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Wanting Austin Inside Out: Viral Poetics and Queer Theory

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ABSTRACT. My aim in this paper is to investigate how some elements from queer theory—insofar as it investigates the disruption of social norms—can provide key insights into thinking the virality of language. This virality of language, that describes how some linguistic practices contaminate performative from within, is especially visible in poetic practices and what I call viral poetics. More specifically, by focusing on works that have been categorized as autotheory, I explore how the performative force of poetry affects language and the constitution of the subject. My paper is divided in three parts focusing each on an author and highlighting one specific notion related to viral poetics: Paul Preciado with the notion of performativity, Maggie Nelson with the notion of identity, and Kae Tempest with the idea of creativity.

1. Introduction

> We must know whether we want to change the world to experience it with the same sensorial system as the one we already possess, or whether we'd rather modify our body, the somatic filter through which it passes. Which is preferable: changing my personality and keeping my body, or changing my body and keeping my current manner of experiencing reality? A fake dilemma. Our personalities arise from this very gap between body and reality. (Preciado, 2013, p. 237)

"Always, I wanted marriage inside out" (Sedgwick, 1994, p. 34) says Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in one of her poems. And marriage is, as we know since J. L. Austin's *How to Do Things with Words*, exemplary of the performativity of language. To want marriage inside out would mean

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to want Austin inside out, to uncover an alternative that lies dormant behind his normative performative that excludes, silences, oppresses those who do not conform. To want the performative inside out would therefore mean to include what Austin decides to exclude, namely what he (in)famously calls parasitic utterances. This alternative has been explored by Jacques Derrida and Judith Butler among others, and I aim to pursue their reflection by focusing on the virality of language that is at play in poetic practices. This virality is helpful to understand how some creative uses of language can contaminate the dominant performative from within. A viral performative brings to the fore the disruptive force of language which is especially visible in poetic uses of language. I use the term poetic in a broad way, not focusing especially on poetry as a genre, but rather as creative practices that are at play in language. This virality of poetic uses of language poses a challenge to Austin's conservative picture of language and might explain why he excludes them from his consideration and casts them aside as parasitic (Austin, 1975, p. 22). However, if we follow Derrida's interpretation of Austin, the origin of parasitism lies in the very iterative nature of the performative (Derrida, 1988, pp. 13–19). Indeed, if the performative gains force only through the reiteration of utterances and if there is no way of distinguishing parasitic utterances from ordinary ones at first glance, the parasite is a possibility that is always already there in our uses of language. In this sense, poetic phenomena function as silent viruses contaminating the performative from within. In the iterations necessary for the performative to exist lies the possibility for the virus to replicate. This viral replication and contamination of ordinary language challenges the traditional categories of thought, and especially, following Butler's initiative, the notions of subject, gender and identity (Butler, 1997b, p. 144).

In contemporary literary theory, the challenge of these notions has been a central objective of feminist and queer theory. Against the dominant performative, queer theory can be seen, following Sedgwick, as 'the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality aren't made (or can't be made) to signify monolithically.' (Sedgwick, 1993, p. 8) While the dominant performative establishes an order that supposedly cannot be moved, queer theory aims to see the world as open possibilities. Meaning is no longer monolithic, it is no longer established once and for all, but is constituted through these possibilities. Language moves from a tool of oppression to one of creation. Although queer

theory seems to focus on that which refuses to be performative, on that which refuses to produce and reproduce, it does not necessarily mean that it must be opposed to the performativity of viral poetics. Indeed, this opposition is only apparent as the performativity of viral poetics moves away from the Austinian focus on the illocutionary (the conventional) and towards the perlocutionary (the unconventional).

My aim in this paper is to explore how some features of queer theory provide key insights in wanting Austin inside out. My paper is divided in three parts, each focusing on a writer who highlights the disruptive and transformative force of poetry in a specific way. The first part recasts the illocutionary-perlocutionary distinction in order to highlight the disruptive force of language in Paul Preciado's *An Apartment on Uranus*. This intertwining of disruption and performativity leads me, in the second part, to consider the generation of significance related to subject identity in Maggie Nelson's *The Argonauts*. The third and final part explores the notion of creativity that is central to this generation of significance in Kae Tempest's *On Connection*.

2. Paul Preciado on the Performativity of Language

In a chapter intitled 'The Attractive Force of a Break-Up,' Preciado explores how the performativity of language establishes institutions and becomes a tool for oppression: 'Performative force is the result of the violent imposition of a norm that we prefer to call nature to avoid confronting the reorganization of the social relationships of power that any change in conventions would bring about.'(Preciado, 2019, p. 98) In order to acquire its dominant position, the performative must disguise itself. This disguise takes the name 'nature.' By passing as natural, the dominant performative becomes a universal truth, an objective matter of fact. Preciado challenges the traditional opposition between nature and culture by showing that nature is already a cultural phenomenon.

In this sense, it is through a disguise (*nature*) that dominant performatives (*culture*) act upon and regulate social norms. Following Butler, Preciado considers this disguise in linguistic terms:

Butler would go even further in her thinking about utterances on identity (gender identity, but also sexual and racial identity, 'man', 'woman', 'homosexual', 'black', etc.) as performative utterances that pass as constative, perlocutionary acts that pass as illocutionary acts, words that produce what they are supposed to describe, questions that take the form of scientific statements, or commands that are presented as ethnographic portrayals. (Preciado, 2019, p. 99)

The disguise is elaborate: dominant performatives present themselves as constatives, as if they were matters of fact rather than interpretations. They are perlocutionary acts that present themselves as illocutionary acts. While illocutionary acts are conventional and as it were automatic (the illocutionary force is active as soon as the utterance is spoken), perlocutionary acts are extralinguistic effects of language that are not totally controllable. By disguising themselves as illocutionary acts, perlocutionary acts become immediately effective. The dominant performative controls perlocutionary effects by making them pass as illocutionary. One way to undermine the dominant performative is therefore to reveal its perlocutionary—and hence purely cultural—nature.

The word 'break-up' translates the French *rupture* which includes the broader meaning of rupture. In this idea of rupture lies the disruptive force of language and the attraction of break-up becomes the attraction of the disruptive. If the reiteration of performative utterances establishes social norms and if the possibility of parasitism lies within this reiteration, then it might be possible to modify, affect, infect the dominant performative. There is an attraction of disruption that brings to resist the normativity of ordinary language. It is in this resistance that lies the possibility of creating something different, as Preciado argues:

For the subaltern, speaking implies not simply resisting the violence of the hegemonic performative, but above all imagining dissident theatres where the production of a different performative force can be possible. Inventing a new scene of enunciation, as Jacques Rancière would say. Disidentifying oneself in order to reconstruct the subjectivity damaged by the dominant performative language. (Preciado, 2019, p. 99)

Preciado uses the term 'subaltern' to name the oppressed, silenced minority following Gayatri Spivak's famous essay 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' (Spivak, 1999) And he argues that the only way for the subaltern to escape the domination of the performative is to invent a different stage, a stage in which the dominant performative will appear as it is and lose its performative force.

Poetic and artistic works are ways of creating such alternative stages by bringing to the fore the disruptive force of language.

To focus on an alternative performative force means moving from the illocutionary to the perlocutionary. Although Austin acknowledges the difficulty of the perlocutionary in his theory, the "likeliest to give trouble," (Austin, 1975, p. 109) he casts it aside rather rapidly. This notion has however received renewed attention, especially since Stanley Cavell's essay 'Performative and Passionate Utterance.' Cavell contrasts the performative *qua* illocutionary with the passionate *qua* perlocutionary: "A performative utterance is an offer of participation in the order of law. And perhaps we can say: A passionate utterance is an invitation to improvisation in the disorders of desire." (Cavell, 2008, p. 185) To move away from the convention of the dominant performative and include parasitic uses of language, we must move towards the perlocutionary.

Sedgwick further challenges this conventionality of the performative: "The fascinating and powerful class of negative performatives—disavowal, demur, renunciation, deprecation, repudiation, "count me out," giving the lie—is marked, in almost every instance, by the asymmetrical property of being much less prone to becoming conventional than the positive performatives." (Sedgwick, 2003, p. 70) This idea of negative performatives moves away from the conventionality of illocution and towards the unconventionality and unpredictability of perlocution. It is important to note that a negative performative does not negate the existence of the performative but rather disrupts or displaces it. As Julie Rak argues, it is "a refusal that does not negate the original statement." (Rak, 2021) To avoid the confusion between refusal and negation, Sedgwick coins the term periperformative: 'By contrast to the performative, the periperformative is the mode in which people may invoke illocutionary acts in the explicit context of other illocutionary acts. Thus, it can also accomplish something toward undoing that fateful reliance of explicit performativity on *the exemplary*, on the single example—which so often has meant, for instance, in the contingency of philosophical and literary practice, the exemplarity of the marriage act itself. (Sedgwick, 2003, p. 79) The periperformative highlights how an illocutionary act can contaminate another illocutionary act. But more than that, it means that the illocutionary is not set once and for all, that it can be changed and, with this changeable nature, the illocutionary becomes closer to the perlocutionary. The periperformative moves in the vicinity of the performative but highlights a different point. While Austin's performative

remains stuck in the exemplary, the periperformative opens the possibility to escape this exemplarity and to understand how contamination can occur between performatives, how it is possible to turn the performative inside out.

Preciado considers that there are two steps to overcome the dominant performative:

> On the one hand, it is imperative to distinguish ourselves from the dominant scientific, technological, commercial, legal languages that comprise the cognitive skeleton of the epistemology of sexual difference and techno-patriarchal capitalism. On the other, it is urgent to invent a new grammar that allows us to imagine another social organization of forms of life. (Preciado, 2019, p. 50)

First, as we have seen, we must move away from the dominant language, the one that disguises its performativity in factuality, its cultural contingency in a natural necessity. Against the institutionalized *illocutionary* force around which Austin centres his analysis (marriage, christening, etc.), poetic uses of language disrupt these linguistic institutions: the *perlocutionary* force of the poetic disrupts the *illocutionary* force at play in our ordinary uses of language. To operate such a revolution requires a certain rupture which breaks with the dominant system, as Preciado argues: 'any revolution, subjective or social, demands an exile of the voice, a suspension of gesture, a rupture of utterance, the reconnection with the etymological lines that had been closed, or else an outright cut into living language in order to introduce a difference to it (differ*a*nce), a spacing (*espacement*), or as Derrida would say, "an improvised anarchy."' (Preciado, 2021, p. 168) As language is historically and performatively construed and constantly changes, the only way to operate a revolution is to act on this language, to create a difference and a *differance*.

Second, to create this *differance*, we must invent new forms of life. This invention is the task of poetry according to Henri Meschonnic as he considers that "a poem exists only if a form of life transforms a form of language and reciprocally if a form of language transforms a form of life.[102]" (Meschonnic, 2001, p. 292) Poetic utterances have the effect of transforming forms of language and forms of life to escape the dominant discourse. This conception connects

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[102] My translation: 'il y a poème seulement si une forme de vie transforme une forme de langage et si réciproquement une forme de langage transforme une forme de vie.'

the poetic to the world, and one of the ways in which poetry affects the world is through the notion of subject. Meschonnic claims that "There is no subject without the subject of a poem.[103]" (Meschonnic, 2001, p. 292) It is through the performative (or passionate in Cavell's terms) language of the poem that subjects can shape themselves and constitute themselves as subjects. The notion of poem must be understood here in a broad way, as a use of language that affects the reader and the world.

3. Linguistic Constitution of Identity

With the performative, the position of the speaker (subject) becomes of central significance. As Sedgwick argues: "[Discussions of linguistic performativity] also deal with how powerfully language positions: does it change the way we understand meaning, for instance, if the semantic force of a word like "queer" is so different in a first-person from what it is in a second- or third-person sentence?" (Sedgwick, 1993, p. 11) If meaning is no longer construed in terms of 'objective' reference but in terms of 'subjective' performance, it cannot be separated from the position of the speaker. Language is not something neutral but is dependent on the speaking subject and the context of utterance. A queer theory of language therefore shows that the social norms and conventions embedded in language can be overturned, can be modified, that language is not an obstacle to change but a place of endless possibilities.

In *Gender Trouble*, Butler comments on Nietzsche's idea that "there is no doer behind the deed" in order to show that gender is a doing rather than a given: "within the metaphysics of substance, gender proves to be performative—that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed." (Butler, 1990, p. 34) Against the idea that the there is a doer that does something, a performative conception of the subject considers that the deed constitutes the subject, in the same way language acts upon the world rather than merely representing it. There is no subject before language because language performatively constitutes the subject.

This constitution of the subject is at the core of Maggie Nelson's *The Argonauts*. Following the famous thought experiment of Theseus' ship, Argo, Nelson questions whether

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[103] My translation: 'Pas de sujet sans sujet du poème.'

there is some constancy to our identity. Indeed, the thought experiment goes as follows: imagine that over the course of its various travels, the pieces of wood that constitute Argo have all been replaces by new ones. Is the ship still the same ship even though none of its original pieces of wood remain? The underlying question is: what constitutes the identity of this ship? And by extension what constitutes the identity of the human subject?

Nelson translates this question in the field of language: can two utterances be identical? Are the iterations of the performative always the same? She relates these questions to Roland Barthes's reflection on the utterance 'I love you:'

> A day or two after my love pronouncement, now feral with vulnerability, I sent you the passage from Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes in which Barthes describes how the subject who utters the phrase 'I love you' is like 'the Argonaut renewing his ship during its voyage without changing its name.' Just as the Argo's parts may be replaced over time but the boat is still called the Argo, whenever the lover utters the phrase 'I love you,' its meaning must be renewed by each use, as 'the very task of love and of language is to give to one and the same phrase inflections which will be forever new.' (Nelson, 2016, p. 5)

To what does (if it does) the utterance 'I love you' owe its constancy? As the 'I' and the 'you' can differ and are perhaps always imperfect linguistic constructs and as the notion of love can vary according to subjects and time, what makes 'I love you' meaningful? This utterance that seems universal, insofar as it is constantly reproduced in our lives and in cultural phenomena such as films, TV shows, songs, literature, poetry, etc., might in fact mean something different for each of us. By saying 'I love you,' I am always saying (and hence doing) something new.

The problem that Nelson raises is that of the performativity of language and how language comes to meaning something. It is the poetic question of the generation of significance. As she further suggests:

> Words change depending on who speaks them; there is no cure. The answer isn't just to introduce new words (boi, cisgendered, andro-fag) and then set out to reify their meanings (though obviously there is power and pragmatism here). One must also become alert to the multitude of possible uses, possible contexts, the wings with which each word can fly. Like when you whisper, you're just a hole, letting me fill you up. Like when I say husband. (Nelson, 2016, 9)

Creating new words and meanings is not sufficient to change the world. Following what we explored with Preciado, if we want the dominant performative inside out, we need to create new uses of words, new scenes of enunciation. Words are nothing in themselves, but only acquire a force once they are used. Opening new possibilities for words, giving them new wings to use Nelson's image, is the only way to change the world. As long as we remain within the framework of the metaphysics of substance in which words have reified meanings that point out towards things in the world, we cannot hope to act upon the world.

As Nelson further suggests, we need to move away from a language of assertion, away from the 'totalizing language' of the dominant performative:

> Afraid of assertion. Always trying to get out of 'totalizing' language, i.e., language that rides roughshod over specificity; realizing this is another form of paranoia. Barthes found the exit to this merry-go-round by reminding himself that 'it is language which is assertive, not he.' It is absurd, Barthes says, to try to flee from language's assertive nature by 'add[ing] to each sentence some little phrase of uncertainty, as if anything that came out of language could make language tremble.' (Nelson, 2016, p. 122)

The danger of language is its propensity towards generality and totality. One of the problems of the metaphysics of language is, as Wittgenstein puts it, its 'craving for generality.' (Wittgenstein, 2008, p. 17) Or in Nietzschean terms its 'equating unequal things.' (Nietzsche, 1990, p. 83) It is the process of totalization that is problematic as it hides and minorizes the subject's experiences. By refusing the social order imposed by language, queer theory becomes a parasite, but one that inverts Austin's evaluation of parasitism. The parasite is not that which passively feeds onto the social order (abuses it rather than uses it), but that which actively transforms it from within. It refuses to play the game of the dominant performative in order to play an alternative game; it breaks down totalizing language to express new potentialities and intensities.

This move away from totalizing language modifies the dominant performative. Not by imposing another normativity, but by undermining the question of normativity. Without normativity there is just a range of possibilities. Tyler Bradway considers this point to be where Nelson's work joins queer theory: "Nelson decenters sexual transgression from queerness, but her goal is not to enshrine another mode of relationality in its place. Rather, she wants to narrate

queerness in a way that does not presume one set of practices or relations has the monopoly "on the so-called radical, or the so-called normative."'" (Bradway, 2021, p. 718) By avoiding to replace one normativity by another, Nelson aims at keeping the subject in this fluidity that can never be fixed.

Following Sedgwick, Nelson places this reflection within the framework of queer theory:

> Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick wanted to make way for 'queer' to hold all kinds of resistances and fracturings and mismatches that have little or nothing to do with sexual orientation. 'Queer is a continuing moment, movement, motive—recurrent, eddying, troublant' she wrote. 'Keenly, it is relational, and strange.' She wanted the term to be a perpetual excitement, a kind of placeholder—a nominative, like Argo, willing to designate molten or shifting parts, a means of asserting while also giving the slip. That is what reclaimed terms do—they retain, they insist on retaining, a sense of the fugitive. (Nelson, 2016, p. 35)

The question of identity (gender, sexual orientation, but to a broader extent 'all kinds of resistances and fracturings and mismatches') is central to Sedgwick's understanding of the notion of 'queer.' And it is in this sense that queer theory can provide tools to understand viral poetics. According to Annamarie Jagose, queer theory is based on the theory of performativity: "Like the theory of performativity, which to a large extent underwrites its project, queer opts for denaturalisation as its primary strategy." (Jagose, 1996, p. 98) As we have seen with Preciado and Butler, there is a process of denaturalization, i.e., of showing that what the dominant performative imposes as natural is in fact socio-culturally constituted. As Jagose further argues:

> While the concept of performativity includes these and other self-reflexive instances, equally—if less obviously—it explains those everyday productions of gender and sexual identity which seem most to evade explanation. For gender is performative, not because it is something that the subject deliberately and playfully assumes, but because, through reiteration, it consolidates the subject. In this respect, performativity is the precondition of the subject. (Jagose, 1996, p. 86)

The subject is performatively constituted, and we can understand Meschonnic's idea that 'There is no subject without the subject of a poem' as a claim that it is through poetic means

that the subject reaches the understanding of its own performativity. The subject is performatively constituted, and usually follows the norms of the dominant performative that reiterates itself constantly.

However, as we have seen, in the idea that performances repeat themselves also lies the possibility of disruption. In the multiple iterations lie the possibility for viral action. As Butler argues in her essay 'Imitation and Gender Insubordination:' "If every performance repeats itself to institute the effect of identity, then every repetition requires an interval between the acts, as it were, in which risk and excess threaten to disrupt the identity being constituted." (Fuss, 1991, p. 28) In this sense, poetic uses of language are ways of affecting identity in its iterations, to performatively act upon the categories of thought and socio-cultural norms. As Donald Hall argues: "In its emphasis upon the disruptive, the constructed, the tactical, and performative, queer analysis reveals some of the ways in which many late-modern individuals experience the fractured and contingent nature of human existence in the twenty-first century." (Hall, 2003, p. 5) Queer theory therefore invites us to reconsider the notion of the subject by showing how it is performatively constituted. It further suggests that the metaphysical dualisms that pervade our conceptual scheme are less natural than cultural. As social constructs, Sedgwick considers that "a deconstructive understanding of these binarisms makes it possible to identify them as sites that are peculiarly densely charged with lasting potentials for powerful manipulation—through precisely the mechanisms of self-contradictory definition or, more succinctly, the double bind." (Sedgwick, 1990, p. 10) The deconstruction of these metaphysical dualisms opens a space for 'powerful manipulation.' It is this space of manipulation that poetry aims to create, in order to offer an alternative to the traditional categories of thought.

4. Kae Tempest and the Creative Connection of Poetry

We have seen that the performativity of language constitutes the subject and that we need new uses of words in order to overcome the dominant performative. In her comment of Nietzsche's idea that there is no doer behind the deed, Butler insists on one specific word: "Nietzsche's own language elides this problem by claiming that the "der Täter ist zum Tun bloß hinzugedichtet." This passive verb formation, "hinzugedichtet," poetically or fictively added on to, appended, or applied, leaves unclear who or what executes this fairly consequential

formation." (Butler, 1997a, p. 46) The question is: who poetically adds the doer to the deed? And how is it done? The word '*hinzugedichtet'* is of central significance as it contains the idea of '*dichten*,' the idea of poetry.

This idea is what can be seen in Kae Tempest saying that "Telling poems levels the room." (Tempest, 2020, p. 21) In telling poems, language ceases to be a tool of oppression to become a creative and transformative one. As Tempest further argues: "Naked language has a humanising effect; listening to someone tell their story, people noticeably opened up, became more vulnerable, and let their defences down; the rooms got less frosty, less confrontational." (Tempest, 2020, p. 22) The force of telling poems resides in this idea that they change the way of relating to language and the world. These poems open a space in which language is not used for confrontation or judgment, but as a means to overcome them: "Each time I have walked into strange rooms with poems to tell, I have had to confront my own insecurities and judgements about who I was talking to and why, and each time I was taught something about what connects us being more powerful than what divides." (Tempest, 2020, p. 23) Poetry creates a space for connection rather than division, inclusion rather than exclusion.

This idea is what Tempest calls 'creative connection:' 'Creative connection is the use of creativity to access and feel connection and get yourself and those with you in the moment into a more connected space.' (Tempest, 2020, pp. 5–6) Creativity opens the possibility for a connection and poetry is one way to express this creativity. But this creativity also refers to other ways of making, to a broader understanding of poetics in the etymological sense of *poiesis*: "creativity is any act of love. Any act of making. It is usually applied to art-making, but it can also be applied to anything you do that requires your focus, skill and ingenuity. It takes creativity to dress well, for example. To parent. To paint a windowsill. To give someone you love your full attention." (Tempest, 2020, p. 5) To be creative one does not need to be engaged in what are usually called creative practices such as artmaking or writing. To be creative means to act with intention and full attention. Thus, to be creative is something that concerns everyone in their everyday life.

And this is one point where the ordinary gains central significance. Against the idea that the ordinary is something lesser and that we should strive for the extraordinary, being creative means remaining within the ordinary and discovering the endless possibilities that lie within it. Following Guillaume Apollinaire: "It is that poetry and creation are one and the same;

only that man can be called poet who invents, who creates insofar as man can create. The poet is who discovers new joys, even if they are hard to bear. One can be a poet in any field: it is enough that one be adventuresome and pursue new discovery." (Cook, 2004, p. 80) Or Nietzsche: 'For with [artists] this subtle power usually comes to an end where art and life begins; but we want to be poets of our life—first of all in the smallest, most everyday matters.' (Nietzsche, 1974, para. 299)

In this sense, creativity offers guidance to navigate in the ordinary. As Tempest argues: "Somehow, creativity reached through the fog when nothing else could. It gave me guidance, offered me purpose and connected me to all other creative people. It was transformative." (Tempest, 2020, p. 32) Creativity offers guidance to escape the normativity of discourse and make sense of the world. Meaning is not found but created. We place meaning in things and people. To be creative is to become active in engaging with the world, and thus refusing passive submission to social codes. It is in this sense that 'telling poems levels the room:'

> This is why poetry levels the room. Because it speaks to the psychic facts which are hidden.
> To be judged by others is part of social life. We may tell ourselves that we don't care what others think of us but we evolved the ability to enjoy a good gossip in order to encourage certain traits and discourage others: selfishness was dangerous in prehistoric society, because if someone ate all the food then the others would starve. So, gossiping became a way of keeping a check on any undesirable behaviour. The difficult feelings that arise from transgressing social codes, from being 'talked about' by those you don't want to upset have been knitted into the fabric of our moralities for many hundreds of generations. (Tempest, 2020, p. 64)

Poetry and other poetic practices are ways of engaging with these hidden psychic facts, with what has 'been knitted into the fabric of our moralities for many hundreds of generations.' As they have been guiding us for so long, it is obviously difficult to digress and transgress these moralities. But creativity precisely helps overcoming these moralities, revealing and making apparent what is usually hidden. Not necessarily to dispose of them, but to create a space in which we can deal with them without enduring them. A space in which we can act and mean.

Transgressing social codes, disrupting social norms, overcoming these moralities that naturalize socio-cultural aspects of life, are some of the effects of poetry. Poetry should not be considered here as an object or an essence, but as an activity that performatively transforms

our forms of language and our forms of life. It is in this sense that poetry can be compared to a virus infecting the iterations of the performative in order to change it from within. A viral poetics joins here the aims of queer theory: it refuses the dominant performative and opens new possibilities. Not to establish a different, alternative order, but to undermine the idea of order: to move from oppression to creation, from illocution to perlocution, from exclusion to inclusion. Viral poetics reveals how the poetic generation of significance can turn the dominant performative inside out.

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