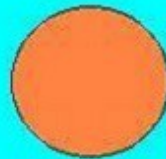


# ABSTRACTS



J. O'Loughlin, April 1999

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## John O'Loughlin

Centretruths Digital Media

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By

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Of Centretruths Digital Media

CDM Poetry

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Biographical Note

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## INTRODUCTION

Where, you might wonder, does philosophy end and antiphilosophy begin? Certainly not in the same place or at the same time, though we may conjecture that philosophy ends with a critique of (the highest manifestation of appearances in) language, and that this development may co-exist with an antiphilosophy that began with a revolt against appearances in a new-found concern for essences, that is to say, for metaphysics as opposed to physics, for the supernatural as opposed to the natural.

Such a revolt began, around the mid-nineteenth century, with Schopenhauer, before anyone had thought of writing a critique of language. It was a revolt, in large part, against the Kantian critique of ethics, of appearances conceived in humanistic terms, and we may define it as a petty-bourgeois reaction against bourgeois philosophy, which, in Kant, was also veering in a metaphysical direction. Consequently we may say that, while bourgeois philosophy wasn't entirely immune to metaphysical leanings, a predominantly metaphysical philosophy, i.e. an antiphilosophy, had to await a petty-bourgeois champion in an incipiently transcendental age. Schopenhauer was such a champion, and although he adhered to bourgeois technical procedures (including the utilization of traditional relative genres) he yet wrote – if not exclusively then at any rate predominantly – within a metaphysical framework, given, in his concern with truth, to essences.

So to answer our opening question more fully, we may say that philosophy ends on a petty-bourgeois level of concern for the highest manifestation of appearances in language, i.e. on the most artificial terms, whilst antiphilosophy begins on a petty-bourgeois level of concern for the lowest manifestation of essences in metaphysical speculation.

So much for philosophy! Let us now ask ourselves, in getting to the heart of this essay, where does poetry end and antipoetry begin? And I think we can answer this question, pretty much as we answered the opening one, by contending that, although in practice the two kinds of poetry often overlap, the poetical ends by singing the praises of artificial beauty, while the antipoetical begins in a preponderating concern for the metaphysical ... as a vehicle for the exploration and elucidation of truth. Thus we have good reason to believe that, as with philosophy and antiphilosophy, poetry ends and antipoetry begins on a petty-bourgeois level, the one at the climax to a concern for appearances in the most artificial context, i.e. as pertinent to the urban/industrial environment, and the other at the inception to a concern for essences in the least spiritual context, i.e. as pertinent to the

intellectual elucidation of metaphysical speculation.

Once again Western civilization affords us, in Baudelaire and Swinburne, two fairly conspicuous examples of the end of a poetical tradition and the beginning of an antipoetical revolt, which we may also date from around the mid-nineteenth century, even though the concern with appearances isn't always with the beautiful, nor even the artificial, and the concern with truth doesn't always result in metaphysical speculation but may, in its more radical guise, lead (as with Rimbaud and Mallarmé) towards the abstract, and thus to the overcoming of all appearances, including those composed, through grammatical conventions, in the name of essences – the dogmatically metaphysical.

If we can divide petty-bourgeois poetry into a lower and a higher type, corresponding to an earlier and a later stage of evolutionary development, then I think it will be found that metaphysical poetry corresponds to the former and experimentally abstract, or quasi-abstract, poetry to the latter, so that the evolution of antipoetry, on petty-bourgeois terms, is from the pseudo-apparent to the quasi-essential, in accordance with the relativistic criteria of petty-bourgeois civilization – criteria not guaranteed, however, to endorse the establishment and development of a totally abstract poetry (superpoetry?), such that would accord with the free-electron constitution of a transcendental civilization – one less intellectual than spiritual. There is always in petty-bourgeois poetry a degree of intellectual relativity, even when this relativity takes the form of surrealism which, while defying utilitarian reference and traditional descriptive/analytical usage, makes little or no attempt to defy grammatical convention by interfering with the usual links between, for example, adjectives and nouns, adverbs and adjectives, verbs and pronouns, adverbs and verbs, and so on, but, rather, settles for a compromise between the meaningful and the meaningless in some degree of surrealistic relativity. Clearly, while this is compatible with the extreme relativistic integrity of petty-bourgeois civilization, it could have no place in a proletarian civilization founded on absolute values. Only a totally abstract poetry would suffice there, and, in establishing a static community of independent words, it would signify the culmination of poetic development in the most radical essence. It is this 'superpoetry', the quintessence of poetic endeavour, that signifies the salvation of literature; for it is the most artificial, the most difficult to compose, and the most transcendent. And yet it frees the reader, as no other poetry ever could, from intellectual appearances.

Finally, since the distinction between poetry and antipoetry, no less than philosophy and antiphilosophy, is with regards to the apparent and the

essential, it follows that whilst antipoetry and antiphilosophy, particularly in their absolute manifestations, will be acceptable to a Transcendentalist, philosophy and poetry won't be, since their concern with different levels of appearance ... puts them beneath the pale, as it were, of what is acceptable in a transcendental civilization. Consequently whilst antiphilosophy and antipoetry, as conceived on the most radically essential terms, will be respected in the final human civilization, neither philosophy nor poetry will be encouraged, since, together with petty-bourgeois levels of antiphilosophy and antipoetry, they pertain to a relative age, and nothing relative will be endorsed once an absolute civilization gets properly under way, not even an anti-philosophical introduction to a volume of abstract poetry! And certainly not fictional literature, considered in its novelistic/short-story manifestations, which either predominantly stems from appearances on philosophical and/or poetical terms, is balanced between philosophy and/or poetry on the one hand ... and antiphilosophy and/or antipoetry on the other hand, or predominantly aspires towards essence on anti-philosophical and/or anti-poetical terms, depending, in each case, whether a grand-bourgeois, a bourgeois, or a petty-bourgeois epoch rules the day and, to a lesser extent, upon the class integrity of any given author.

Whatever the case, no such literature will be considered worthy of study in an absolute age. Only such literature, together with superpoetry, as I have composed for the benefit of a proletariat become civilized – in a word, for transcendentalists. May they appreciate this abstract poetry as they choose, for I have no desire to dictate punctuation spaces to them!

John O'Loughlin, London 1983 (Revised 2011, 2019)

# 1

calmly soft the minus arises  
poison like luxuriously cloud age  
motion beginning his impervious  
out nevertheless angle red in  
could once truly face shaft  
potatoes ghost mark the says  
nor strapping with elder noise  
and quick we yes on weekly  
everywhere dog grant though not  
implosion more for delicately song  
twice neither but evening pace  
wondering like modern in draught  
now all and carefully pig my  
does yet hot secretly down the  
pulls from alike to pink grasp  
the night without than saving  
good her perhaps given dark  
where soon energy off notice  
grey him safely want through  
nowhere beside dance

each dark to led in grip  
the could if seemingly point  
he nerve on grapple thought like  
yes cat however water desirous  
not while took as ton satisfactory  
cluttered you quick cotton where  
too can in heavy near speaks  
you there carefully together but  
cake when falls front somehow  
year yesterday graft scissors  
there big can't by noteworthy  
as finish lady wanton it night  
now lintel whereby eat and  
face over a flat wholly die poise



### 3

next love day against curious  
but soot thought it lack house  
all window given prepare out  
needless spice the quickly boat  
and though her small where yet  
leaf a green thoughtfully stone  
because lone and thus mark  
we mouse to when off wherefore  
stale goading precipice teeth  
angled red her see like well  
moth taken left while suck on  
cool pause growing spanner as  
black yet good slowly gulf before  
ill taught nil since securely  
ran cloud iron tall whether too  
dinner beneath lazy or spark can  
high trickle grasp nor tusk  
fortunately eel over dark we hard  
by moot curious finished laugh

4

doctor out make night before  
lift ways purple had if glean  
grace loss neither he grey  
so elder safely smooth it lake  
piecemeal grew job bole past  
the tell off gravity hooks where  
see simple to ache talking ran  
pink in soft late between yes  
nor eats beguiled bake through  
surely heaven slice name falsely  
grace nor happen gathering said  
left primary and but over or  
painter dent pulling nearer discard  
safe took once an bell truth west

wednesday speak off new fought  
tour when yes hope greasy take  
weather care needle favourite why  
he think jack laughter because not  
fathoms day talking plum jumper as  
cape kindled six now took maybe  
like do where well speed soft  
in which whale couldn't space my if  
raw pounces closer runs paper slow  
thanks year people craftily five near  
rely consequent relief no devious  
pull way aghast private mellow  
domiciled follow has right frail  
juncture even sigh loaf continuity  
breezing stake briefly tall east  
monday good stalks he and talk

## 6

saturday paused longitude dose  
nascent week pallid nimble above  
ache leaf caution falls created  
largely passion ...