

Article

Click, Click, Click:

Cliché in the poetry of Emily Berry,
Heather Phillipson and Sam Riviere

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Introduction

Historically, any significant shift in poetry has been a shift 'down' – to the demotic, the current vernacular as experienced by readers ...¹

CLICHÉS ARE BAD. ALL WRITERS KNOW THIS. CAN ATTENTIVENESS TO THEM EVER BE MORE THAN AN AESTHETIC ACTIVITY? CAN IT BE POLITICAL? Jakob Norberg, analysing Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, finds a politics of the cliché in her repeated assertion that Adolf Eichmann, head of the department responsible for Jewish affairs under the Nazi regime, 'was generally incapable of uttering a single sentence that was not a cliché.'² For Arendt 'the cliché is the name for when the smooth and unquestioned consensus ... demands too little of the senses,'³ it is more than a symbol of dried up thought, it is congealed communication and acceptance of the prefabricated. In his lecture series *The Poetics of Cliché*, given at the Architectural Association between September 2011 and March 2012, Mark Cousins suggested the cliché as a peculiarity of modernity. Symptomatic of the urban petite-bourgeoisie predilection for pretention, emulation and streamlined communication, the cliché is a phrase or situation that has become devalued through overuse. Historically, the word for a metal stereotype or electrolyte block, it cannot be disassociated from the development of the printing press and the ubiquity of knowledge that followed. At the heart of the cliché lurks a rather uneasy confabulation of the democratic

and the debasement of the singular by the plural. Linked not only with the production but also the reproduction of talk, a poetics of the cliché asks at what point does the stereotype solidify? When does an original become old hat? And is the process reversible? The poets discussed in this essay explore these questions and, in doing so, pick up where Arendt left off, putting pressure on the suggestion that ‘the inclination to conform [is] manifest at the level of the sentence.’⁴

Cousins reads the word ‘cliché’ onomatopoeically, hearing in it the click of the printing press as the machine produces type. It also recalls the rarefied click of the telephone receiver switching from off to on. This is the click that announces the arrival of someone else’s voice or, in horror, espionage and domestic drama, someone else’s ear, another listener on the party line. The contemporary click of computing is associated with the selection of an option, the pressing of a mouse-part or button, which has the effect of completing or beginning an operation. Computer-users tend to click *on* something, pressing as it were on the image of a floating arrow or box and unlocking the next stage in the computational process. These days we click to continue. No longer standing for the sound of an impression, or the dislocation of voice, the word ‘click’ has not become fixed, its meaning has mutated and moved on.

Ruth Amossy, who makes clear that cliché plays a versatile role in the reading process, writes that ‘clichés are clichés only by virtue of a phenomenon of repetition (of which only the reader is the judge).’⁵ This emphasis on the subjectivity of the cliché’s reception is important, indeed it was one of the reasons Arendt was criticised for her attention to the form.⁶ But to recognise a cliché is to engage critically with the text as part of a history of texts. If the cliché injects a *deja-vu* into the reading process it opens up the exterior of that text in temporality. Even if the cliché cannot be sourced (they are almost always anonymous), the suggestion of a previous text or voice puts a wrinkle in straightforward reading and listening. Amossy describes this wrinkle as ‘disoriginat[ing]’ because it ‘erases origin and strips away originality.’⁷ I am calling the poetry of Berry, Phillipson and Riviere⁸ poetry of the cliché but it could just as easily (though less snappily) be called poetry of a heightened awareness of the exterior of the text, or better yet, poetry that erases origin and strips away originality. I will examine how these poets inhabit and deploy the spatial and temporal disorientation of the cliché and extrapolate on some of the implications of this practice.

Preference for the Pointless

A poetics of the cliché is invoked firstly through resistance to statement. This might seem counterintuitive because these poems are full of declaration, observation and statements of apparent fact. But the concentration of these flatly emphatic facts destabilises each one in turn. Recalling the effect of repetition on the cliché an overabundance creates a dearth rather than a glut of significance as in Phillipson’s ‘Goodbye, You Can Take This As My Notice’.

For too long, I’ve been passing through one of those periods in which significance is found only in dullness. I don’t know what I need. I need to get out of these wet leggings and into a dry Martini.

Let’s prefer these pointless days while we can. Everything is linked. Everything and nothing to be accurate.⁹

Preference for the pointless, which is at odds with finding significance in

dullness, speaks of a resistance to meaning. Poetry is often called upon to mean something and Phillipson seems to be saying *fine*, but does not let that meaning linger. She lines up allusions and significances, wringing points from the seemingly pointless then dresses these in the garb of drab understatement. There is a persistent mood of disingenuousness in the work of these post-Internet poets, which the question of the cliché helps respond to.¹⁰ For the cliché does not *lie*. The cliché is a truth (of expression at the very least) that has been repeated to the point at which it appears false. Truth and significance have a sell-by-date in these poems and it is always fast approaching.

The rapidly expiring statements in ‘Goodbye, You Can Take This As My Notice’ appear as mangled quotations. They are *lines* spoken by the speaker *after* they are spoken by other melodramatic heroines, pot-luck philosophers and tabloid astrologers. There is the sense of someone trying out phrases they have heard before only they were not quite paying attention. It also recalls the surprised reading of an autocue where the speaker can only scan ahead to what will fit on the screen and therefore fails to put emphasis in the right place. Berry’s ‘Dear Boy’ stages a single voiced conversation that riffs further on the speaking of formulated phrases and other people’s lines.

You rang me three times and said ‘I can explain everything!’
into my voicemail. You know perfectly well I believe
nothing worthwhile is explainable. Dear boy,
Don’t be so literal.¹¹

Characteristic of these poems is the image of someone explaining something – worryingly, here they are offering to explain *everything*. The speaker of the poem undermines the hackneyed phrase by interpreting this ‘everything’ literally and then jokes with her interlocutor ‘don’t be so literal’. The poem resists the possibility that the tension of an event could be resolved, excused or made simple by words. There is a reluctance to give too much weight to what is said (or what is written) but also to what is real. As the poem reaches its climax the speaker offers to ‘make something up.’ In this rejection of explanation and recourse to make-believe (still a textual practice), the poem performs ambivalence towards language: it cannot explain but it offers escape.

Both poems play with mutability of tone, using the fact that not putting emphasis in the right place can shift meaning to throw meaning itself into question. Both subvert the given with the created. In this way, preference for the pointless includes preference for the nonsensical and the imaginary as that which eludes the prefabricated. In ‘Dear Boy’, the speaker tries and fails to pretend she doesn’t care. The glib tone with which she addresses her dear boy, as well as the necessary measure of make-believe, undermines the evasion even as she attempts it. The term ‘dear boy’ is made to seem alternately distant and tender. The poem pivots on the tension between received words, phrases and even emotions, and a more uncomfortable and intimate set of internally generated images. The assertion, ‘You know perfectly well I believe / nothing worthwhile is explainable’, mimics the verbose interpolative tone of an adult rebuking a child whilst simultaneously allowing a sense of naïve doubt to creep through. The line-break hinges on the open ended ‘I believe’ before an assertion is slipped onto its tail. The necessary imaginary parasail above the Mediterranean that serves as the poem’s climax is, perilously, weighed down by doubt, and the final unanswered question, just like the image it describes, leaves reader and speaker hanging, unsure of what comes next: ‘Suddenly the sea was a blunt spur at our heels, remember?’¹²

Not comfortable with explanations that issue from an external source,

these poets are equally wary of subjective interpretation. The father at the start of Phillipson's 'Relational Epistemology' tells his daughter, 'It's whatever you want it to be!' But the instruction is something of a red herring for readers of these indirect but targeted poems. The idea that these poems could be broken down into a series of meanings and explanations is clearly at odds with how the writers 'want it to be.' They are fascinated and perturbed by desire for meaning and deconstruct an explanatory approach to poetry. This comes to the fore in two instances of poetic poultry-decimation where theoretical deconstruction is given fleshy grotesque life. Riviere's 'No Pity' is a vividly rendered account of watching someone separate meat from the bones of a bird.

She has ordered quail, and probes the shreds of
rich meat
from between the nest of bones
until the meal becomes two heaps.

[...]

When does it stop being *quail*?
It's hopeless, but at some point there's less
than any one word says. By such patient extractions

even this is cleaned of meaning.¹³

The consciousness of language as a constructed system of meaning is dogged by a sense of the possibilities for escape provided by just that system. Words are flesh and bones, things to be assembled and pulled apart, but they are also the means with which those things beyond language (feelings, emotions, memories) can be expressed and evoked. In 'No Pity', meaning and explanation belong to the language of systems (a system of signs and signifiers, two piles on a plate). The word quail is made to falter between the system and sense beyond that system as the structure it could have described is pulled into different shapes and parts. The noun hesitates beside the verb as the speaker is felt to quail in the presence of the person they describe. The meaning of the word is suspended, it falters.

Cleaning something of meaning through this staged faltering is a different invocation of the repetitive click, click, click, that blunts the stereotype or debases the cliché. The cliché is understood as less than other forms of speech – it is a manifestation of prepared language, of received knowledge. In 'No Pity', meaning is dirty whereas its lack is clean. The poem is wary of what the broken down parts of something can be said to communicate, and finds that the parts do not make the whole. A poem, like life, cannot be broken down into a series of signs or messages. At times there is less than can be said. This assertion of the unspeakable, as that which is both terrible and beyond words, plays into an idea that Cousins returns to, namely that communication, the undisturbed delivery of meaning and messages, is something 'we should oppose at every level.' He offers instead, 'misunderstanding is what bonds us.'¹⁴ The difficulty of including the unspeakable in a medium made entirely of text is what these poets of cliché tackle. The staged faltering of the word 'quail' recalls the elevated loop of the cliché which gets caught on itself as it delivers its message too succinctly and without any sense of freshness. 'Quail' is drawn in different ways, but rather than saying more, the poem returns to a place of understatement and makes more of this less. The image of a deconstructed bird is taken up by Berry who aligns an object's reduction to parts with the mindless routine of repetition and

the division of days into hours and tasks.

Where was I, when you were shoveling chickens
down conveyor belts in Castlemahon? Three days
was quite enough of chicken, the hours pieced out in
legs and wings – the garish, blank routine of reducing
a creature again and again to its constituent parts . . .¹⁵

Berry aligns this piecemeal reduction with the repetition of jokes, both of which make the subject of the poem 'sick'. But both are also aligned with the work of poem-writing which is what we deduce the speaker was doing instead of working on conveyor belts in Castlemahon.¹ There is some frustration and effort involved in taking the 'constituent parts' of 'other people's stories' and turning them into a poem which is what has been done here, the effort signalled by the callus gained from 'press[ing] too hard with the pen'.¹⁶

Phillipson invokes the disproportionate relationship between a thing and its parts by attention to a cherry cake. In 'Relational Epistemology' the making of a cake in the familial kitchen is both a way into and out of theoretical engagements with the world. Recalling the two piles of Riviere's flesh and bones, the ingredients, once brought together, subvert notions of scale. This is a clear statement about language and poetry. There is always less *and* more than is being said.

'It's like Ludwig said,
raisins may be the best part of a cake

but a bag of raisins is not better than a cake.
My cake isn't, as it were, thinned-out raisins.'¹⁷

The cliché that is passively absorbed or used does not require any thought. By constantly disturbing fixity and consistency these poems resist the trap of the cliché whilst calling attention to it. They display an ambivalence towards communication that recalls Arendt's assertion that 'the lack of concepts for a world threatens to bring with it a breakdown of communication but at the same time the loss of orientation can only be remedied through such communication'.¹⁸

Doing the Voices

A poetics of the cliché is invoked secondly through the detection and harnessing of the anonymous voices of everyday speech. Amossy writes that the cliché contributes to 'the realm of the "as they say", "as everyone says", "as you have to admit"'.¹⁹ In these poems, this realm takes the form of the chatter of advertisements, news cycles, and social media, so that it becomes 'as everyone is saying' rather than 'as everyone says'. Rather than separating themselves from this way of talking and thinking, the poets parrot the banter of advice columns, sales pitches and po-faced commentary, reminding the reader that to communicate in this realm always means in some sense *doing the voices*.²⁰

A poem is not bound by the convention which insists upon the declaration at the start of a novel, that it is, 'entirely a work of fiction', that the names, characters and incidents portrayed in it are the work of the author's imagination. Of course this is a declaration of legal necessity and cannot

usefully be aligned with an author's intent or the novel's content and, as Patricia Waugh points out, some metafiction seek to subvert those very conventions, but poetry *already* stands outside the carefully demarcated territories of fact and fiction.²¹ It is neither one nor the other and yet is intimately connected with both. Gaston Bachelard insists that, if it is successful, the poetic image is a reality. This is very different from representing reality which, even if declaring itself to be an object of pure imagination, is what many fictions set out to do. Helen Vendler, in 'The Art of Criticism', eloquently captures the particular position in which poetry places its reader, a position which cannot be occupied by the reader of fiction.

I don't believe poems are written to be heard, or as Mill said, to be overheard; nor are poems addressed to their reader. I believe that poems are a score for performance by the reader, and that you become the speaking voice. You don't read or overhear the voice in the poem. You are the voice in the poem. You stand behind the words and speak them as your own.²²

For Vendler the experience of reading a poem is akin to brief possession which is what performance is, the inhabitation of another role, another body. When we recognise a cliché, as Amossy explains, it is as though we recognise an anonymous voice, paradoxical though that might seem. When we speak in clichés, which certain situations force us to do, it is as though we speak with someone else's words.

Vendler's insight is of particular relevance to the poetry of Berry, Phillipson and Riviere because it seizes upon the speaking voice and written speech, subverting notions of origin for both. It is the conversational tone of the work that speaks most explicitly of these writers' debt to the New York School of poets (John Ashberry, Frank O'Hara and James Schuyler among others). The influence of these writers can be read across the three poets in their breezy intimacy as well as in the structuring of the work which is built upon a series of non sequiturs and apostrophe. Discussing O'Hara's *Lunch Poems*, Phillipson remarked upon the presence within the poems of 'not a self, but a fluidity of selves.'²³ This sense of fluid identity, of a continually changing rostra of roles, can be read in her *Instant-flex 718* where inside each poem, voice and tone shift and switch and are presented as a series of options.

'Life is too contemporary,' says the heart.
'It's a nouvelle gymnasium with fountains of waste paper.' Or:

'Hi!' And: 'I'd like to make a discovery!'
These are just a few examples.

More eloquent than the varying register of the reported speech are the conjunctions 'or' and 'and' which give purchase to this sense of the optional. Opinion, feeling, and meaning are shown to be things you can decide to have or take on. The poem paraphrases Cousins when it hesitates: 'Ease of communication has ruined the heart's eloquence, for the moment.'²⁴

It is Berry who most forcefully takes the disembodied voice as her medium. The experience of hearing your own voice and disliking it, is a useful analogy for the tension with language and 'received pronunciation' explored throughout her work. She repeatedly starts poems with conversational non sequiturs: 'Where was I', 'Anyway', 'The truth is', 'Actually', as though each poem began half way through a telephone conversation.²⁵ Her poetry is telephonic, her zone is that of the switchboard. Doctors speak next to

stethoscopes, women to absent telephones and mirrors. The proliferation of voices begets a proliferation of receiving ears as well. The speaking voices shuttle between expressions of paranoia and exhibitionism. And as in Phillipson's 'A Dramatic Look', the stage notation, as it were, is just as important as that which it notates. The insertion of 'dramatically' into 'Our Love Could Spoil Dinner' makes for a meta-theatricality and a vertigo of potential audiences.

'Oh, Robusta,' I say dramatically when I know
he's listening. 'You inferior bean.'²⁶

Berry's deployment of speech plays with the theme of being heard and misheard, of being understood and misunderstood. Through this we find a performance of self-moderation. Berry puts it simply: 'for me, writing a poem is a form of speaking so somebody is always being addressed.'²⁷ Her manner of address demands a performance on the part of the reader like that noted by Vendler as well as recalling the worn out phrase of the cliché. As such, the tone of voice with which these poems speak is often, self-consciously dated. Perhaps like the speech that issues from the telephone, there is a sense that this manner of address is dislocated from the person to whom it is spoken. This sense of dislocation is where the work distances itself from the informal ease of the New York School. Unlike her adopted American grandfathers, Berry's voices do not always sit easy in her mouth. And they are not always her own. She oscillates between breezy confessional conversation and a more staged, parodied tone recalling the staccato translations of Freud's case studies into English.

I went swimming with the Doctor;
he wore his stethoscope and listened
to the ebb and flow, 'Bad line,' he said.

The effect of this is to be constantly reminded of the artificiality of the construction, to be reminded that it is a construction and that you are being asked to play along for the duration of the poem.

Demotic Vernacular

If Berry's click is that of the telephone receiver then Riviere takes the click of the mouse as his route through the varying levels of received and preconceived words, images and scenarios on offer in (and out of) contemporary society. In computing, a [hyperlink](#) is a reference to data that the reader can directly follow either by clicking or by hovering or that is followed automatically. The architecture of the internet is a recurrent presence in Riviere's work and his poetry can be described as hypertextual. His first collection, *81 Austerities* was written and published online and the form recalls the brief texts of tweets and online comment boxes, status updates and picture captions. Hypertextuality can be read in the brevity of concentration that each poem enacts. Like the stereotypical internet user who is funnelled from thing to thing, following link after link after link, these poems are similarly untethered. Pornography is a recurrent theme, as is celebrity culture, and there is often the sense of the speaker looking through windows, staring at screens, seeing things he wants and does not want to see. In his recent collection *Standard Twin Fantasy*, this sense of surveillance and voyeurism is probed with a weariness that still manages to be elegiac, conjuring lost promise from the tawdry backrooms of fiction.

We go about our business like we're not being watched. Such rooms do not exist: where shadows designate the villain, curtains part to reveal a screen on which red curtains ripple. And what should she be called, the woman framed always in the window in the television dust? Rooms that are the provinces of ruined jokes from which the afterlife appears as an ordinary street. Where detectives go, for practice, between cases.²⁸

It is tempting to spool out allusions, mining the poem for the things it mines, seeing snippets of Lynch's *Twin Peaks*, Raymond Chandler's hotel lobby loiterers, and the dark side alleys of *The Lady of Shanghai*, but what this activity does is show is that he (and we) are dealing in clichés. The non-existent scenes he describes are familiar but this familiarity is ultimately unwelcome. None of it is real but you have still seen it all before.

Phillipson plays with hypertextuality in a way that gestures to a question asked at the beginning of this essay; is the process (of the cliché) *reversible*? Of the three poets, Phillipson is the one who most consistently attempts this speculative surgical procedure. 'Heliocentric Cosmology' riffs on the phrase 'mashed potato' until it becomes something else entirely, bringing it to a state of clichéd nonsense. She does the same thing with Herman Melville in 'When the City Centre's at a Standstill, It's Really Quite a Thrill to Lie in the Road and Read Herman Melville'. Earlier I discussed how her work presents a series of options. We also find edits, as though meaning and sense are never to be landed upon with certainty or permanence. Instead they are offered, then crossed out or replaced. This strategy can be read clearly in 'What We Learn From Fantasy' which flits between three levels of diction: headline, body text and notes on the body-text. Caps locks, italics and strike-through functions are deployed here with playful ingenuity.

Almost nothing corresponds to what goes on

in its sprung-floor playground except certainty
that days spew out like headlines
through a web-press as big as a building.

THEN A MAN IN A GORILLA SUIT HELD ME;
it was like deliverance

Invention, it transpires, is contactless love-making.
It is the saucy dream of toothpaste hauliers
and the validity of oral hygiene. It is safe sex,

in some trendy poses, with the possibility
of more gallant kinds of cheesecakes.²⁹

Her approach is far less paranoid than that of Riviere, though myriad levels of reference and consciousness are described, the sense is optimistic and elastic or sees optimism in elasticity. She prizes an active approach to communication, utilising juxtaposition and interaction between a number of images and inferences rather than anything singular or finite. Like the missing step of the hyperlink foothold it is both destabilizing and invigorating.

In Tokyo, in the year 2003,
I overheard, the ground rolled continuously. Say,
who among us doesn't care to picture

the architectonic platelets that chafe below
the surfaces on which all people are shaken.

Her hypertextuality is ultimately very human, the conspiratorial 'say' is reminiscent of a falsely jovial salesman and the tone leapfrogs scientific terminology to land upon the unshakably intimate 'chafe'. She continually uses her hypertextual links to deflate the language of advertising, obfuscation and cliché to expose their certainties as constructions. In switching between register, tone and source, all three poets use the performance of the poem to draw attention to the performance of all stock phrases and expressions as, 'you stand behind the words and speak them as your own.'³⁰

Conclusion (Time Please)

The varying technologies that create a 'click' used here to think about the cliché have been the printing press (which makes the click of the electrotype block), the telephone (which sends and receives voices) and the computer (which allows users to click on links, buttons and options). Each of these clicks describes an attribute of the linguistic cliché. The block of the printing press recalls the repetition inherent in any cliché; it has been used too many times, it has been worn out. The telephone recalls the fact that it comes from an outside source – the cliché is given to you rather than made, it is a prepared expression.³¹ The click of the computer has been used here to talk about hypertextuality. It is the means with which countless other sources can be accessed, recorded and broadcast and it casts the shadow of elsewhere and otherwise. We can suggest that this final click is a source of acceleration where cliché is concerned since lives are documented, filed and announced in such volume that the source for external voices and prefabricated sentiments is ever more present. In each of these senses, there is the troubling of the present with an impasse or quibble of temporality. The cliché is language that bears the mark of time. It is to the question of time that I would like to turn for some concluding thoughts on these poets of cliché.

Each of the poets communicates a relationship with time that is redolent of the broken record of the cliché. I have called the cliché, truth out of date. These poems are written with the spectre of the out of date hot on their heels. They try to weigh up the present through the lens of an imagined retrospection. There is consistently a split between an immediate reality and what that reality may come to mean. Staged through speculative attempts at prediction, they scope out a new zone of tenses; past, present and future seem unnaturally close and worryingly unfixed. So Berry's 'Value of Submission', which climaxes with a reworking of Dione Warwick's 'Walk On By', has its speaker taking notes, just in case.

She took the details in
as if they might be worth something (later
perhaps they were)

...and she wondered what her future self
might make of this

... Why do these things
happen, and what becomes of them,
all the strange disowned moments
standing about like lightening struck trees.³²

There is ambivalence between the moments and details that will come to matter and those that will go unclaimed. Phillipson's 'German Phenomenology Makes Me Want to Strip and Run through North London', about the failure of language, particularly academic language, to capture or explain experience, carries at its heart a separate concern, about what the recognition of that failure – and its concurrent impulse to strip and run – will come to mean or signify in the future. Even disregard for a textbook is understood as something that may yet come to be valuable, – over time.

If it were winter I'd be intellectual, but it's Tuesday
and I'd rather be outside, naked, than learned –
rather lap the tarmac escarpment of Archway Roundabout
wearing only a rucksack. It might come in useful.³³

She plays with the denoted noun implied by the pronoun 'it'. Is it the rucksack or the outing that might come in useful? These poems are full of this measuring, playful but considered calculation about the value of experience. Mark Currie writes that

Stories are mechanisms that reconcile what is taking place with what will have been. This relation between the present and future perfect offers a grammatical formula quite different from our default notions of narrative as recollection or recapitulation. It promises new understandings of the reading process within the strange logic of a future that is already complete.³⁴

These poems are written as the mechanisms of storytelling are still turning. The poets broadcast their recollection and forecast recapitulation, but they do not present narratives that are already complete. Their relationship with time is much more circular, it keeps looking back, and they keep checking to see if they look and sound the same.

Riviere's 'Love Story' layers fact and fiction to draw out the ways in which they can jar alongside one another disruptively. He writes explicitly about self-narration and prediction, role-playing being something that can both drive action forward and hold it still. He imagines his future self colliding with a past significance, writing it all back on itself, unfurling a certainty that was never the case.

'Sometimes, doesn't this feel just like
a scene from a book ...

If this, say, was written,
every piece would have its purpose,
a reference to call back to, or from.

...

That would mean something, be deliberate, placed.'

Though it didn't, and wasn't, I almost added.
The story worked by wanting – we sent ahead,
From the start saw our destination,

the last stop, want returning on a bus top.
I met it, passing me on the way back,
Already writing – what . . . 'Sam, I know you'd never do that.'³⁵

The cliché is that which has been devalued over time. These poets mark experiences of cliché through an attention to the way in which language is preformed and the way in which time can be seen to erode significance and value (of memories as well as words). They flit between the different clicks of the cliché, taking pleasure in the moments where language appears to chafe. Where Arendt placed herself in the position of the listener, the detector of the cliché, these poets find themselves in the awkward position of hearing *themselves* speak. This is political because it admits a complicity with the prefabricated whilst at showing a way (and that it is possible) to resist it.

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Notes

- 1 Sam Riviere, “‘Unlike’”: Forms of Refusal in Poetry on the Internet’, *Pool*, 11 July 2011, <<http://pooool.info/unlike-forms-of-refusal-in-poetry-on-the-internet/>> [accessed 1 January 2015]
- 2 Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (London, Penguin: 1963) p. 27.
- 3 Jakob Norberg, ‘The Political Theory of the Cliché’, *Cultural Critique*, 76 (2010), p. 80.
- 4 Norberg, ‘The Political Theory of the Cliché’, p. 76.
- 5 Ruth Amossy, ‘The Cliché in the Reading Process’, *SubStance*, 11 (1982), pp. 34-35.
- 6 ‘In the eyes of her critics, Arendt’s repeated characterization of Eichmann’s statements as clichéd betrayed a curious wish to display sophistication and literary sensibility.’
Norberg, ‘The Political Theory of the Cliché’, p. 78.
- 7 Amossy, ‘The Cliché in the Reading Process’, p. 35.
- 8 Emily Berry’s first collection was *Dear Boy* (London: Faber and Faber, 2014); Heather Phillipson’s first collection was *Instant-flex 718* (Tarsset: Bloodaxe, 2013); Sam Riviere’s first collection was *81 Austerities* (London: Faber and Faber, 2012). Also cited here are Sam Riviere, *Faber New Poets 7* (London: Faber and Faber, 2010) and *Standard Twin Fantasy* (London: eggbox, 2014).
- 9 Heather Phillipson, ‘Goodbye: You Can Take This As My Notice’, *Instant-flex 718*, p. 60.
- 10 The term ‘post-internet’ has been used by Gene McHugh, Marisa Olson, Artie Viekant and others. It has been written about in particular by Charles Whalley who defines it as ‘contemporary poetry that engages with “the internet”’. Whalley’s ‘post-internet’ project can be found at <http://www.postinternetpoetry.tumblr.com> [accessed 1 January 2015].
- 11 Emily Berry, ‘Dear Boy’, *Dear Boy*, p. 7.
- 12 Berry, ‘Dear Boy’, p.7.
- 13 Riviere, ‘No Pity’, *Faber New Poets 7*, p. 11.
- 14 Mark Cousins, *Topos, Place Commonplace*, lecture given at the ICA, April 2011.
- 15 Berry, ‘Other People’s Stories’, p. 21.
- 16 Berry, ‘Dear Boy’, p.7.
- 17 Phillipson, ‘Relational Epistemology’, p. 19.
- 18 Arendt, cited by Norberg, p. 78.
- 19 Amossy, ‘The Cliché in the Reading Process’, p. 37.
- 20 This is a reference to the working title for T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* which was ‘He Do The Police in Different Voices’. The title is lifted from *Our Mutual Friend*. “‘I aint, you must know,” said Betty, “much of a hand at reading writing-hand, though I can read my Bible and most print. And I do love a newspaper. You mightn’t think it, but Sloppy is a beautiful reader of a newspaper. He do the Police in different voices.””
Charles Dickens, (Chicago: Bedford, 1884), p. 90.
- 21 Patricia Waugh, ‘What is Metafiction and Why are They Saying Such Awful Things About it?’ in Mark Currie, ed., *Metafiction* (London: Longman, 1995), p. 40.
- 22 Helen Vendler, ‘The Art of Criticism’, *The Paris Review*, 141 (1996)
<<http://www.theparisreview.org/interviews/1324/the-art-of-criticism-no-3-helen-vendler>> [accessed 1 January 2015].

- 23 Phillipson, 'Lunch Poems Recital', Slade Research Centre, 30 October 2014.
24 Phillipson, 'A Dramatic Look inside the Heart Makes for Interesting Viewing', p. 13.
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26 Berry, 'Our Love Could Spoil Dinner', p. 3.
27 Emily Berry, 'Restraint, Dear Boy: Emily Berry Interviewed By Sam Riviere', *The
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30 Vendler, 'The Art of Criticism'.
31 What I have not discussed here but what would make a ripe topic for investigation is
the fact that the cliché always inhabits a space between writing and speaking. By this I
mean that the cliché is oddly *heard* writing when written and that its production is
associated with the writing of spoken language.
32 Berry, 'The Value of Submission', *Dear Boy*, p. 33.
33 Phillipson, 'German Phenomenology Makes Me Want to Strip and Run through North
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34 Mark Currie, *The Unexpected; Narrative Temporality and the Philosophy of Surprise*
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35 Sam Riviere, 'Love Story', *Faber New Poets*, p. 7.

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