in the precinct of a lit or altered dark. The poem is impelled by the impossible recognition that

blankness, as the unthinkable origin and destination of all being, can only come to us in the form of a sign, a sign which immediately and unerringly betrays the blankness that it seeks to represent, either in the form of a word or in the form of a dash. The metrical feet of the poem, and the bodily feet of the groping poet, can only crank out a mechanical testimony to the blankness that both being and poetry are – and by staging such testimony, deny it. The figure of blind seeing upon which the poem rests – ‘Twas lighter – to be Blind –’ – is the apotheosis of this irresolvable antinomy. The phrase might suggest a response to the indifference that the poet feels; it is easier (lighter) just to stop trying to see one’s being or make sense of one’s condition, as the heaviness of those trudging feet can only be lightened by a kind of careless resignation to unthinking. But it also suggests that the impossible combination of living and dying that being in time is – a being which is generated by nothingness and leads to nothingness and is continually giving way to nothingness, even as it finds itself impossibly persisting, pushing itself forward – can only be seen by inventing a looking which is also an aversion of the gaze, by learning to see in a dark which remains dark, even as it alters, even as it adjusts itself to the conditions of visibility.

The poem which perhaps captures this combination assemblage of dying and blind seeing most sharply is poem 591, ‘I heard a Fly buzz – when I died –’:

I heard a fly buzz – when I died –

The Stillness in the Room

Was like the Stillness in the Air –

Between the Heaves of Storm –

The Eyes around – had wrung them dry –

And Breaths were gathering firm

For that last Onset – when the King

Be witnessed – in the Room –

I willed my Keepsakes – Signed away

What portion of me be

Assignable – and then it was

There interposed a Fly –

With Blue – uncertain – stumbling Buzz –

Between the light – and me –

And then the Windows failed – and then

I could not see to see –

The task of this poem is to open a blind space within seeing, in which the event of death might be allowed, against all the rules of life, to take place. The first line – ‘I heard a fly buzz – when I died –’ – makes the impossible claim, common to all posthumous narration, that one’s own death has been achieved, that one has been able to experience and outlive one’s own dying. The following stanzas seem in part to fall back from this claim, recasting the poet’s death as the future moment towards which the poem is moving, as the mourners in still room prepare for their grief, and as the poet herself manages her final affairs. But as the poem moves towards its climax, it comes ever closer to the rent in being that is torn by that opening line, working its way back into the crevasse between life and death, before and after, that has already swallowed it. The opening line inaugurates a shattering difference within the I itself; the I who hears the fly’s buzz cannot be quite the same as the I who has died, as the buzzing is surely a prelude to the death that the dead I has already achieved. This difference within the speaking voice can be heard again in the third stanza as the poet ‘Signed away / What portion of me be / Assignable’ (ll. 9-12). Just as the poet of ‘From Blank to Blank’ experiences a difference from herself, as she ‘pushed’ her ‘mechanic feet’ along her threadless way, so here the poet feels a vast distance from herself in the very signs she has for herself – the signs with which she gives a portion of herself away. And then, as we reach the extraordinary ending of the poem, as the fly ‘interposes’ between the dead I and the living I, or between the I and the signs by which it knows itself, this difference flies wide open, leading to one of the most intense figures of blind seeing in Dickinson’s verse. The fly buzzes at the window, which marks the threshold between ‘the light’ and ‘me’ (l. 14); perhaps, as the uncertain, stumbling buzz begins its buzzing, the window marks the boundary between a celestial light outside or beyond, and the living ‘me’ who lies still on her deathbed, in her still room, on this side of death. But ‘then’, as the ‘Windows failed’, the distinctions that have held the poem in place suddenly give way, returning us to an impossible naked gulf between living self and dead self, a gulf in which the visible and the invisible, seeing and unseeing, reach an awful, utterly disjunct identity. As the poet finds that ‘I could not see to see’ (l. 16), she understands that she is already beyond the horizons of the room, already in the death that has happened in the poem’s first line. As the windows fail, the dead I can no longer see the into the room, into the body and the mind in which she carries out her last act of seeing, can no longer see into herself in order to see out of the window towards her dying light. But even as this failure offers itself as the final act of the

poem (the poem is driven by those urgent markers of temporal progression, ‘and then’ (l. 11), ‘and then’ (l. 15), ‘and then’ (l. 15)), the poem tells us that it is also its opening impulse, and the very condition of seeing itself. To see is to conjure some conjunction between the I who lives in sequential time and the I who is already and always in the blank province of death; and the light by which we achieve such seeing is always riven by the darkness of dying, always dimmed by its connection with the shadowy ‘portion’ of the self which is not ‘assignable’, which cannot find itself illuminated by any kind of light.

III

The Total Object, Complete with Missing Parts.

It is this kind of seeing, I think, that both Heidegger and Agamben have in mind, when they talk of a darkness which contains a ‘light that, while directed towards us, infinitely distances itself from us’,¹⁶ or when they see shadows as a ‘concealed emitting of light’.¹⁷ Picturing, for Dickinson, as for Agamben and for Heidegger, involves a kind of unpicturing, is shot through or bound up with unpicturing. To find ‘another way to see’ is to learn to see this hidden communication between light and dark. As Dickinson puts it in ‘The Tint I cannot take – is best’, this kind of picturing requires us to understand that a ‘portion’ of the life world is resistant to visibility, to apportioning or assigning, and cannot take any representative or material tint, so that one can only picture the world, can only ‘see it’, when the ‘Cheated eye/ Shuts arrogantly – in the Grave’ (696, ll. 22-23). To see by this dark light is to see in the grave, to see in the space of death that Dickinson’s verse so singularly, so miraculously summons to thought. And, if one can see a shared vocabulary of blind seeing, in this dialogue between Dickinson, Heidegger and Agamben, so too it is possible to see a submerged or minor literary heritage that has its roots in Dickinson, and that stretches this relation between death and ‘bright impossibility’ (348, l. 3) beyond Dickinson’s own time, into the twentieth century, and on into our own contemporary moment.

Take the work of Samuel Beckett, which is, I think, engaged throughout in a certain kind of slantwise dialogue with Dickinson’s poetry – a dialogue which has so far largely eluded critical expression. There is I think a buried affinity between these two writers, a kind of shared mood and sensibility that causes a certain shock of recognition when reading from one to the other, as if, in Beckett’s words, they emerge from the same ‘profounds of mind. Of mindlessness’.¹⁸ Think, for example, of Beckett’s 1946 French language poem *La Mouche* (which I give here also in Steven Connor’s translation):

entre la scène et moi

la vitre

vide sauf elle

ventre à terre

sanglée dans ses boyaux noirs

antennes affolées ailes liées

pattes crochues bouche suçant à vide

sabrant l'azur s'écrasant contre l'invisible

sous mon pouce impuissant elle fait chavirer

la mer et le ciel serein¹⁹ (p. 45)

between the vista and me

the pane

void save it

belly down

strapped in its black guts

crazed antennae, bound wings

legs crooked mouthparts sucking on void

slashing the blue crushing itself against the invisible

under my helpless thumb it convulses

sea and quiet sky

The image here, in Beckett's poem, of a fly pressed against a window pane calls irresistibly to Dickinson's 'I heard a fly buzz – when I died'. 'La Mouche' reads almost as an anagram of Dickinson's poem, with the 'blue' of the 'Blue – uncertain – stumbling Buzz' reframed in the phrase 'sabrant l'azur', with the failure of sight that ends Dickinson's poem rendered as a 'crushing' 'against the invisible' ('s'écrasant contre l'invisible'), and with the interposing of

the window between ‘the light – and me’ in Dickinson cast here as the installing of a ‘pane’ (‘vitre’) between ‘la scène’ and ‘moi’.

Such a recreation of the elements of Dickinson’s poem in ‘La Mouche’, of course, is no proof of ‘influence’, and indeed I have no interest in claiming that Beckett is knowingly referencing Dickinson here. I do not seek to reveal that Beckett has an active interest in Dickinson that has so far been missed by his critics, but rather to suggest that Beckett’s literary thinking has a rich resonance with Dickinson’s, one which underlies their manifest differences in cultural attitude and religious conviction. What the Dickinsonian cast to Beckett’s poem does allow us to see is a kind of shared sensibility, a shared visual vocabulary, that is evident in a particular way in ‘La Mouche’, but which turns and glimmers throughout Beckett’s oeuvre, from ‘Serena 1’ and *More Pricks than Kicks* in the early 1930s to *Worstward Ho* and *Stirrings Still* in the 1980s. As Seven Connor and others have demonstrated, the image of the fly pressed against the window pane recurs through Beckett’s oeuvre, and each time it does it brings with it associations that evoke a Dickinsonian undertow to Beckett’s writing, a pull towards a kind of blind seeing that he shares with her, and that opens onto the space of an instantiated, imagined death.²⁰ Watt, written in 1944, contains an image of flies seeking the warmth and light that has a Dickinsonian pulse:

The flies, of skeleton thinness, excited to new efforts by yet another dawn, left the walls, and the ceiling, and even the floor, and hastened in great numbers to the window. Here, pressed against the impenetrable panes, they would enjoy the light and warmth of the long summer’s day.²¹

The fly pressed against the impenetrable pane here carries something from the fly crushed against the invisible in ‘La Mouche’, and prepares the ground for Beckett’s later houseflies – in *Company*, for example, which focuses sharply on a ‘live fly’ that might provide some company to the lone protagonist of the novella, a ‘live fly mistaking him for dead’;²² or in *All Strange Away*, where the narrator commands himself to imagine, to ‘lodge a second in that glare’, a ‘dying common house or dying window fly’.²³

Now, there is nothing in particular to suggest that this recurrence of the ‘window fly’ in Beckett is associated with Dickinson’s death fly (although one of the few essays to extend a comparison between Beckett and Dickinson reads the fly in *Company* as a cousin of the fly in ‘I heard a fly Buzz – when I died’).²⁴ But the associations that gather around the fly in these recurring passages are woven into a particular kind of thinking about death, about visibility, and about the requirement that one brings death to visibility and perception as part of any attempt to picture the world – a kind of thinking that Beckett and Dickinson deeply share. Dickinson’s fly, in interposing between the dead and living ‘I’, between ‘the light’ and ‘me’, and in marking that gap that opens up in seeing as the poet ‘could not see to see’, stumbles into the limit space

that her entire work strains to make thinkable, the space underlying being, in which the oppositions that make being possible are both revealed and overcome. There is, there has to be, a space between darkness and brightness, between being alive and being dead, where these two conditions meet and separate; to think is to approach this zone of mingling and separation, to find oneself at once annulled and brought to being within it. Both Dickinson and Beckett know this, and for both the task of writing is to enter this zone, to enter the indefiniteness, the indifference, that it confers upon the thinker, while making of such indefiniteness, such indifference, the very difference and definition that allows us to maintain a subject position, and allows us to cast a picture of the world. Sharon Cameron, in what remains one of the most incisive readings of 'I heard a Fly buzz – when I died' remarks on just this attention in Dickinson to the commingling of dark and bright, of life and death, in terms which make the continuity between Dickinson and Beckett palpable. Dickinson's lyrics, Cameron writes, 'attempt to cross boundaries, to blur distinctions between life and death, time and timelessness, figure and its fulfilment, or to put it more accurately, to wear a passage between them';²⁵ and the force that allows her to cross such boundaries, to wear such a passage, is that of imagined, perceived death, an imagining of death that manages to conjure a continuity between bright and dark, between blindness and seeing. The last two lines of Dickinson's poem ('And then the windows failed – and then / I could not see to see'), Cameron writes, forge a space in which 'death is survived by perception', and in which the poem 'penetrates to the invisible imagination which strengthens in response to the loss of visible sight' (p. 115).

For any reader of Beckett's work, this description of Dickinson's blind seeing is eerily prescient of the passage that Beckett's own writing wears from blank to blank, 'on', as he puts it, from 'nought anew',²⁶ from the 'unthinkable first to the no less unthinkable last'.²⁷ If for Dickinson, death is survived by perception, so for Beckett, the imagination continually outlives its own death. 'I don't know when I died', the narrator of *The Calmative* says at the opening of his narrative, in an impossible posthumous gambit which mirrors the opening of Dickinson's poem;²⁸ and Beckett's writing career, from the *Unnamable* on, is nothing more than an extended attempt to imagine the death of the imagination, to conjure a kind of seeing that continues, after the difference between seeing and unseeing, between living and dying, has been cancelled. As the narrator of *All Strange Away* imagines that Dickinsonian fly, pressed against the window pane in the bright glare of a death that has already been died, the narrator summons this requirement, this demand that the Beckettian imagination lives on in the throes of its own death. 'Imagination dead imagine', the narrator says: 'Imagination dead imagine to lodge a second in that glare a dying common house or dying window fly, then fall the five feet to the dust and die or die and fall' (p. 172).

The light that shines in Beckett's work, from the 'darkness visible' of 'A wet night' to the 'unfading light' of 'Neither',²⁹ is drawn from this encounter with a perceived death, this

capacity to open a glaring second in which the imagination imagines its own dying. In all of the 'rotunda texts' of the sixties and seventies, in *Imagination Dead Imagine*, *All Strange Away*, and then in *The Lost Ones*, *Company*, *Ill seen Ill Said*, and *Worstward Ho*, the undifferentiated storyscapes are lit by a peculiar light, which is made of the shadows that it seems to vanquish, and which is won by an imagination that is working at and beyond the limits of its own conditions of possibility. The scene in *Company*, in which the protagonist lies 'on his back in the dark' in a placeless cylinder, listening to a 'voice' which tells him of his life, is periodically lit by precisely this light. The light, the narrator says, has 'no source', 'as if faintly luminous all his little void' (p. 15) – in the same way that the light in the rotunda of *Imagination Dead Imagine* comes from 'no visible source' (p. 182). The light in these works appears to saturate the space – so that in the rotunda of *Imagination Dead Imagine* 'all shines with the same white shine' (p. 182), and in the cylinder of *The Lost Ones* the light 'appears to emanate from all sides and to permeate the entire space as though this were uniformly luminous down to its least particle of ambient air'.³⁰ This lends these works a kind of brilliance, a shadowless quality, like the relentless illumination of a shopping mall, or of a rubber cell. But even as these works bask in omnipresent light, it is clear at all times that the light here is only another kind of darkness, that brightness is, as in Dickinson's 'We grow accustomed to the Dark –', simply an alteration of the dark. The brilliant light of Beckett's late works always holds a darkness within it, always trembles on the brink of revealing an identity with the dark that it opposes – this, the narrator of *Company* suggests, is a 'shadowy light' (p. 15), a light which simply makes the 'darkness visible' (p. 15).

To learn to see in this light requires one to develop a particular kind of blind seeing, one that we are taught too in reading Dickinson's verse, as she stumbles from blank to blank. When Beckett seeks to picture a world, when he reaches for what the narrator of *The Lost Ones* calls 'a perfect mental image of the whole system' (p. 204), he seeks to imagine a space in which everything is included, in which death is included in the sphere of life, in which dark is included in the sphere of light. As a young Beckett puts it, he seeks to imagine the art work as a 'total object, complete with missing parts'.³¹ And this requires him to understand that the picture of the world, in its fullness, includes those shadows that are concealed within Heideggerian light, just as any attempt to imagine being requires us to apprehend the thought that nonbeing is one of its constituent parts. Beckett's late works seek to produce pictures of completion, pictures of the totality. But what Beckett finds is that the harder we try to imagine the world in its blankness or in its completeness, in its fullness or in its emptiness, we find that there exists always a remainder, some deathly element or ingredient of life, some dark element of light, that cannot quite come to thought or expression; some difference from self that is a feature of the very grammar of being. The narrator of *Worstward Ho* – Beckett's most excruciating experiment in blind seeing – finds that the attempt to 'see all' produces not simply omnipresent light, but a kind of Dickinsonian blank, a flaw in being, in thinking, that runs right through its

very fabric. To try to say everything, Beckett's narrator writes, produces only a kind of Dickinson unsaying, in which we are cast into unthought, into 'profounds of mindlessness' which are marked only by those 'Blanks for when words gone'.³²

IV

The Ponderous Spectacle of Things Ceasing to Be

It is perhaps in the lit darkness of our own contemporary moment that this fugitive affinity between Beckett and Dickinson, this latent tradition of blind seeing, comes to a kind of oblique perceptibility. There is, I think, a recognition, across a wide range of contemporary writers, that the task of making a picture of the world today involves us in the apprehension of a kind of darkness that is woven into the picturing mechanism itself – just as there is a growing sense that to think about life now, under contemporary conditions, requires us to re-see the junction between the living and the dead. As Jane Bennett argues in her 2010 book *Vibrant Matter*, there is an urgent imperative now to rethink the means by which life is distributed in matter, beyond the forms prescribed by humanist traditions – a rethinking which requires us to 'dissipate the onto-theological binaries of life/matter, human/animal'.³³ Our current predicament both allows and requires us to produce a new material account of the terrain that opens up between life and death, to overcome our habit, as Bennett puts it, of 'parsing the world into dull matter (it, things) and vibrant life (us, beings)';³⁴ and in doing so, we are led too to resee the difficult boundary between the blind and the sighted, between the visible and the invisible.

This articulation of world picturing, with blind seeing, with a new kind of inclusive disjunction between life and death, can be found, as I have said, across the range of contemporary imaginings. But I am going to focus here on one example – Cormac McCarthy's novel of global death *The Road* – a novel which owes an explicit debt to Beckett, and perhaps an implicit one to Dickinson, as the originator of the mode of deathwriting I am seeking here to articulate. McCarthy's novel sets out to offer a picture of the world, as an environment given over in its entirety to death. The man at the heart of the story is afforded, at one moment in the novel, a vision of this kind of planetary death. 'He walked out in the gray light', the narrator says,

and stood and he saw for a brief moment the absolute truth of the world. The cold relentless circling of the intestate earth. Darkness implacable. The blind dogs of the sun in their running. The crushing black vacuum of the universe.³⁵

This is a moment of blind seeing of some intensity. The gray light in which the man stands is cast by a blind sun; the absolute seeing that he is granted – his sudden grasping of the mechanical turning of a cosmic machine – is a vision that emerges from and takes place in implacable darkness. The moment of seeing itself is peculiarly annulled or proleptically cancelled, as it belongs to a model of looking and observing that, in the wake of whatever disaster has befallen the world, is now defunct. As the man puts it later in the novel, whatever world picture is granted here is one that no longer organises itself around the human as a relational centre. It is only ‘in the world’s destruction’ that it is ‘possible at last to see how it was made’ (p. 293).

McCarthy’s novel sets out to produce this picture of borderless death; but in doing so, in setting out to imagine the process by which the human extinguishes itself entirely, McCarthy produces that same kind of remainder, that same possibility of new modes of seeing, new ways of understanding the relation between the dead and the living, that we find in Beckett, and in Dickinson. McCarthy’s novel is drenched in Beckettian rhythms and allusions – it conducts itself throughout as an exercise in Beckettian thinking. Beckett’s *Imagination Dead Imagine*, with which McCarthy’s novel is in constant dialogue, opens with the declaration that, in whatever space the narrator is imagining, there is ‘No trace anywhere of life’,³⁶ and this phrase comes back repeatedly in *The Road*, like a mantra or an undertone. In this world, the narrator says, there is ‘no sign of life’ (p. 11); ‘The roadside hedges were gone to rows of black and twisted brambles. No sign of life’ (p. 20); there are ‘No tracks in the road, nothing living anywhere’ (p. 29); there is ‘no smoke, no movement of life’ (p. 82); there is ‘No sign of life anywhere’ (p. 216). As the man and the boy walk the road, as they push their mechanic feet along the ‘black shape’ of the road, ‘running from dark to dark’ (p. 279), they walk in the footsteps of all those tramping figures in Beckett, who in turn walk mechanically along that threadless way that Dickinson strings between blank and blank. In a rare moment of humour, McCarthy’s boy asks his father ‘What are our long term goals?’ (p. 170), and in the question we can hear Beckett’s grim dismantling of the Christian mechanics of hope, Dickinson’s disclosure of the indefiniteness of the end. But, in reanimating these Beckettian, Dickinsonian rhythms, McCarthy’s novel also produces that same furtive duplication, that same opening of wriggling difference within the static picture of the self-same, that moves in Beckett’s imagination, that animates Dickinson’s deathwriting. The boy asks his father at one point, perhaps as an adjunct to the question of ‘long term goals’, whether there is any other world, whether the world that they inhabit, in the last throes of its destruction, is the only world available to thought or to life. ‘There could be people alive someplace else’, the boy suggests:

Whereplace else?

I dont know. Anywhere.

You mean besides on earth?

Yes.

I don't think so. They couldn't live anywhere else.

Not even if they could get there?

No. (pp. 260-261)

This question is at the heart of McCarthy's imagination, as it is central to Beckett's thinking, and to Dickinson's. It calls, perhaps faintly, to Dickinson's assertion that 'the Brain – is wider than the sky –' (598) ('put them side by side', she says, 'The one the other will contain / With ease' (598, ll. 2-4)), and much more loudly to that moment in Beckett's *Endgame* when another love-crazed father seeks some kind of escape from the world that contains us. In the post-apocalyptic wastes of *Endgame*, where the 'earth is extinguished',³⁷ where the 'waves' are 'lead' and the 'sun is zero' (p. 107), a desperate father asks Hamm for some bread, to keep his child alive for another day, and Hamm refuses him, pointing out that survival in this world is only a prolongation of a time that has already died. 'Use your head', Hamm tells the pleading man, 'I give you some corn',

the colours come back into his little cheeks – perhaps. And then? [Pause.] I lost patience. [Violently.] Use your head, can't you, use your head, you're on earth, there's no cure for that! (p. 118)

For Beckett's Hamm, as for McCarthy's father, the world is all there is. The vision that McCarthy's father is granted of the 'absolute truth of the world' is a monologic vision, a 'total object', like the 'mental image of the entire system' that lies at the heart of Beckett's *The Lost Ones*. There is no place 'besides on earth', there is no cure for our worldedness. But what McCarthy's world picture discovers, like Beckett's like Dickinson's, is that picturing itself contains always a kind of darkness, a kind of countersight that is woven into seeing, and that offers a death that is also, as in Dickinson, 'Another way – to see'. The light that shines in McCarthy's novel is, like that in Beckett and in Dickinson, a dark kind of light, a light made of 'implacable darkness'. In another of those breath-taking seams, in which McCarthy's world folds into Beckett's, the light in *The Road* is described as 'sourceless' – the 'faint light all about, quivering and sourceless, refracted in the rain of drifting soot' (pp. 13-14). This is the light that is cast when the sun is 'zero', and in both Beckett and McCarthy there is an echo here of the possibility of seeing that emerges from the dark light cast in Dickinson's verse. But, in the half-light of the tradition I am sketching here, this sourceless light, this light compounded of the darkness it withstands, is not the result of a theology, but instead the fugitive corollary to seeing and thinking itself, the obscurity that inhabits the act of picturing, and that carries a latent, unthought, ungraven future. McCarthy's father equates world seeing with world destruction. It

is only ‘in the world’s destruction’ that it might be ‘possible to see how it was made’; but the kind of world seeing that McCarthy reaches for, the kind of seeing that we find in Beckett, and in Dickinson, is one that unearths a junction between the destruction of the world, and its very possibility, the motor of its becoming. The father sees before him ‘the sweeping waste, hydrotopic and coldly secular’, but he sees also ‘The ponderous counterspectacle of things ceasing to be’ (p. 293) – the counterspectacle that accompanies all instances of the spectacle, and that harbours that Heideggerian ‘shadow that is cast around all things everywhere’ (p. 135).

V

Another way - to see

I have talked throughout this essay of a tradition, a tradition of ‘blind seeing’, one to which we have to tune ourselves if we are to conceive of the world picture today, in the wake of the human project, and under the conditions of the Anthropocene. I have used this word, because I cannot find another that names the kind of work that I am suggesting that we need to do, or that could be equal to the kind of history that might address the future that awaits us. But I hope that it is clear that a tradition of blind seeing is hardly a tradition at all, and that it resists just the kind of lucidity it calls for, as Susan Howe recognises when she traces the ‘ambiguous paths of kinship’ that connect her to Emily Dickinson, or as Deleuze and Guattari recognise when they try to conscript Kafka into a ‘minor literature’.³⁸ Harold Bloom declares, in *The Western Canon*, that the operation of recruiting Dickinson’s slantwise thinking for the great tradition is unproblematic. ‘Her canonicity’, he writes, ‘results from her achieved strangeness, her uncanny relation to the tradition’ (p. 308). Her ‘Sublime’, he goes on, ‘is founded upon her unnamings of all our certitudes into so many blanks; and it gives her, and her authentic readers, another way to see, almost into the dark’ (p. 309). That Bloom can rehearse the jargon of authenticity, while blithely laying claim to Dickinson’s poetics of unnamings, indicates, I think, how weak this gesture of incorporation is, how it fails to respond to the kind of thinking that Dickinson’s poetry demands, or to see in the kind of light that it casts. Seeing ‘almost into the dark’ is not, I would suggest, what Dickinson’s poetry does; rather, it opens a buried junction between blindness and sight, an impossible meeting ground which sets the conditions for seeing itself, for being itself. To imagine a tradition to which such seeing belongs requires us to rethink the tradition itself, to suspend the cultural forms that have bound us and normalised us. Heidegger argues as much, when he offers a proleptic rebuke to Bloom’s canon, and to the work of tradition more generally. The shadow which accompanies the world picture, which is in fact a ‘concealed emitting of light’ points, Heidegger writes, ‘to something else, which it is denied to us of today to know’.³⁹ To ‘experience’ and ‘ponder’ this counterspectacle, requires us, Heidegger writes, to resist the ‘flight into tradition’ which ‘can bring about nothing in itself

other than self-deception and blindness in relation to the historical moment' (p. 136). If we are to see by the light of Dickinsonian darkness, or by the light that shines in Beckett's shade, then we need to learn to think a tradition, while resisting the flight into tradition – while recognising that world seeing today requires us to think beyond the human forms that have bound us. 'Reflection', Heidegger writes, 'transports the man of the future into that "between" in which he belongs to Being and yet remains a stranger amid that which is' (p. 136). To reflect on the world picture today requires us to achieve just this between-ness, and just this estrangement. To see with the eyes of the blind, as McCarthy and Beckett and Dickinson asks us to do, is to accustom ourselves to a Dickinsonian dark, in which 'something in the sight/ Adjusts itself' (428, ll. 18-19). It is this adjusted sight that will allow us to behold the 'larger – Darkneses' (l. 9) of today.

NOTES

¹ Franz Kafka, *Diaries, 1910-1923* (New York, Schocken, 1948, ed. Max Brod), p. 321.

² Eric Lax, *On Being Funny: Woody Allen and Comedy* (New York: Manor Books, 1975), p. 232.

³ Maurice Blanchot, *The Space of Literature* (Lincoln: The University of Nebraska Press, 1982), trans. Ann Smock, p. 94.

⁴ Emily Dickinson, 'The Tint I cannot take – is best –', in *Emily Dickinson, The Poems of Emily Dickinson* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), ed. R.W. Franklin, p. 310, l. 24. All further references to Dickinson's poetry will be to this edition, and will include the number of the poem, and line number.

⁵ Martin Heidegger, 'The Age of the World Picture', in *Martin Heidegger, The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays* (New York: Harper, 1977), trans. William Lovitt, p. 134.

⁶ Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), trans. Kevin Attell, p. 80.

⁷ Giorgio Agamben, 'What is the Contemporary?', in *Giorgio Agamben, Nudities* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), trans. David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella, p. 13.

⁸ Harold Bloom, *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages* (London: Papermac, 1996), p. 295.

⁹ See Paul de Man, 'The Rhetoric of Blindness', in *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*, second edition (London: Routledge, 1983), pp. 102-141. There are a number of different rhetorical forms in which the relation between blindness and sight has been couched. Paul de Man's work is part of a deconstructive rhetoric of blindness; for a recent book which addresses the question from a disability studies perspective, see Georgina Kleege, *Sight Unseen* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

¹⁰ de Man, *Blindness and Insight*, p. 109.

¹¹ de Man, *Blindness and Insight*, p. 103.

¹² de Man, *Blindness and Insight*, p. 141.

¹³ Jacques Derrida, *Memoirs of the Blind: The Self-Portrait and Other Ruins* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas, p. 51.

¹⁴ See Páraic Finnerty, *Dickinson's Shakespeare* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2006), pp. 118-19.

¹⁵ William Shakespeare, 'Sonnet 43', in *William Shakespeare, The Complete Works* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), eds. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, p. 756.

¹⁶ Agamben, 'What is the Contemporary', pp. 14-15.

¹⁷ Heidegger, 'Age of the World Picture', p. 154.

¹⁸ Samuel Beckett, *Ohio Impromptu*, in *Samuel Beckett, The Complete Dramatic Works* (London: Faber and Faber, 2006), p. 448.

¹⁹ Samuel Beckett, 'La Mouche', in *Samuel Beckett, Collected Poems* (London: Calder, 1986), p. 45.

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- ²⁰ See Steven Connor, 'Making Flies Mean Something', in Connor, Beckett, *Modernism and the Material Imagination*, pp. 48-62.
- ²¹ Samuel Beckett, *Watt* (London: Calder, 1976), p. 236.
- ²² Samuel Beckett, *Company*, in Samuel Beckett, *Nohow On* (London: Calder, 1992), p. 22.
- ²³ Samuel Beckett, *All Strange Away*, in Samuel Beckett, *The Complete Short Prose 1929-1989* (New York: Grove Press, 1995), p. 172.
- ²⁴ Mary F. Cantanzaro, 'More Than a Common Pest: The Fly as Non-human Companion in Emily Dickinson's 'I Heard a Fly Buzz When I Died' and Samuel Beckett's *Company*', in Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, ed., *From Sky and Earth to Metaphysics* (New York: Springer, 2015), pp. 157-162.
- ²⁵ Sharon Cameron, *Lyric Time: Dickinson and the Limits of Genre* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1979), p. 135.
- ²⁶ Beckett, *Company*, p. 12.
- ²⁷ Samuel Beckett, *How It Is* (London: Calder, 1996), p. 153.
- ²⁸ Samuel Beckett, *The Calmative*, in Samuel Beckett, *The Expelled and Other Novellas* (London: Penguin, 1980), p. 51.
- ²⁹ Samuel Beckett, 'Neither', in Beckett, *Complete Short Prose*, p. 258.
- ³⁰ Samuel Beckett, *The Lost Ones*, in Beckett, *Complete Short Prose*, p. 215.
- ³¹ Samuel Beckett, *Proust and Three Dialogues with Georges Duthuit* (London: Calder, 1965), p. 101.
- ³² Samuel Beckett, *Worstward Ho*, in Beckett, *Nohow On*, p. 124.
- ³³ Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), p. x.
- ³⁴ Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, p. vii.
- ³⁵ Cormac McCarthy, *The Road* (London: Picador, 2006), p. 138.
- ³⁶ Samuel Beckett, *Imagination Dead Imagine*, in Beckett, *Complete Short Prose*, p. 182.
- ³⁷ Samuel Beckett, *Endgame*, in Beckett, *Complete Dramatic Works*, p. 132.
- ³⁸ See Susan Howe, *My Emily Dickinson* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 1985), p. 1, and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986)
- ³⁹ Heidegger, 'Age of the World picture', p. 136.