“Watch This Spillage”: Allusion and Intertext in the Poetry of Anne Carson

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List of Abbreviations

Within Text

Works by Anne Carson:

Plainwater: Essays and Poetry	.....	*Plainwater*
Autobiography of Red: A Novel in Verse	.....	*Autobiography of Red*
Economy of the Unlost (Reading Simonides of Keos with Paul Celan)	.....	*Economy of the Unlost*
The Beauty of the Husband: A Fictional Essay in Twenty-nine Tangoes	.....	*The Beauty of the Husband*
"Foam (Essay with Rhapsody): On the Sublime in Longinus and Antonioni"	.....	"Foam"
"Writing on the World: Simonides, Exactitude ad Paul Celan"	.....	"Writing on the World"
"Uncle Falling: A Pair of Lyric Lectures with Shared Chorus"	.....	"Uncle Falling"

Works by Others

Lee Upton:

Defensive Measures: the Poetry of Niedecker, Bishop, Glück and Carson	.....	*Defensive Measures*

Julia Kristeva:

Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection	.....	*Powers of Horror*

Within in-text Citation

Works by Anne Carson (where different from above)

Eros the Bittersweet	.....	*Eros*
Glass, Irony and God	.....	*Irony*
"A_with Anne Carson"	.....	"A_"
"Contempts: A study of Profit and Nonprofit in Homer, Moravia and Godard" *Float*	.....	"Contempts"
If not Winter	.....	*If not*
The Beauty of the Husband	.....	*Beauty*

Abstract

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Allusion and intertext are integral to Anne Carson’s poetry and manifest the erotics of “coming to know”. As such, they demand a level of critical attention that has conventionally been afforded more usually to the narrative aspects of her work. Carson's imagination necessarily works in dialogue with her theoretical and scholarly compulsions to create a unique dynamic, an ever-building connective framework of “triangulation-as-process”. Triangulation in cartography provides a paradigm to illustrate this dynamic. Triangulation-as-process provides an orthographic reading of the cultural space Carson opens for readers. Writers from disparate times and genres usually form the nexus of every particular allusive triangulation. I frame the instances of quotation and citation within the poetry as speech act, referencing the interest in theories regarding speech and writing evident in Carson’s work. I identify post-structural influences in the relational dynamics within the process of triangulation, and suggest that her abiding concerns regarding gender, hybridity, fluidity, movement and spatiality are fostered by this process. The mesh of allusions that Carson weaves within and between texts may activate further intertextual connections in the reader’s mind, moving beyond the promptings of authorial intent. Allusion and intertext facilitate the complicated cross-talk of contemporary and traditional narratives, evoking both a sense of flux and of history within her work. The homoerotic triangulations of “Sappho 31” and the *Phaedrus* are central to this process, allowing power lines to shift, and enacting Carson’s disruption of the narrative of normative heterosexuality. The dynamics of allusion and intertext require a significant shift in readers’ perspectives, and my readings of Carson seek to exemplify that necessary mobility.

Introduction: Knucklebones

Anne Carson was born in Toronto, Ontario, Canada in 1950. Will Aitken, for *The Paris Review* in 2004, gives a brief account of her background, stating that she was: "the second and final child of Margaret and Robert Carson. Her mother was a housewife; her father worked for the Toronto Dominion Bank. During her childhood, the family moved about from bank to bank in small Ontario towns like Stoney Creek, Port Hope, Timmins". She took her BA and MA in Classics at the University of Toronto in the seventies, before, Aitken adds, studying Ancient Greek in St Andrews University, Scotland. She returned to the University of Toronto in 1981 to complete a PhD, and her dissertation became the book *Eros the Bittersweet,* published in 1986, which Aitken describes as: "a brief dense treatise on lack's centrality to desire". He notes a comparatively slow start in getting her poetry published, with some U.S. literary magazines, rather than those in her native Canada, publishing her work in the late eighties, and states: "it was not until Carson was forty-two that a small Canadian publisher, Brick Books, published her first book of poems, *Short Talks".*

In a recent review, published in 2014, "Estranged Pain: Anne Carson's *Red Doc>",* Roy Scranton comments further on Carson's early writing career: "When she published *Eros the Bittersweet,* Carson was not yet a poet …She was a classics professor who had published a strange book to mixed reviews."(205) .The desultory way he describes her early writing and academic life serves as contrast to his description of the year it all changed: 1995, with the publication of *Plainwater* and *Glass Irony and God,* when she: "erupted onto the contemporary American poetry scene" as "an important and exciting new voice". *Plainwater* contains two series of poems which had been published in the eighties, the prose poems "Short Talks", and the group of poems: "The Life of Towns", as well as new poems. *Glass Irony and God,* published by New Directions, contains sections of

poetry including “The Glass Essay”, as well as the theoretical essay “The Gender of Sound”, and Cape re-published most of the book as *Glass and God* in 1998, with “The Gender of Sound” omitted. Scranton goes on to refer to her rise from that time to: “the rarest place in American culture: an experimental poet whom people actually read”(205).

Melanie Rehak’s earlier article from *The New York Times*, in 2000, fills in a few more gaps for this early period: “Carson enjoyed a kind of underground reputation for roughly a decade; then in 1996, she won a Lannan Literary Award. This was followed the next year with a Pushcart Prize, and 1998 brought a Guggenheim Fellowship. That same year, her fourth book, ‘Autobiography of Red: A Novel in Verse’, was nominated for the National Book Critics Circle Award. It sold 25,000 copies, rare for a book of poetry”. Both Rehak, in 2000, and Scranton, fourteen years later, agree on the popularity of Carson’s books from the mid-nineties onwards. Carson is reticent about discussing details of her life, and in the same article Rehak says: “She can seem reserved to the point of diffidence” and “The only information given on the jacket flap of her books is the single sentence: ‘Anne Carson lives in Canada’”. The author information on the back inside cover of *The Beauty of The Husband* states this latter bare fact, and nothing else. The information on the inside of the box in which rests *Nox,* published in 2010, is almost equally unforthcoming: “Anne Carson was born in Canada and teaches Ancient Greek for a living”. It also lists some of her books, and adds: “Robert Currie assisted in the design and realization of the book”. Anne Carson collaborates frequently with her partner, Robert Currie, and both performed the long poem, *Lecture on the History of Skywriting,* at the West Cork Literary Festival in Bantry, Ireland, in July 2019.

Interviews with Carson almost always face the reticence Rehak identifies, and usually focus on her work. The work itself often provides more insight. Her relationship with her mother and father is explored in *Plainwater* and *The Glass Essay*. The death of

her brother is worked through in *Nox*, and her Uncle's dementia in the pamphlet "Uncle Falling" from *Float,* published in 2016. Such writings may indicate certain facts about her life, but have to be viewed through the lens of Carson's espousal of "the true lies of poetry" (*Beauty* 33), which may give rise to alteration, or to a condensing, of autobiographical facts to expose a more telling truth. Carson explores these narratives by using the space on the page and ordinary language to write poetry which is clear and uncluttered. However, Carson's poetry is far from simple, and the ideas she considers, as well as the almost casual use of allusion in her work, give the clean lines of her poems extraordinary weight.

The desire to know, and allusion and intertext in Carson's work as manifestation of that desire, are the subject of this thesis. Aitken's description of the subject matter of *Eros the Bittersweet* being "lack's centrality to desire" is particularly relevant because, in that book, Carson discusses two forms of desire: desire for the beloved and desire to know. When I began to explore allusion and intertext in Anne Carson's poetry in earnest, it wasn't difficult for me to accept the idea that "falling in love" and "coming to know" (*Eros* 171) have, as Carson asserts: "something like an electrification in them. They are not like anything else, but they are like each other" (*Eros* 70), so that the desire to know is capable of carrying the same erotic charge as desire for the beloved. Anyone engaged in scholarly investigations who doubts this, may try to "Think of your life without it", as Carson expresses it in the context of sleep (*Decreation* 41). To site this desire for knowledge in the intellect is as inappropriate as siting desire for the beloved in the heart: it is a whole body experience, and for this reason I have avoided terms such as "intellectual endeavour" to describe the process of "reach and grasp" (*Eros* 30) which this desire demands.

For Carson, the term "erotic" relates to eros. In the introduction to his translation of Plato's *Phaedrus,* from 2002, which this thesis cites, Robin Waterfield quotes from D.M.

Halperin's article in *Ancient Philosophy 5* (1985), 'Platonic Eros and what Men Call Love", in providing a definition: "Now, eros is actually the Greek word for 'a longing capable of satisfaction', especially passionate love, and in the context of relations between human beings it means primarily 'sexual desire' or even 'lust'" (xi−xii). Halperin's definition is pertinent to Carson's reading of the term "eros" as synonymous with "lack" in *Eros the Bittersweet,* because it is only the possibility of satisfaction, however slight, and the lack of that satisfaction, that can engender the lust to which Waterfield refers. To think of eros as sexual desire or as lust, gives an indication of the possible effects of desire on the body, and that effect might be felt in the context of desire for the beloved, or desire for "coming to know", both of which are manifest throughout the body of Carson's work.

Carson's poetry has been considered difficult by some critics, and that difficulty has been ascribed, in part, to the wealth of allusions in her work, which have, at times, been framed as stemming from an intention to obfuscate. This may be due, as one critic suggests, to the poet's desire to lift the poem by both deterring and attracting: "repelling the invasive reader" (Upton 23), or as another has less charitably asserted, due to: "a tic of scholarship, she can't resist showing off her erudition" (David C.Ward 5). In *Eros the Bittersweet,* Carson hints at the perceived difficulty in her work by noting: "We are not poets who need no metaphor or symbol to carry our meaning across"(*Eros* 75), and continues, as readers of Carson might expect, by giving the etymology of the word "symbol": "in the ancient Greek world, one half of a knucklebone carried as a token of identity to someone who has the other half". She notes the use of the metaphor of a "symbolon" in the ideas expressed by the Aristophanes character in Plato's *Symposium*: "each one of us is but the symbolon of a human being −sliced in half like a flatfish, two instead of one−and each pursues a never ending search for the symbolon of himself " (75−76). The "symbolon" of allusion and intertext may stand as one half of the

knucklebone of Carson's poetry. The allusions are not merely a kind of scholarly flourish but, in fusing with the poetic narrative, they provide a means for the poems to be, not only remarkable, but whole.

Joshua Marie Wilkinson, in his introduction to a recent publication on Carson, *Ecstatic Lyre*, identifies the "cross-genre pollinating" (2) in Carson's work, and this as most noticeable in the titles she uses, indicative of her desire to cross boundaries, so that a poem may be an "essay", and a poem or drama might be a "lecture". This transgression of boundaries is perhaps at its most distilled in the list given in the pamphlet "Maintenance", where number twenty one in the list is: "Who does all this thinking are there rules for ~~this boundary~~/ between the work and its maintenance who draws it" followed by: "22. Don't like boundary" (*Float* n.p.). In the chapter "Scholarship and Debasement, overlaying the defences in Anne Carson", Lee Upton explores the interplay of the title's two components in Carson's writing, and observes: "She animates poetry with scholarly searches, pulling characters from one period of time to another, or meshing one person's line of argument with another" (102). Upton rightly identifies the energy that the juxtaposition between writers and thinkers, and the subsequent dialogue between their utterances, lend to Carson's writing.

Carson's work rejects boundaries and eschews categorization, but she also professes a desire to keep edges visible, and she folds references to ancient and modern texts within her work while keeping the edges where such texts meet her contemporary narratives before readers. The excitement that such meetings between the contemporary and past may bring is amplified the more allusion and intertext in Carson's work is investigated, because it becomes evident that Carson and her readers are engaging in a process, extending over the body of her work, which plots the references she makes in a pattern which allows for "looking down through the cracks to another world down there

which you can almost see, almost express but not quite" (*Margins of Mind* 2.20-2.39). It is a process which involves the awareness of a constantly moving sea of culture, the exactitude of cartography, and the transformative power of volcanoes. With it comes an authority, which is not only that of the scholar, but which is both intuitive and emotional and which interacts with time itself.

In *Eros the Bittersweet,* Carson returns to the metaphor of a knucklebone in her exploration of the Sokratic dialogue, the *Phaedrus,* which rotates around *eros* and the word *logos (λόγος)*, which may be defined, at its simplest, as: " the word by which the inward thought is expressed" or: "the inward thought or reason itself" (Liddell 146). In the chapter "Erotikos Logos", Carson positions *logos* as erotic: *"eros* and *logos* are fitted together in the *Phaedrus* as closely as two halves of a knucklebone" (*Eros* 123). The conveying of the ideas or "inward thoughts and reasons" of other writers and thinkers in her work, in conjunction with a narrative which often explores the erotic relationships of the speaker, manifests a desire to unite those "two halves of a knucklebone" (*Eros* 75-76).

Allusion and intertext are not merely compositional elements of a: "skin of scholarly reference" (Upton 107), but are central to Anne Carson's poetry and have a primary function, equal to that of the narrative, within her poems. To make any attempt to separate, or subordinate, the allusions and intertext within her work from the narrative is to slice the poetry in half like Aristophanes' flatfish. Mindful of the lack in existing scholarship of extensive research on erudition in Carson's poetry, allusion and intertext is the subject of the thesis. However, these references within her work are in constant dialogue with her contemporary narratives, and both work in dialectic to provide insight into the explorations and scenarios that she creates.

The Aristophanes character frames the search to be whole as the search for a mate*:* male for male, female for male, or female for female. For Carson, this search spills through

the *symbolon* of poetry and the "reach and grasp" (*Eros* 30) of coming to know, as well as through the narrative. The union of *eros* and *logos*, of Carson's poetry and the allusions within it, is one which facilitates movement across gender and time, and through states of being. This union is part of her identity as poet, and it is an erotic one.

Chapter One: Literature Review

In this thesis, I seek to provide an answer to the following question: what dynamics may be identified in the allusions and intertext evident in Anne Carson's poetry, and what do they lend to the experience of reading Carson's work? Carson's poetry is highly allusive, and little scholarship exists dedicated to the study of allusion and intertext in her writing. This thesis seeks to address this lack. The subject is allusion and intertext in the context of Carson's poetry. However, as her poetry is often in dialogue with her theoretical writings, both are considered in arriving at a theory regarding allusion and intertext in her work. This thesis is a valuable intervention in scholarship, not only because it examines the dynamics inherent in the little researched area of allusion and intertext in Carson's writing, but also because it challenges certain conceptions regarding the hybridity of her writing which have taken hold within scholarship on Carson's work. The interplay of the scholarly and the imaginative within Carson's work provides a unique hybridity previously unidentified.

Allusion and intertext in Carson's writing is a manifestation of the desire for "coming to know", first explored in *Eros the Bittersweet*: the book, published in 1986, which sprang from Carson's PhD dissertation. Such allusions and intertextual echoes may arise through Carson's deliberate placing of allusions within her work, or from less controlled intertextual occurrences. In the thesis, the term "allusion" encompasses the most concrete examples of direct quotation and citation within Carson's poetry, as well as any word, phrase or scenario which she uses to provide links between her own texts, or to connect to the work of others. I accept that the term "intertext" encapsulates the full complexity which Julia Kristeva's definition suggests: "the segment is the result of the intersection of a number of voices, of a number of textual interventions, which are combined in the semantic field, but also in the syntactic and phonic fields of the explicit

utterance" (*Interviews* 189). However, due to the constraints of a doctoral thesis, I consider only those connections identifiable within and between texts.

As well as a manifestation of desire, allusion is a means by which Carson demonstrates the interconnectedness of ideas, terms and individuals which she explores throughout the body of her work. She demonstrates this interconnectedness in a number of ways, but has herself spoken of "juxtaposition" as a method by which she connects seemingly disparate terms such as "my pear, your winter" (*Plainwater* 94), or writers and thinkers from widely differing epochs and cultures, such as Celan and Simonides. In maintaining focus on allusion and intertext in Carson's work, it becomes evident that she situates many of these juxtapositions in threes, as she does with Weil, Porete and Sappho in *Decreation,* a book of poetry and theoretical writings, published in 2005. Furthermore, the overlaying of any two individuals, or ideas, Carson chooses, may also "triangulate", to reveal insights and outcomes hitherto overlooked. I make the distinction between an individual triangulation, which provides an intense revelatory experience of a moment, instance or idea, and triangulation-as-process, by which Carson opens a wide textual and polyphonic space for readers, allowing for a multiplicity of such moments of triangulation to spread before her readers' vision.

Through allusion and intertext in her writing, Carson offers an invitation to readers to engage in the imaginative process which the allusive juxtapositions she makes can promote. To fully understand this process, it is necessary to perceive the dynamics at play in any individual allusive triangulation Carson puts before readers. Currently, the term "triangulation" is most commonly heard in television police drama's where an individual "triangulation" of mobile phone calls is used to pinpoint the location of a criminal quarry or kidnap victim: three lines forming a triangle drawn on a map. This modern understanding of triangulation operates in a similar manner to the initial triangulation used

in cartography, which can be seen in Appendix C. In *Eros the Bittersweet*, Carson lays "Sappho 31" and the *Phaedrus* alongside, where she describes the dynamics of triangulation in Sappho's poem, and mirrors this with the triangulation she identifies in the *Phaedrus*. In order to feel the full effects of the desire to know in Carson's writing, it becomes necessary to follow the currents of the "electrification" (*Eros* 163) produced, as they pass throughout an ever-building matrix of triangulation-as-process.

Such an imaginative vision of a textual space overturns conceptions of scholarly endeavour as dry and passionless, and allows allusion and intertext to mingle with Carson's narratives, in a similar manner to lovers mingling in the act of love, as depicted in the explorations of Ancient Greek literature in *Eros the Bittersweet*. With this realisation, allusion and intertext can take a central place within Carson's poetry, eschewing criticisms that Carson's use of erudition jars with the narrative or that the allusions she makes are "awkward arabesques" (87) as Sarah Jackson describes them.

Carson provides an array of writers and thinkers in her work, and many of the allusions she makes are in the form of direct quotation, suggestive of an interest in allusion as utterance. The intersecting triangulations I describe as "triangulation-as-process" thus become representative of a community of voices. For Carson, allusion as quotation is a form of speech act and is imbued with performative power, and triangulation and triangulation-as-process provide a framework for these utterances. Crucially, these instances of speech act work in dialectic in Carson's writing, to give rise to new ideas which push the limits of thinking outward.

The triangulation-as-process which allusion and intertext in Carson's writing creates, untethers the dualities which are abiding concerns for Carson, such as truth and lies, absence and presence, monster and human, mortal and immortal. Through

triangulation, these dualities escape the confines of the binary, and, in doing so, move away from the linear to the spatial. Dualities no longer travel along a continuum, but are triangulated, moving in a space which admits of paradox and fosters hybridity, creating a wider space for thought. Preconceived ideas regarding gender are also readily overturned by the manner in which Carson provides a multiplicity of utterances from many homoerotic writers and thinkers. This is a relational space where the writers and thinkers Carson quotes and interprets spark the erotics of "coming to know" (*Eros* 171). The placing of the homoerotic triangulations of the *Phaedrus* and "Sappho 31" at the centre of this matrix of utterances, facilitates the creation of a space which is not only textual and polyphonic, relational and performative, but, also, disruptive.

Such considerations demonstrate how allusion and intertext serves, and is served by, the narratives in Carson's poetry. Many of Carson's long poems possess a narrative arc. Examples of these might be *The Beauty of the Husband*, published in 2001, or a series of poems such as "The Glass Essay" or "The Fall of Rome: A Travellers Guide" (*Glass and God* 1998). Readers of Carson are confronted, confounded and delighted by Carson's espousal of paradox; her overlaying of contemporary ideas with Romantic tropes and Ancient Greek philosophies; her creation of the hybrid Geryon who appears in the book-length "novel in verse", *Autobiography of Red* (1998) and reappears as G in the long poem, *Red Doc>*, published fifteen years later; her references to Kafka or Aristotle amongst descriptions of sex after treading grapes or a walk to the divorce courts in *The Beauty of the Husband.* Allusion and intertext also provides a loose, shifting structure for a series of poems such as "The Life of Towns", first published in the magazine *Grand Street* in 1989, or the poetry and prose pieces on a variety of subjects, ranging from "Uncle Falling" to "Merry Christmas from Hegel", in the series of twenty two pamphlets which comprise *Float*, from 2016.

Intertext is given special consideration in the thesis because it is evident that her theoretical writings show a particular interest in intertext, and she routinely makes connections between her poems and theoretical writings. Sometimes these connections will be placed in adjacent pieces of writing, or within the same book, but often they intermesh between several texts. This intermeshing serves to blur the edges between allusion and intertext in Carson's writing. However, it is possible to indicate some demarcation. Through the discussions in *Economy of the Unlost: (Reading Simonides of Keos with Paul Celan* (1999), on intertextual possibilities, Carson heightens awareness of intertext. In the same book, and frequently throughout her work, she also enacts intertext, by creating a mesh of allusion within the text. This repeated intermeshing is still a form of allusion, but through this repeated interweaving, Carson readies her readers to expect such connections, and this may also activate intertextual connections within their minds. This activation prompts readers to create or experience further connections, moving beyond any which Carson may have imagined.

While the allusions in the form of intertextual connections in Carson's writing are often threaded together by her use of one word or term, the most noticeable instances of allusion in her work take the form of quotations within both her prose and poetry. They are indicative of an erudition gained by "scholarship", and in connection with Carson in this thesis, the term does not refer to the generally compartmentalised world of academic endeavour, but to any engagement with the desire to know. Carson is a trained classicist, but her erudition extends far beyond that discipline. She invites readers to engage with this desire, moving from the juxtapositions that she makes to expand their own ideas. In several contexts, Carson encourages this imaginative response in readers, so that the form of some of her books as text objects spark creative interactions, and the unnumbered multicoloured

pamphlets in *Float* encourage multiple entryways and support her exhortation on the cover card that "Reading can be freefall" (n.p.).

When fully considered, the number of instances of allusion and intertext in Carson's writing can become overwhelming, because they are a glimpse into the wealth of erudition which Carson has gained from a life time of reading, both within her academic discipline as a classicist, and as a non-specialist avid practitioner. Reading has had a profound effect on Carson as poet and theorist, and the speakers in her poetry often interact with text. Such an amount of allusion and intertext as Carson's work provides, could become unwieldly. However, with the dynamic of triangulation which she espouses in *Eros the Bittersweet*, and returns to throughout her career, a pattern emerges. There are repeated triangulations evident in her work, and this pattern of triangulation provides a means to understand how Carson "opens textual space" for readers (93), as Karla Kelsey observes. This space is a community of voices, but it is also an orthographic projection of a cultural space, a triangulation-as-process, limited only by the wide expanse of Carson's erudition.

This space is populated by speakers who often inhabit the: "terrain of the abject" as Kristeva describes it, (*Powers of Horror* 18), ranging from Marcell Proust to Virginia Woolf, from the part monster, part human Geryon to the half human, half immortal Sad but Great in *Red Doc>*. It is a space where hybridity is not confined to the characters Carson creates or celebrates. Carson's poetry and scholarship also provides a space for her writing to be hybrid, to be freed from the continuum between "academic and other", where John D'Agata, in interview with Carson in 1997, wishes to place it. The scholarship in Carson's writing, which is mainly conveyed by allusion and intertext, breaks new ground. It is, like Geryon, unique and of itself. In this thesis, I place the fascinating hybrid of Carson's writing in a triangulation with academic and other imaginative writing. Carson's work

provides a movement away from that continuum of academic and creative writing, to which some critics appear to believe all writing is tethered, and her hybrid writing pushes space outwards to promote a shift in thinking regarding what writing is, and what it could be.

Literature Review

Carson is a high-profile poet who has won many awards, including the T.S. Eliot Prize for *The Beauty of the Husband* in 2001, and the Griffin Poetry Prize in 2001 and 2014, and yet there is a relatively small amount of scholarship on her work. While articles and books relevant to this thesis are discussed later in this section, it is first necessary to contextualise that scholarship. Particularly in the past ten years, scholarship has shown interest in self and other in Anne Carson's writing, as well as the estrangement detectable in much of her work. The title of Joan Fleming's article from 2016: "Talk (why?) with mute ash": Anne Carson's Nox as Therapeutic Biography", gives an indication of the motivations which prompt critics to investigate estrangement, abasement, and self and other in Carson's work. The publication of the art object which is *Nox* in 2010, swiftly followed by *Antigonick* in 2012, a loose reworking of Sophockles' Antigone, with comic font, artwork and translucent leaves, and the series of multicoloured pamphlets in a clear plastic box that is *Float* from 2016, has prompted several papers on the materiality of Carson's books. The use of myth in Carson's work has also been considered, and her translations of Ancient Greek texts have been the focus of several papers spanning the past twenty years.

Earlier articles are sparser, although there are many short reviews of her individual publications. *Canadian Literature 176* from 2003, which is dedicated to Carson, considers aspects arising from *Economy of the Unlost*, such as "withness", or the accusations of

plagiarism levelled at both Celan and Carson, or Carson's "errancy" which explores truth and lies. In the same journal, Tanis MacDonald considers the father-daughter relationship in *Plainwater*, and Jess Battis discusses gender in *Autobiography of Red.* Battis' article is not included in the main body of the journal, but is included at the back in the "Notes" section, and it is possible that this indicates less interest in gender in Carson's work at that period. Certainly, although articles on gender and Carson are still not plentiful, they are mostly published in recent years.

Turning to allusion and intertext in Carson's writing, which is the subject of this thesis, scholarship has often been confined to references to her "erudition", which is, in many cases, positioned as, in some way, in opposition to her poetry. David C. Ward and Mark Scroggins have dismissed the erudition in her poetry as an affectation or irritation. Other critics, such as Sarah Jackson, have framed the allusions within her work as a means to delay the narrative, and both she and Lee Upton view poetry in general as often requiring a certain distance from its readers. Upton appears to frame Carson's erudition as in some way a defensive tactic, while also viewing it as integral to the poetry. There has been little attempt to unpick what Carson's erudition might involve, and there is an academic lacuna regarding research which focuses specifically on allusion and intertext in her work.

I seek to dispel the idea that Carson's work is a fusion of academic and creative writing. The description of Carson's writing as a fusion of academic and other writing, discussed in Carson's interview with John D'Agata in *The Iowa Review* in 1997 is one which has gained purchase in scholarship, despite Carson's immediate and clear refutation of the idea in that interview. D'Agata is insistent in questioning Carson's assertion that *Eros the Bittersweet* was likely to be the last time she: "got those two impulses to move in the same stream−the academic and the other" ("A_" 9), and he uses the examples of an

earlier version of *Economy of the Unlost,* and "The Glass Essay", to suggest that she continues to combine the two "in the same stream". He observes that: "some people" would say that: "you're still working with both in the same stream" to which Carson gives a definitive "No" (10). He presses the point over several pages before asserting that: "People still call 'The Glass Essay', for example, brilliant literary criticism and a brilliant poem, together in one form, in one consistent voice" (12). At this point Carson appears to lose patience, and replies: "Well. Then, it must be true". During this exchange, D'Agata suggests that "*Economy"*[1] is similar to *Eros the Bittersweet* in its placing of academic and what Carson terms "the other" into "the one stream", and Carson emphatically denies this but, in an answer that D'Agata does not explore, explains that she "had found a more mature method" (9).

There have been two recent publications dedicated to scholarship on Carson, and both contain references to the interview: the more recent being *Ecstatic Lyre* published in 2015, and the earlier, *Canadian Literature 176* from 2003. In this latter, Robert Stanton raises the spectre of the D'Agata interview to observe: "the seeming confusions of the academic and the aesthetic that lead Carson's interviewer, John D'Agata, to keep insisting that for '[s]ome people' she is 'still working with both in the same stream' are everywhere apparent in her work" (35) Stanton quotes Carson's observation concerning a "mature method" but lists a number of books by Carson which, he asserts, have academic features. He observes: "And yet, D'Agata is right to keep pressing the issue in his interview. If poetry and essay are essentially separate, why publish essays in collections of poetry?" (36) Carson's "academic and other" becomes "poetry and essay" in Stanton's reading, and his question arises, not from Carson's statement, but from his misreading of her words.

[1] This essay which D'Agata refers to as "Economy" appears to be very truncated version. D'Agata describes it as a "tiny essay…about Simonides and Celan" (11).

Stanton's observation seems to underscore an attitude of resistance to Carson's assertion of a "more mature method". Carson's detailed argument regarding "triangulation", and the "stereoscopic vision" required to apprehend it in *Eros the Bittersweet,* appears to be a precursor to the "more mature method" referred to in the interview, and described in the "Method" chapter of *Economy of the Unlost*. D'Agata's error in missing an opportunity to gain insight into scholarship in Carson's poetry by asking Carson directly what she means by: "a more mature method", and what that method consists of, is compounded by Stanton's reference to it in an essay on "errancy", which features lying and the "true lies of poetry". Unlike D'Agata, Stanton has the "Method" section of *Economy of the Unlost* available to him, but continues to insist, after referring to a few lines of the book which contain a quotation from George Eliot, (but which do not contain the explanation of method which the chapter provides): "It would be hard to imagine a more poetic critical 'method.' And yet Carson goes out of her way —in the D'Agata interview at least, to deny any connection between the two strands of her work" (37). In fact, in that interview, Carson does not deny "any" connection, because she observes that: "the same amount of mental energy" goes into both ("A_" 11).

In his essay in *Ecstatic Lyre,* Bruce Beasley sees Geryon's hybridity reflected in the text of *Autobiography of Red,* and celebrates the "strangeness" (79) he identifies in the text. However, he again refers to the interview with D'Agata in a manner that might mislead, noting disintegration of the boundaries of: "what Carson calls 'the academic and other' in her writing"(80) in *Autobiography of Red,* published in 2001, but swerves past Carson's assertion, in the same sentence from which he slices the quotation, that *Eros the Bittersweet,* published in 1986, was the last time she included both types of writing "in the same stream"("A_" 9).

In the introduction to *Ecstatic Lyre* the editor, Joshua Marie Wilkinson, provides an answer of sorts to Stanton's question regarding poetry and essays, in identifying a cross-pollination and rejection of categorization within her writing. He lists the kinds of concerns prevalent in Carson's work: "gender, marriage, sexuality, family, love , death , religion and divorce" (1), and provides some indication of the forms her "rethinking" of these ideas might take: "from the fragment through the drama and all the way out to comics, dance, video and performance" (1). He takes her first book of poems, "Short Talks", also included in Carson's *Plainwater: Essays and Poetry,* as an example of the crossing of literary genre which has been noted by many critics, and mentions its inclusion in *The Anchor Book of New American Short Stories* and *Best American Essays,* to conclude: "It's hard to imagine another first book of poems doing so much cross-genre pollinating. But it's even harder to imagine another debut collection of poetry selected to exemplify other genres like short stories and essays" (2).

In *Defensive Measures: the Poetry of Niedecker, Bishop, Glück and Carson,* published in 2005, Lee Upton's observation on the interface of poetry and scholarship in Carson's work identifies a certain merging poetry and scholarship: "One of Carson's contributions to contemporary poetry has been to expose and soften the boundaries between poetry and scholarship…(27). Upton engages with these boundaries by noting the operations which Carson's form of scholarship might involve, ranging from the interrogation of etymology to the positing of "tentative theses"(105). Although Upton identifies these operations, she appears unwilling to take Carson's assertions regarding her method at face value, and states: "To call her method juxtaposition hardly does it justice"(106). While Upton's placing of four poets in the same book might itself be deemed a juxtaposition, and this juxtaposition facilitates new ways of looking at the work of all four, it may also have restricted the space for further consideration of Carson's

method. To come to an understanding of Carson's poetics it is necessary to interrogate the idea of juxtaposition, as well as the "stereoscopic vision" it entails, and the resultant dynamic of triangulation, which promote the dialogue between scholarship and poetry in Carson's work.

However, triangulation has been identified as important in Carson's poetics, particularly by Chris Jennings in his article, "The Erotic Poetics of Anne Carson" published in 2001. In this article, Jennings usefully frames Carson as mediator between Ancient Greek culture and contemporary culture. I follow Jennings in considering Carson as mediator, and extend this mediation to include Romantic and Modernist writers, among others. While Jennings considers Carson's ideas on triangulation expressed in *Eros the Bittersweet,* as well as identifying a liminal positioning, with regard to the lines of connection discussed by Carson at the prose introduction to "The Life of Towns", he places unnecessary restrictions on the contexts in which triangulation can be found in Carson's work by confining it to the interconnection of the contemporary and Ancient Greek culture, and his framing of Carson as mediator within each triangulation narrows the flexibility that triangulation offers. He notes the connection between dualities and triangulation, but does not identify the possibilities that such a shift from two to three, from the linear to the spatial, might allow.

Ian Rae, in his article "Verglas: Narrative Technique in Anne Carson's 'The Glass Essay'", published in 2011, also identifies triangulation in Carson's writing, considering it in the context of "The Glass Essay". Importantly for this thesis, Rae notes an accrual of triangulations −triangulations of "details"− in that series of poems, which he likens to "a snowflake" (168). This accretion of triangulations is the only reference to a build-up of triangulations that I have found in scholarship on Carson's work. Rae's article is particularly useful in his exploration of intertextual connections within "The Glass Essay",

and I draw on Rae's ideas in discussions of intertext in the thesis. In the context of intertext, the metaphor of organic accrual inherent in a snowflake, may be more appropriate than that of the process of triangulation in cartography, which this thesis advocates. However, Rae also notes Carson's use of intertextual connections and their effect on readers, implying thought and intent, for which the snowflake metaphor is not effective, and for which the paradigm of triangulation in cartography holds true.

Ecstatic Lyre is part of the "Under Discussion" series, by University of Michigan Press which has the aim, expressed above the list of titles in the front section, of collecting reviews and essays about poets on whom: "the consensus has not yet been formed"(n.p.). The inclusion of Anne Carson in the list of poets under discussion in the series, might point to an attempt to address the lack of scholarship about her work, which this thesis also identifies. The book includes scholarly essays on a wide range of texts by Carson, and also provides an interview. The essays are usually short, which gives rise to a tendency for them to touch on important ideas, tropes and considerations in Carson's work, without their being allowed the space to fully explore the subject matter. In her essay "Anne Carson's Stereoscopic Poetics", Jessica Fisher identifies stereoscopy as: "meant to ensure the perception of a three-dimensional reality"(12), but she relates it to blocked vision. She mentions metaphor, and circles around a description of metaphor in *Eros the Bittersweet,* but does not identify stereoscopic vision as a means to perceive metaphor, even though Carson states this in that book. She quickly moves from this to considerations of absence in Carson's writing. There is perhaps too swift a movement through these two complex ideas in this five-page essay.

Ecstatic Lyre proves useful to explore readers' reactions to Carson, which might give insight into the effect of reading Carson's work. I consider the descriptions of Graham Foust, Lily Hoang and others in this regard. I also discuss assertions by Karla Kelsey,

Virginia Konchan, and others, some of which have been useful in explorations into gender, hybridity, and "reading with" in the thesis. Perhaps the most interesting essay in terms of the interaction between reader and text which Carson might desire, is the artist Bianca Stone's account of collaborating with Carson and her partner Robert Currie, "Your Soul Is Blowing Apart: *Antigonick* and the Influence of Collaborative Process", and I consider this essay in the context of Carson inviting readers to an imaginative space. In general, like any good discussion, most of the essays are springboards for further thought, but it is the accounts of the changes that critics describe happening on reading, and often re-reading, Carson that has proved most useful in providing some insight into the effects that the dynamics in her work might have on readers.

Due to Carson's broad erudition, it is frequently necessary to cross disciplines to fully grasp some important concepts, ideas and allusions within her work, as well as to identify intertext within her writing. The crossing of disciplines requires stepping beyond the usual scope of poetry research, and outside the disciplines usually associated with literary theory and poetics. For example, in-depth research into stereoscopic vision requires a return to the originator of the phrase, the classicist William Bedell Stanford. This may shed light on Fisher's struggle to establish the connection between metaphor and "stereoscopic vision" in *Ecstatic Lyre,* as a short essay may not be the place to delve into classicist scholarship from almost a century ago, although Carson herself gives a brief, but fairly effective, synopsis of Stanford's argument in *Eros the Bittersweet*. Carson cites Stanford and his book from 1936, *Greek Metaphor: Studies in Theory and Practice,* in relation to "stereoscopic vision" as a means to apprehend triangulation (*Eros* 73). Due to the book's limited availability, I have included an extended quotation from Stanford, which illuminates the connection between this type of vision and metaphor.

In the same classicist territory, some of Carson's assertions hinge on the meaning of words in Greek, and *Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon* is used for the occasional definition of Greek words, such as *logos.* Certain key words from the original Greek in "Sappho 31" are also briefly considered, as the poem is central to my discussion regarding triangulation in Carson's work. I give some attention to Carson's translations of the poem, and Emily Watson's comments regarding Carson's translation of the poem are considered. I also reference Xavier Buxton's commentary on the poem in "Sappho and Shelley: Lyric in the Dative", particularly with regard to the language of the poem giving insight into the positioning of Sappho as speaker and subject.

I discuss several books and papers from Page Dubois, as her work often considers Sappho in the context of gender, and of history. Dubois provides a useful commentary on the place of Sappho in lyric poetry. Her observations on the silencing of women, in this context, echo those in Carson's theoretical writings. Her concerns regarding postmodern ideas on timelessness and history, expressed in the introduction to *Sappho is Burning*, are useful in arriving at a theory regarding the tension between the timeless and history, fostered by allusion and intertext in Carson's work. The postmodern view regarding time, to which Dubois expresses ambivalence in *Sappho is Burning,* is more clearly expressed by A. J. Bartlett and Justin Clemens in their book, *Lacan Deleuze Badiou* (2014), and their synopsis of time and the contemporary is a useful comparison to the dynamic regarding time in Carson's work, which triangulation-as-process facilitates.

The text of Plato's *Phaedrus* is considered, both for promoting the desire for coming to know, according to Carson, and as key to my assertions regarding Carson's use of allusion as a form of speech act. I also refer to certain philosophical arguments, such as that of Jacques Derrida, regarding the *Phaedrus,* to further explore speech act in her work. To this end, J. L. Austin's theories from *How to Do Things with Words* regarding speech

act as performative, as well as those of Judith Butler, are also discussed. I identify possible references to Austin in Carson's poetry, and convergences with Butler's views on speech as performative in Carson's theoretical writings. Raoul Moati's book from 2014, *Derrida/Searle: Deconstruction and Ordinary Language*, is referenced as it provides a useful discussion of the theories of Austin and Derrida on the performative. Moati's discussion is useful in providing insight into the tension I identify in Carson's poetics, between her concern with the power of words, and with the limits of meaning.

Page Dubois considers the *Phaedrus* in the context of gender, and her paper "The Homoerotics of the Phaedrus" is discussed in relation to Carson's interest in silence, as well as speech. Dubois' paper provides a balancing argument to the privileging of speech in the *Phaedrus,* embraced by Carson, and, like Dubois, she is mindful of an almost total absence of the voices of women in Ancient Greek culture. Classicist scholarship on Alkman, in the context of gender, is also considered, as Alkman is repeatedly referenced, along with Aristotle, in the poem "Essay on What I Think about Most" (*Men* 30-36), published in 2000, which takes metaphor and error as its subject. I cite Anne L. Klinck's paper which provides insights into the connections between Sappho, Alkman and gender.

Gender is an abiding concern in Carson's work, and several papers on gender in Carson's writing are discussed, particularly in relation to my arguments regarding the way in which triangulation and triangulation-as-process promote hybridity and a shift in thinking regarding heterosexuality as normative. Several papers connect Geryon with considerations of gender, such as that of Jess Battis in *Canadian Literature 176*, who makes interesting observations about the in-between space which Geryon occupies. Hanna Geordis' paper from 2014, "Discarded Histories and Queer Effects in Anne Carson's Autobiography of Red" is selected as an example of more recent scholarship on Geryon. I discuss Elizabeth D. Harvey and Mark A. Cheetham's paper on Anne Carson's

collaboration with the artist Roni Horn, (Roni Horn's *Vatnasafn/Library of Water* and Anne Carson's 'Wildly Constant' from *Float*). This paper is particularly useful in its linking of gender, triangulation and fluidity: a connection which I also identify throughout Carson's work. While much of the paper is concerned with Horn's art installation sited in a library in Iceland, those sections which turn attention to gender in Carson's writing, and to triangulation and changing states, provide good insight, and I cite these as important in coming to a theory of how allusion and intertext foster considerations of gender, fluidity and borderline spaces.

Research into intertextuality and references to the abject in Carson's writing has led to my citing Julia Kristeva's theories, as far as the relate to these subjects in Carson's writing. The book *Julia Kristeva Interviews* is useful as a condensing of Kristeva's theories in her own words, on several subjects, and *Powers of Horror* is cited in relation to Kristeva's theory of abjection. Other important post-structuralist thinkers such as Lacan, are also cited, in so far as they might give insight into allusion and intertext in Carson's work.

Due to the fact that triangulation-as-process is an original idea, I have only been able to cite scholarship on individual triangulations in Carson's writing, with the exception of Rae's reference, mentioned above, to the accrual of triangulations he identifies in "The Glass Essay". In order to put forward a theory of triangulation-as-process, it has been useful to consider the process of triangulation in cartography as a metaphor for this imaginative process in the context of allusion and intertext. I find references to cartography in Carson's paper, "Writing on the World: Simonides, Exactitude and Paul Celan", a precursor to *Economy of the Unlost*, which appeared in *Arion*, a journal spanning Classics and the Humanities, in 1996. The term "exactitude", which is discussed in detail in Carson's paper, connects to Jorge Luis Borges' account of mapping in his piece "On

Exactitude in Science". Triangulation-as-process provides an orthographic representation of a cultural space, just as a house plan is a linear orthographic representation of a house viewed from above, and as such differs from the huge, detailed, and ultimately useless map which Borges describes.

The multiplicities and lines of connections evident in triangulation-as-process invite comparison with Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's theory of the map/ rhizome, and I compare triangulation-as-process with that theory, finding significant differences in terms of the relational dynamic triangulation-as-process fosters between utterances. Catherine Gander's comments on Deleuze and Guattari's theory in her book, *Muriel Rukeyser and Documentary: The Poetics of Connection* published in 2013 is cited, as it provides insight into that theory. Rachel Hewitt's book *Map of a Nation* is cited as providing a non-specialist account of triangulation in the context of cartography.

My methodology is formally laid out in the next section, but it is important to note that I begin by paying close attention to Carson's theoretical writings in conjunction with reading and listening to Carson's interviews, to assist me in framing a theory regarding allusion and intertext in her work. This level of attention might prevent the kind of assumptions made by D'Agata, Stanton and others regarding scholarship in Carson's work. Carson often speaks to her readers, and this gives insight into the dynamics she wishes to create. She occasionally explains her methods in her writing, and has clearly expressed her rejection, after *Eros the Bittersweet*, of placing the academic and her other writing in the same stream. I begin by listening hard to Carson, to avoid the pitfalls of some academics who seem inclined to dismiss what Carson says about her work, in favour of their own theories on the nature of Carson's writing.

The titles of Carson's texts and interviews which I have engaged with in this act of listening are too numerous to itemise here, but they include those previously discussed

such as the theoretical book *Eros the Bittersweet*, and the "novel in verse" *Autobiography of Red*, and many books which include poems and theoretical writings such as *Men In the Off Hours* from 2000, *Decreation* from 2005, and the series of pamphlets, *Float*, from 2016. *The Beauty of the Husband* from 2001 and the more experimental *Red Doc>* from 2013, may be said to continue the novel in verse format. *Nox*, published in 2010 defies category, as an art object which is also a book, with lyrical definitions placed next to polaroid images, scraps of family history and anecdotes. The poetry pamphlet, *The Albertine Workout*, from 2015, comprising a series of poems related to Proust, and recent individual poems appearing in magazines and newspapers are discussed. Interviews, both written and in the form of podcasts, and a video of performance piece in the form of a long poem, *Lecture on the History of Skywriting*, from 2016, are considered. In this performance piece the speaker is the Sky, and is reading from his diaries, which commence prior to the creation of the Universe, and end with the present day violence of remote warfare. It is only after this listening, and close reading of many poetic texts by Carson, and reading some part of what she reads, that engagement with the recent scholarship on Carson, mentioned above, becomes fruitful.

Methodology

My methodology is text based, and seeks to examine the field of Carson's erudition, in the form of allusion and intertext, manifest in her writing, and its dynamics. I identify gaps in current scholarship on Carson's erudition, particularly in the context of allusion and intertext in her work. I note that recent scholarship has displayed impatience with the allusions in Carson's writing, regarding it as other to the poetry, and there is a pressing necessity to demonstrate how the allusion and intertext evident in her writing, add to the experience of reading Carson's work. It is possible to engage with Carson's poetry without considering the allusive triangulations and triangulation-as-process which this

thesis explores, just as it is possible to engage with a poem by Keats without understanding metre. However, understanding the underlying triangular structure of Carson's writing adds considerably to the experience of reading her work.

To this end, in the early stages of my research, I identified and mapped numerous instances of allusion to writers and thinkers in Carson's poetry, and their contexts, and the interconnections between her texts, using the computer programme "Twine", which provided a layered, visual representation of those interconnections. Due to the intermeshing between Carson's poetry and theoretical writings which I identified, I also noted references to the same writers and thinkers within her prose. To gain understanding of allusion and intertext in her work, I look to Carson's theoretical writings and interviews for further insight. I describe the dynamics at work, and how they affect readers. I work outwards from the allusions and intertextual connections I identify in her poetry and other work to consideration of scholarship about Carson, and exploration of theories which are pertinent to allusion and intertext in her writing.

Limitations

Carson's poetry is highly allusive, and, due to the constraints of a PhD in terms of time and space, I confine discussion to the types of influences, references and intertextual connections arising from the broad scope of Carson's reading, while accepting that Carson's life experience is also influential in the allusions she makes, and in the intertext within her work.

I explore Carson as mediator in the contemporary interpretations of the ideas of writers to whom she refers, but also accept that Carson, as translator from Ancient Greek, makes interpretations of the texts within her translations. Although I have read some texts in the original Greek for this thesis, to check certain assertions that Carson makes

regarding them, Carson's interpretations within text, as translator, are not considered, with the exception of the poem, "Sappho 31", which is key to this thesis. Carson has also translated and reworked several Ancient Greek dramas, such as Euripides' *Bakkhai* in 2016, but with the exception of *Antigonick*, which is mentioned in the context of the collaborative process, these texts are not discussed in the thesis, as this would require a shift in focus towards Carson's translation process.

There is a dialogue between Carson's poetic narratives and the allusions and intertext in her poetry. Carson's narratives are considered in this context, but aspects of Carson's poetry that lie beyond this context are not considered. Due to this, for example, I devote a full chapter to Carson's linguistic concerns because they are directly related to allusion as speech act. However, I do not allow her possible interest in psychoanalysis the same space, because an in-depth exploration would require a shift in focus from allusion and intertext to the narratives themselves.

I focus on the allusive dynamic in Carson's writing, detecting a shifting matrix of triangulations in the allusions Carson makes and considering how intertext moves within the space. Although many instances of allusion, within texts spanning the course of Carson's writing career, are considered, the thesis does not seek to document every such instance.

Thesis Outline

Chapter Two of the thesis, "Watch This Spillage": Speech and Silence, frames allusion and intertext as manifestation of the desire for "coming to know". I discuss allusion as speech act, and Carson's mediations regarding the utterances she refers to in her work. I compare this with Carson's concerns with silence and the silenced, and contend that her privileging of speech must be viewed in the context of her concern with those

whose voices are denied. Chapter Three, “Autobiography of Read”, focuses on reading as both manifestation and catalyst for desire to know. Carson as reader, instances of reading in Carson’s poetry, and critics’ reactions to reading Carson are discussed. I frame allusion and intertext as manifestations of Carson’s erudition, and I discuss intertext in detail in this chapter. Chapter Four, Triangulation: “How these lines do paint themselves”, looks more closely at triangulation, and triangulation-as-process, as frameworks for the dynamics of allusion and intertext in Carson’s work. I provide examples of various types of triangulation in Carson’s writing, and I consider the dynamic of triangulation-as-process, and its effects on readers. Chapter Five “Volcano Time” looks to Carson’s postmodern concerns which triangulation and triangulation-as-process facilitate. The paradigm of the volcano is discussed as illustrating the necessary connection between triangulation, fluidity and changing states in Carson’s work.

Chapter Two: Watch this Spillage: Speech and Silence

More happy love! More happy, happy love!
John Keats, "Ode on a Grecian Urn"

At the beginning of *Eros the Bittersweet,* Carson links Sappho and Plato, and the past and the present, in the context of desire: "There is a dilemma within eros that has been thought crucial by thinkers from Sappho to the present day. Plato turns and returns to it" (9). This linkage of Sappho, a poet who is the focus for many contemporary explorations on lyric poetry, and investigations into gender, and Plato who has been, for millennia, the starting point for traditional theories, philosophical and otherwise, as well as connecting the lyrical and scholarly, may immediately evoke questions in this exploration of desire.

Allusion and intertext is not just natural to Carson's poetry but is central to her erotic poetics, and desire for the beloved, which may involve loss and, perhaps, abasement, and desire for the "reach and grasp" of coming to know are placed together, like *eros* and *logos* in the *Phaedrus*, like "two sides of a knucklebone" (*Eros* 123) in her work. While asserting that erudition is an integral part of Carson's poetry, Lee Upton notes that the fusion of the scholarly and the lyrical in Carson's work may give rise to criticism from scholars and poetry critics alike: "She would make an eruptible poetry that defies ending and has risked critical charges of excess and of misplaced erudition in doing so" (24). Later in the book, Upton frames allusion in Carson's poetry as being partly responsible for this criticism: "Part of the difficulty is that it is relentlessly broad in its allusiveness, sometimes scholarly in tone, and at the same time beset by passions that we are unaccustomed to seeing in poems that wear their cerebral pedigree so overtly" (104).

Carson identifies triangulations in "Sappho 31" and the *Phaedrus* and asserts that the triangulations she finds in both the poem and the Sokratic dialogue enhance our perception of desire. The triangulation in Sappho's poem heightens our perception of erotic desire for the beloved, and the triangulation she identifies in the *Phaedrus* manifests the

desire for text embodied as *paidika* (*παιδικά*) explored in the dialogue. The naming and quotations which form the nexus of such triangulations are a form of speech act, and these utterances are performative and add energy to the allusive triangulations she makes. In exploring speech as performative, she also considers more recent traditions, such as those of J.L. Austin and Jacques Derrida, and convergences with the theories of Judith Butler on the performative are also evident in her theoretical writings. However, this privileging of speech needs to be considered in the context of Carson's abiding concern with the limits of meaning, and with silence.

Names

> A pronoun is a kind of withdrawal from naming.
> Because naming is heavy, naming may be slightly shaming.
> We live much more lightly than this,
> We address ourselves allusively in our minds−
> As "I" or "we" or "one"−. . .
>
> ("Reticent Sonnet", *Float n.p.*)

The allusive dynamic that is most noticeable on first reading Anne Carson's poetry is the use of the names of writers, thinkers and artists in her work, and her readers will be familiar with references to the Ancient Greek writers she favours, such as Plato, Aristotle, Sappho and Alkman, as well as more contemporary writers, including Proust, Woolf, Celan, Höderlin and the Brontës. Her naming can sometimes be playful. "Variations on The Right to Remain Silent" (*Float*) provides an example where Carson, as poet, crafts almost an entire poem from the names of several London Underground stations, in a reiteration of a fragment by Ibykos, which pivots on the original's three-part rhetorical device: "on the one hand …on the other hand …nay rather":

> Nay rather, like the seven sisters
> gardening in the British Museum,
> accompanied by penalties,
> tooting,
> turnpiked,
> hackneyed,
> I'm advised to expect delays all the way to the loo.

("Ibykos fr. 286, translated using stops and signs from the London Underground" *Float* n.p.)

The poem is a humorous one but the phrase "the British Museum" combined with "hackneyed" may suggest a swipe at the present conservatism in British society, as well as conveying the dreariness of travelling on the London Underground.

Carson, as theorist, explores the power of naming in *Eros the Bittersweet*, where she tells the story of the (unnamed) King's daughter who is in love with Apollonius, after being seduced by his learning, but whose father decrees she must marry someone from a given list. Carson relates that Apollonius, as messenger, brings the list to the beloved, and she reads out the names and adds Apollonius' name to the list before returning the list to her father. This act of writing is a performative one, asserting the woman's right to choose her own husband, but for Carson it serves to illustrate the two types of desire: desire for the beloved, and desire for knowledge, on which the whole argument of *Eros the Bittersweet* hinges. The fact that the daughter is "unnamed" and given context only through her position as daughter, is a reminder of Carson's considerations on the silencing of women in Ancient Greek society which will be discussed later in this chapter. Carson tells this story to illustrate the: "seductive power of letters", and asserts: "There are two kinds of letters here (alphabet and epistle) and there are two kinds of love being made (as reader, you are also being wooed). Each one fits within the other" (97). These "two kinds of love" comprise the subject matter of *Eros the Bittersweet*: erotic love for the beloved and the similarly erotic love of *logos.* Exploration of the tension between these two loves drives much of Carson's work, and is key to Carson's allusive writing.

There is so much naming in Carson's writing that it might be a source of irritation on first reading, and is partly responsible for criticisms of over-erudition in her work. While playing with names in "Variations on the Right to Remain Silent", Carson also

expresses reservations: “most of us, given a choice between chaos and naming, between catastrophe and cliché, would choose naming” (*Float* n.p.). Carson states this in the context of translation, and continues by considering: “the benevolence of the untranslatable”. Carson may have such criticisms , as well as translation, in mind in her description of naming as “heavy” and “slightly shaming” in the lines which open this section, although the latter may also reference the common phrase “name and shame”. Despite these reservations, names proliferate in Carson’s work. Most of the names Carson refers to are ancient or contemporary writers or artists. In ordinary speech the use of proper names may have the function of addressing someone who is present, or may be a way of bringing an absent person into the conversation, perhaps to give information regarding them, or to lend weight to the speaker’s ideas, and this is part of the reason that Carson names so many writers from the canon, as well as lesser known writers and artists, in her work.

Carson sometimes uses proper names in isolation in her poetry, appearing to have an expectation that readers will have knowledge, interest or imagination enough to give context, such as smoke “Miltoning up to heaven” in “Wrong Norma”, (*LRB 38*), or may recall explorations in a previous text, just as: “And these Husserl his Husserl/ quickly to paper” from the poem “Birthday Cut” refers to Husserl’s use of shorthand, described in the prose piece which precedes it in “Cassandra Float Can” (*Float*). The name has a phonic echo of “hussle” suggestive of quickness, but, in both cases, the proper name is being used as a verb, which may indicate the active power names have for Carson. It is possible that this practice of using a name as verb stems from Hamlet’s observation of the “o’erdoing Termagant” that “It out-Herods Herod” (Shakespeare 1736). In Carson’s writing, names do things.

Although names can stand alone, it is more usual for them to be accompanied by direct quotation from the individual named, so that the poem “Audubon” contains the

quotation: "'We are what we make ourselves'/ Audubon told his wife " (*Men* 17*)*, and "Freud (1st draft)" gives two quotations from Freud who, the poem tells us: "spent the summer of 1876 in Trieste/ researching hermaphroditism in eels". The last verse is almost entirely composed of a quotation, which might also read as an ironic commentary on Freud:

> 'Since
> it is not permitted
> to dissect human beings I have
> in fact nothing to do with them', he confided in a letter (*Men* 20).

That naming continues to have importance in Carson's poetry is borne out by the poems in "Possessive Used as Drink (Me)". As well as exploring pronouns, as its subtitle "A Lecture on Pronouns in the Form of 15 Sonnets" suggests, the pamphlet also explores the power of proper names throughout, several of which have homoerotic significance, ranging from Patroklos and Oscar Wilde to Gertrude Stein. The title of the poem "Merce Sonnet" refers to Merce Cunningham, and the broken form and choppy syntax may refer to Cunningham's dance technique. The first sentence which heads the left-hand column reads: "Narrative some dance is", and the second line of the third column reads: "Take a name. Play a part" :

An example:	late afternoon	1941.
Of Graham, Martha	the technique class	is almost done.
Outside	are growing	New York streets dark
From Keller, Helen,	today's visitor,	comes a legendary remark:
"So light,	like the mind," she says,	. . . (*Float* n.p.)

Embedded in the busyness of this poem, the quotation from Helen Keller waits to be discovered. The word "light" here carries a particular tension, as Keller, being a "deaf blind person", cannot know light as the opposite of dark, but feels the lightness of the dance steps as she has her hand on the waist of "a student (it is Merce)…" The conclusion of the poem praises a fluidity in the use of pronouns: " Why! A pronoun/ that dances/ is tangible for miles" (n.p.).

The Beauty of the Husband is full of names, often in the voice of the speaker and is, usually, accompanied by direct quotations or by paraphrases of the words of the writer. It is dedicated to Keats: "on the grounds that a dedication has to be flawed if a book is to remain free and for his general surrender to beauty" (*Beauty* 5). Quotations from Keats abound, although they often stand outside of the narrative, appropriately referenced, between each "Tango". Quotations from other writers and thinkers form part of the narrative in a manner which often suggests that the speaker in the poem is looking to their words to explain events and emotions to herself or readers, so that, when describing one of a series of rows with the husband in "Tango XXII" she turns to Parmenides to indicate the futility of such interactions:

> which, like the chain of Parmenides' well-rounded Truth
> you can follow around in a circle
> and always end up where you began, for
> "it is all one to me where I start−
> I arrive there again soon enough."
> as Parmenides says. (*Beauty* 99−100)

The quotation from Parmenides serves as a wry commentary which indicates the wearisome pattern of repeated insults in a marital row.

In "Tango XX", she explores memory and the "principle of association" by reference to Aristotle and mirrors his (directly quoted) association of milk to white, white to air, and air to damp to recollect Autumn, with an association of ideas in a sexual context: "for instance from nipple to hard/ from hard to hotel room,/ from hotel room/ to a phrase found in a letter he wrote…" (*Beauty* 89). This phrase: "*how you tasted between your legs*", recalled as she is on her way to file divorce papers, causes the speaker's soul to come "rushing up" , and the "Tango" concludes:

> Little soul, poor vague animal:
> beware this invention "always useful for learning and life"
> as Aristotle says, Aristotle who
> had no husband,
> rarely mentions beauty

and was likely to pass rapidly from wrist to slave when trying to recollect wife (*Beauty* 90).

There is a good deal of irony here. These lines make gentle ridicule of the practice within the poem of referencing the words of others to cast light on the narrative. The association of ideas recommended by Aristotle as: "always useful" here causes further pain, which, in turn, provokes a certain peevishness towards Aristotle and his assumed sexual practices. This observation is amusing but also transmits a feeling of intimacy with this ancient philosopher. The intimacy which the speaker demonstrates here is key in Carson's allusive writing, allowing Carson, as theorist, to describe what is happening in the mind of Aeschylus in "Cassandra Float Can": "Aeschylus would like us to see the veils flying up in Cassandra's mind…" (*Float* n.p) or, as poet, to work through "Catullus 101" to tell her own grief in *Nox*.

In the case of Latin and Greek writers, this is an intimacy fostered at an early age. In "Cassandra Float Can", Carson describes how she came to learn Ancient Greek: "I only accidentally learned Greek, from a bored high-school Latin teacher who decided to teach me to read Sappho on my lunch hour. My entire career as a classicist is a sort of preposterous etymology of the word *lunch* " (*Float* n.p.). The final sentence may warn that this account should not be taken too literally, but it is clear that Carson was familiar with both Latin and Greek from an early age. These early encounters with the orators, philosophers and poets of the classical world in the original text, encounters which she constantly renews as a classicist, have had profound effect, and it may be the case that Carson has the speaker of *The Beauty of the Husband* think of the words of Parmenides in the middle of an argument, or Aristotle when going to file divorce papers, because the words of these writers and thinkers are never very far from her mind.

In the case of writers such as Proust or Emily Brontë this intimacy is brought by reading. Carson wrote *The Albertine Workout* after a period of reading Proust every day,

and has said in interview that after finishing Proust: “life was grey”, and that: “A way to keep Proust going would be to write Albertine” (*Margins of Mind* 11.47-12.47). The creation of the book allows for the continued presence of Proust, which reading has previously provided. In “The Glass Essay” the presence of Emily Brontë is so all pervading that the speaker says:

> Also my main fear, which I mean to confront.
> Whenever I visit my mother
> I feel I am turning into Emily Brontë (*Glass and God* 3).

This is an intimacy capable of transmitting itself to readers, and the speaker’s fear of turning into an author she has read, indicates the possibility of a profound and lasting change that may occur through reading. It brings with it a feeling of authenticity which allows readers to trust that the names and the quotations are embedded within Carson’s poetry, not merely to show erudition or to provide difficulty, but because she turns naturally to these individuals in her writing, and because quoting their words lends something important to the work. “Naming is heavy” for readers of Carson because it may appear to punctuate the narrative, especially on first reading. However, as readers continue to journey through the poems or essays, an energy begins to take hold which is fostered, to a significant extent, by the very allusions which may initially have been off-putting.

Naming can also be an invocation. In a scholarly article, “Writing on the World: Simonides, Exactitude and Paul Celan”, written prior to *Economy of the Unlost*, Carson considers Simonides’ epigram on looking at the tomb of Megakles, which also refers to another person: “I pity you, sad Kallias, what you suffered” (fr. 113B, 84D). Carson mediates between this sentence and her readers as follows: “Kallias materializes silently by the reader's side, more mysterious and more pitiable than the dead man. It is as if you were standing alone (you thought) in a room and suddenly heard someone breathing” (*Arion* 8−9). This act of naming has a profound effect on the reader, so much so that it is “as if” the substance of Kallias is made present in the room.

In “Decreation: How women like Sappho, Marguerite Porete and Simone Weil tell God” Carson explores a hymn to “Kypris”, another name for Aphrodite, which begins, “…[come] here to me from Krete/ to this holy temple” (*Decreation* 178):

> Nonetheless we can identify it as a hymn of the type called “kletic,” a calling hymn, an invocation to God to come from where she is to where we are. Such a hymn typically names both of these places, setting its invocation in between in order to measure the difference—a difference which it is the function of the hymn to *decreate*—not to destroy, but to decreate (178).

She contends that such an invocation collapses far and near, and ties this both to Porete’s creation of “the Farnear” and Weil’s theory of “decreation”, which advocates the suppression of the ego in order to be with God. However, it appears that naming and quotation in Carson’s writing is also an act of invocation. It is important to note that the naming of Kallias, together with a small amount of information regarding his feelings and experience, and the placing of him with Megakles and Simonides, allows him to be ushered into the present, and is sufficient to give such force that Carson feels as if he is breathing in the room. This is made possible through Simonides’ epigram, which, for Carson, appears to be an example of the “living breathing word”(*Eros* 131), and readers feel the performative force of this through Carson’s mediation, but it should also be noted that Kallias, whose words have not survived through writing, is silent.

Utterance

In “Foam (Essay with Rhapsody): On the Sublime in Longinus and Antonioni”, where she discusses Longinus’ *On the Sublime*, in which the fragment of “Sappho 31” is preserved, Carson describes a “spillage” through time which encompasses violent action, and spoken and written utterance:

> Longinus' point is that, by brutal juxtaposition of coordinate nouns or noun clauses, Demosthenes transposes violence of fists into violence of syntax. His facts spill over the frame of their original context and pummel the judges' minds. Watch this spillage, which moves from the man who hits, to the words of Demosthenes, to the judges hearing these words, to Longinus analyzing the whole process, to me

> recalling Longinus' discussion of it and finally to you reading my account. The passionate moment echoes from soul to soul. Each controls it temporarily. Each enjoys it quote by quote (*Decreation* 46).

In this quotation there are several reiterations stemming from the violent action which is the subject of Demosthenes' performative utterance: Longinus' analysis, in which he can be assumed to have put his own slant on the orator's words, and Carson's "recalling" of Longinus' discussion. The judges as listeners and Carson's readers are also active in the process. The performative words of Demosthenes, recorded by Longinus, which have force enough to travel across time, are an instance of the power that utterance has in Carson's writing.

While Carson's interest in the performative power of words can be seen in her description of this trajectory from 2005, her interest in the power of speech is also to the fore in *Eros the Bittersweet* from almost twenty years earlier. This book is an early example of Carson, as theorist, bringing together ancient and contemporary ideas in the context of desire, and while it takes its title from Sappho's *glukupikron* (*γλυκύπικρον),* or "sweetbitter", there are several chapters on Plato's *Phaedrus* in the book, one of which is called "*erotikos logos*" (123). The placing of Sappho and Plato together, may have itself been prompted by an act of naming, as Sokrates briefly refers to Sappho in the dialogue. The chapter begins with the quotation from Keats which opens this chapter, suggestive of a link between lyric and philosophical discourse. The title itself brings together two seemingly disparate ideas, that of the erotic and that of *logos* which can be defined as: "the word by which the inward thought is expressed" or "the inward thought or reason itself" (*Liddell* 146). Carson's chapter continues by telling us that: "Phaedrus is in love with a text by the sophist Lysias". The mirroring of sexual desire with the desire for text is explored through Plato's words, and Carson tells us that: "Desire stirs in Phaedrus when he gazes at the words of this text (epethumei, 228b) and visible joy animates him as he reads it aloud

to Sokrates (234d)" (*Eros* 123). Evidence of Carson's similar desirous relationship to text is demonstrated by the privileged position she gives allusion to individual writers and their words in her work, which also manifest the erotic desire for knowledge.

Carson quotes and paraphrases arguments from the Sokratic dialogue, the *Phaedrus* concerning "the word" (*logos*), which compares speech and writing, and she asserts that "*Eros* and *logos* are fitted together in the *Phaedrus* as closely as two halves of a knucklebone" (123). Carson writes of Sokrates' conceiving of wisdom as "a 'living breathing word' (276a)…that happens between people when they talk." and '*Logos'* in its spoken form is a living, changing, unique process of thought" (132). With the reference to *logos* happening: "between people when they talk", Carson refers to the Sokratic method of dialectic, which, for Sokrates, was the appropriate way to conduct philosophical enquiry, and truth grows from the interchange. This use of dialogue as a means to arrive at truth, or a truth, is an important aspect of triangulation, where Carson places the utterances of writers and thinkers in dialogue to give rise to new ideas.

The text which excites Phaedrus, and which prompts a discussion with Sokrates on the merits of speech over writing, is a speech by Lysias on homoerotic love. Carson sums up Lysias' argument as follows:

> Lysias argues that a beautiful boy would do better to bestow his favours on a man who is not in love with him than on a man who is in love with him and he enumerates the ways in which a non lover is preferable to a lover as erotic partner (*Eros* 122).

The fusion of *eros* and *logos* is made evident through Phaedrus' excited response to Lysias' written speech, but this reaction draws light-hearted criticism from Sokrates, who refers to the subject matter of the piece by observing that Phaedrus reacts to the text: "as if it were his *paidika* (*παιδικά*) or beloved boy" (my brackets). He chides Phaedrus, saying that he is using the text, as Carson paraphrases, as a: "tool of seduction, to draw Sokrates beyond the city limits into an orgy of reading in the countryside" (*Eros* 122−123). It is

instructive to consider this *paidika,* as hybrid of text and individual, in relation to Carson's naming of individuals within her poetry, so that, in "The Glass Essay", for example, she is not reading *Wuthering Heights* but "Emily": "I have Emily p. 216 propped open on the sugarbowl " (*Glass and God* 4). This fusion of individual and text remains consistent through Carson's writing.

The term *logos* referring to both the word, and the "inward thought or reason" (Liddell 146), which lies behind the word, may be appealing to Carson as both as poet, and theorist. Her poetry shows a desire to interrogate the meaning of each individual word, and her theoretical writings often look to the etymological derivations of those words, as well as exploring the thoughts of many writers and thinkers, in addition to several painters, such as Velasquez in *Eros the Bittersweet* (pp. 71-82), or Francis Bacon in "Variations on the Right to Remain Silent", one of the pamphlets in *Float*.

In Carson's discussion of *empsychos logos* as "the living breathing word" in the *Phaedrus,* and in her interest in the force of words as performative, there are convergences with the theories of both J.L. Austin and Jacques Derrida. These two philosophers are representatives of two schools of thought, that of the "analytical" philosophers, who follow Austin, and the "continental" philosophers among whom Derrida is a leading figure. There are references to both within Carson's work, and, as is often the case in her writing, she finds room for the opposing views of both. Her references take the form of individual words which carry weight, such as "felicitous" − an important term in Austin's theory, or convergences with Derrida's ideas. Certainly, in *Eros the Bittersweet,* Carson's comment in one of the *Phaedrus* chapters, "What is this dialogue about?" (pp. 163-166), regarding Plato's privileging of speech in a written dialogue, provides a strong echo of Derrida's observations regarding the *Phaedrus* in "Plato's Pharmacy", that: "The play of the other within being must needs be designated 'writing' by Plato in a discourse which would like

to think of itself as spoken in essence, in truth, and which nevertheless is written …" (*Dissemination* 162).

Philosophers are tentative regarding any convergence in the thinking of continental philosophers and those from the analytical tradition, such as J.R.Searle, in the context of the performative. However, the punctuation which brings together the names in the title of Raoul Moati's book from 2014, *Derrida/Searle: Deconstruction and Ordinary Language* is perhaps indicative of the argument within, and he immediately notes Derrida's epigraph at the start of the section "Signature, Event, Context" in *Margins of Philosophy,* which is a direct quotation from Austin. In his introduction, Moati notices a "slippage" in Derrida's introductory section, from the term *"énonciation" (enunciation)* to *"communication*". Even a non-philosopher might identify a shift from the purely spoken to the gathering of speech, writing and other forms of communication that the latter terms encapsulates. For a poet and theorist such as Carson, who invites readers to watch a "spillage" of reiterations through time in "Foam", such a "slippage" may be both intriguing and thrilling. However, Moati, with philosophical caution, considers the "slippage" to be potentially problematic because it appears to find "its counterpart" in analytical philosophy, in particular that of Searle, who, he observes, also rereads Austin's theory from the point of view of communication.

Throughout the book, Moati applies philosophical rigour to the convergences and divergences between the ideas of Searle and Derrida in the context of the performative. It is far from a "vain quarrel" (122), according to Moati, because it invites renewed reflection of the performative by using "tools bequeathed by the continental tradition". He concludes: "…this confrontation over the performative between the pragmatism of the ordinary and continental thought, which my discussion has begun to work through, opens up to the possibility of a new inflection of the performative in its articulation at the limits

of meaning…" (122). While Moati does not appear to consider the possibility of a level of convergence as settled, his conclusion indicates the merit of using aspects of both traditions in considering the performative.

Moati's opening and concluding remarks in the book illuminate how Carson appears able to fold ideas from both analytical and continental philosophy within her writing, and her motivations in doing so. The performative power of words and utterance hold an obvious fascination for Carson. However, this is balanced by her interest in the "limits of meaning" to which Moati refers, and on which Derrida provides a concise philosophical history in the first chapter of *The Margins of Philosophy*, "Tympan". *Eros the Bittersweet* contains many references to the power of speech and writing, but also makes reference to the loss of meaning: to the "blind spot" felt when viewing Velasquez's "Las Meninas"[2], for example, and to the disappearance of *logos*. The "limit" whether of meaning or wisdom is an abiding concern for Carson, in evidence in *Eros the Bittersweet* through to the poem "Clive's Song", published in *The New Yorker* in 2017.

Carson explores the Sokratic idea of writing as subordinate to speech in *Eros the Bittersweet,* and she extracts the notion of "the living breathing word"(131) from it, which is an important motivation in her allusive writing. However, the emphasis on the performative power of reading which pervades her work indicates the value of written utterance for Carson. The description of the "spillage" from Demosthenes to her own readers in "Foam" (*Decreation* 43−50) also appears to give spoken and written utterances equal weight.

Just as there is a fusion, and a tension, between individuals and the texts they produce in Carson's allusive writing, the tension between speech and writing also appears

[2] Searle's "Las Meninas and the Paradoxes of Pictorial Representation" from Critical Enquiry 6 (1980) is itemised in the bibliography of *Eros the Bittersweet* .

to be exciting for Carson, and good writing is capable of conveying the same energy as speech. In the quotation from *Decreation* which begins this section, the idea that these facts spill: "over the frame of their original context", (*Decreation* 46) perhaps alludes to Derrida's answer to Austin's assertion regarding the importance of context for any utterance:

> Every sign, linguistic or non-linguistic, spoken or written (in the usual sense of this opposition), as a small or large unity, can be *cited,* put between quotation marks; thereby it can break with every given context, and engender infinitely new contexts in an absolutely non-saturable fashion. This does not suppose that the mark is valid outside its context, but on the contrary that there are only contexts without any center of absolute anchoring (320).

Citation thus becomes a means of breaking with context, and it might be argued that the lack of "absolute anchoring" which quotation offers appears to allow this spillage to be a performative one, because each reiterator, including listener and reader, can bring something to "the passionate moment" that is Demosthenes original spoken utterance. The spillage "echoes from soul to soul" (45), and the reference to the soul may be prompted by "the Sublime" which is the subject matter of Longinus' text and of Carson's essay. It may also reference Sokrates' idea of " the living breathing word" (*empsychos logos)*, explored in *Eros the Bittersweet, psyche* (*ψῦχή*) being the Greek word for soul, life or breath (Liddell 798). To allow the quotation to spill over the boundaries of its context, is to allow it to break away from repetition and to say something differently, and, in doing so, to approximate Sokrates' "living breathing word" (*Eros* 131).

Carson paraphrases the words of Sokrates in the *Phaedrus*, which assert that writing is subordinate to speaking because this same interchange between individuals is not possible: "It is the same with written words. You might imagine they speak as if they were actually thinking something but if you want to find out about what they are saying and question them, they keep on giving the same message eternally (275d-e) (*Eros* 132) The chapter "Damage to the Living" suggests that damage is the subject of the *Phaedrus*. Plato

is concerned with two sorts of damage. One is the damage done by lovers in the name of desire. The other is the damage done by writing and reading in the name of communication" (129). The damage to the lover is exemplified in a lover's wish that his *paidika,* or "beautiful boy", remain at the acme of his boyhood, and so never grow up, the damage done by reading and writing lies in the fact that they are subordinate, for Sokrates, to speech. Carson sums up his argument: "At this point in the dialogue Sokrates lays his belief candidly and emphatically before Phaedrus: serious thoughts and knowledge have their real life in philosophical conversation, not in the games of reading and writing" (142).

However, Carson identifies the tension maintained between speech and writing, which is made evident in the *Phaedrus,* by echoing Derrida's observation in asserting that it "written dialogue" which discredits written dialogues. She identifies this fact as a space for eros as she continues:

> This fact does not cease to charm its readers. Indeed, it is the fundamental erotic feature of this *erotikos logos*. Each time you read it , you are conducted to a place where something paradoxical happens: the knowledge of Eros that Sokrates and Phaedrus have been unfolding word by word through the written text simply steps into a blind point and vanish, pulling the *logos* in after it (166).

This idea of a blind point which pulls *logos,* as both word and thought, into it, echoes Derrida's concern with the limits of meaning, but is also indicative of Carson's abiding concern with the unsayable or unthinkable.

This erotic tension between speech and writing, and between individual writers and the text they produce, is one Carson works to keep before readers, and quotation is a means of delivering that tension. As well as naming the speaker of any instance of *erotikos logos,* Carson is careful to remind readers of the "living breathing word" (*Eros* 131) by using active present tense verbs normally related to speech with the quotation, so that throughout Carson's work, Aristotle, or any other writer or thinker, "says" or "tells" or "emphasizes", and "says" is by far the most frequent verb in any instance of quotation. Any verb

specifically related to writing is not used, and past tenses are less usual. As well as keeping the tension between speech and writing before readers, such verbs keep the space around these written utterances clear. In *Autobiography of Red*, Carson appears to give insight into this intention:

> ...i see the terrifying
> spaces of the universe hemming me in ...
> the yellowbeard quoted Pascal and then began
> to pile words up all around the terror
> of Pascal until it could scarcely be seen. (91)

"The yellowbeard" obscures the "living, breathing words" of Pascal, in a heap of language. Carson, speaking plain, makes use of simple verbs to cite the originator of the quotation, and allows the words their full force.

Austin's theories on the performative power of certain speech acts are referenced in *The Beauty of the Husband*. The title of "Tango I" begins: "I dedicate this book to Keats" (*Beauty* 5). The title of "Tango II" refers back to that dedication, and begins: " But a dedication is only felicitous if performed before witnesses. . ."(9). This term "felicitous" coupled with "performed" appears to refer to the philosophy of J L Austin whose book, *How to Do Things with Words*, puts forward a theory regarding the performative force of certain utterances such as promising, warning and asking. The value of these speech acts is not dependent on truth, they have performative force because under certain "felicitous" conditions (Austin 22), they do things in the world. The dedication to Keats which Carson terms as "flawed" in "Tango I", here can only be "felicitous" if performed before witnesses. Carson's readers are witnesses, and the dedication is performative because it has been ritualized by "surrender to the public" (5). This reference to Austin picks up on the interest in the power of speech evident in Carson's work, commencing with *Eros the Bittersweet*, where several chapters are devoted to explorations of speech, reading and writing.

The reference to Austin's term "felicitous" in the title of "Tango II", and Carson's embracing of the Sokratic idea of the "living breathing word" suggests a belief in speech as performative. Austin had strict criteria for the kind of speech acts which could be considered performative, and the dedication to Keats, if spoken, would meet such criteria. However, the performative force of words has been identified in many contexts which go very far beyond Austin's original criteria. Judith Butler, who played Kreon in the 2012 production of *Antigonick*, has written extensively on the performative, and explored the performative power of words in Sophokles' *Theban Plays* in her book *Antigone's Claim*. She considers the moment in *Oedipus Colonus* when the chorus remind Oedipus of his crime of killing his father:

> Thus Oedipus is verbally struck by the chorus for having struck and slain his father; the accusation verbally repeats the crime, strikes again where Oedipus is already hurt and where he is thus hurt again. He says, "You strike again," and they strike again, strike with words, repeating, "You killed him"; and the chorus who speaks is ambiguously addressed as "God in heaven," speaking with the force that divine words do (63).

The spillage from action to Demosthenes, Longinus and onwards, from which the thesis takes its title, appears to pass through similar violent reiterations and Carson observes that the orator: "transposes violence of fists into violence of syntax" which "pummels" the minds of the listening judges (*Decreation* 45). Speech act can have similar devastating effect in Carson's poetry, so that the words of the husband, such as: "I love you, I love you both" seem to have seared themselves onto the mind of the speaker in *The Beauty of the Husband* , and may have been partly responsible for the title, the acronym of which is BOTH.

In *Eros the Bittersweet* Carson makes a distinction between speech and writing, but also between good and bad writing in the context of *logos*: "*Logos* in its spoken form is a living, changing, unique process of thought. It happens once and is irrecoverable. The *logos* written down by a writer who knows his craft will approximate this living organism

in the necessary ordering of its parts…" However, Carson continues, bad writing: "does not even attempt this semblance of life" (132). The manner in which Carson uses quotation in her work seems to demonstrate a desire to approximate the *logos* of those she alludes to, as, in writing, direct speech is the nearest to speech act achievable. However, Carson also seems mindful of Sokrates' complaint in the *Phaedrus* that: "it is the same with written words. You might imagine they speak as if they are actually thinking something but if you want to find out about what they are saying and question them, they keep on giving the same message eternally (275d-e) (*Eros* 131).

In "Decreation: How Women like Sappho, Marguerite Porete and Simone Weil tell God", Carson fuses writing and telling to consider the three women's "writerly project" of telling the world about "God, love and reality", and sees this at odds with Sappho's *ekstasis*, as Carson sees it, in "Sappho 31", and Porete and Weil's desire to "decreate" the self, as expressed in Weil's *Grace and God* and Porete's *Mirror of Simple Souls*:

> To be a writer is to construct a big, loud, shiny centre of self from which the writing is given voice and any claim to be intent on annihilating this self while still continuing to write and give voice to writing must involve the writer in some important acts of subterfuge or contradiction (*Decreation* 171).

The phrase "to give voice to writing" exploits the tension between writing and speaking which Carson keeps to the forefront in her allusive writing. This tension allows such writing to be akin to speech, but may also allow for the space where naming and quotation meet Carson's mediations, as outlined above, to be a kind of invocation with which causes the individuals she quotes and interprets to be present, while retaining a sense of their utterances as text.

As with many of Carson's ideas, she also considers what might be thought of as opposing views, and "telling" might itself contain a tension. It is possible to compare the "writerly projects" described in *Decreation* with the private act of writing as telling described in the pamphlet "Candor" from *Float*, and, although this writing is not intended

to be read, the link between reading and writing may be suggested by the scenario of a person standing alone in a room, which Carson also uses to express the immediacy of reading Simonides' words about "sad Kallias" in "Writing on the World, Simonides, Exactitude and Paul Celan" (*Arion* 7-8)

> …You could inscribe a curse on a ribbon of lead and bury it in the ground to lie unread for thousands of years. The point is not to find a reader, the point is the telling itself. Consider a person standing alone in a room. The house is silent. She is looking down at a piece of paper. Nothing else exists. All her veins go down into this paper. She takes her pen and writes on it some marks no one else will ever see, she bestows on it a kind of surplus, she tops it off with a gesture as private and accurate as her own name (*Float* n.p.).

The sentence: "All her veins go down into this paper." suggests both the intensity of writing as a performative bodily experience and a fusion of writer and what is written, of author and text, which is an important aspect of Carson's allusive poetics.

The: "two types of letters (alphabet and epistle) and two kinds of love being made" (97) illustrated by the story of Apollonius and the king's daughter in *Eros the Bittersweet*, references the equating of desire for the beloved with desire for knowledge. However, the "alphabet and epistle", which appear almost as an aside in the above quotation, are the subject of several chapters in the book, giving the history of the introduction of the Ancient Greek alphabet and the spread of literacy: "perhaps the most dramatic of the innovations with which seventh – and sixth – century Greeks had to cope" (42). Carson dwells on the appearance of letters and the mechanics of writing as fondly as a lover might dwell on the appearance and movements of the beloved. Carson concludes that: "letters make the absent present", and in this simple statement raises the major linguistic question regarding the continuous presence of the author in a piece of writing, which Derrida, following Condillac, sums up as follows:

> To write moreover, is thus to communicate without the concrete presence of the speaker but without this presence having disappeared in the transition from orality or gesture to writing, because writing represents its spatial and temporal extension, its expanded continuation (*Margins* 311).

As poet, Carson wants to reproduce the actual words of the writers with whom she has a strong connection, but she also wants to revitalize those words as speech act so that they are capable of giving a different message. “Tango IV” begins “rotate the husband and expose a hidden side” (19), echoing Keats’ phrase regarding the “three ghosts” from “On Indolence” who passed like the figures on a marble urn “when shifted round to see the other side” (*Keats* 304). Similarly, Carson shifts the utterances she quotes around to view “the other side”, by the interpretations which often accompany the quotations she gives, which allow the utterances to say something differently.

In *Decreation* Carson criticises Longinus in a manner which echoes criticisms levelled at her own allusive writing:

> Longinus skates from Homer to Demosthenes to Moses to Sappho on blades of pure bravado.What is a quote? A quote (cognate with *quota*) is a cut, a section, a slice of someone else’s orange. You suck the slice, toss the rind, skate away. Part of what you enjoy in a documentary technique is the sense of banditry. To loot someone else’s life or sentences and make off with a point of view, which is called “objective” because you can make anything into an object by treating it this way, is exciting and dangerous (45).

This criticism may be tongue in cheek, as Longinus’ act of “skating” has ensured the survival of important works which would otherwise have been lost, including Sappho’s fragment 31. Carson’s levity regarding the word “objective” also carries an important idea. To consider a quotation as an object allows the mind to pick it up and rotate it: “to see the hidden side” *(Beauty* 19), so that the quotation from *Decreation* above, for example, becomes a three dimensional box which can be shifted and turned to show something new, as part of the academic task of writing this chapter. Carson couches the quotations she uses in such a way that she holds them up to allow readers to see them differently, and in doing so the written utterance eschews Sokrates’ criticism in the *Phaedrus* that writing keeps repeating the same thing. The use of quotation, naming and citation in Carson’s work mitigates the danger of looting “someone else’s life” (45) that references to the writings of others may involve, although the fact that many of these words are translated creates its

own difficulties. It also allows the edges between cultures to remain visible, as the words remain as near to the original as time and translation allows, but are placed alongside Carson's contemporary interpretations of these utterances. The next section considers these interpretations which often work in tandem with the quotations to create a dialogue between past and contemporary ideas and theories.

Mediation

Carson's writing contains many instances of her mediating between the words of people from differing eras and cultures, and her readers, and the title of this thesis makes reference to the "spillage" described by Carson in *Decreation,* which includes Carson and the reader as it passes: "to me recalling Longinus' discussion of it and finally to you reading my account" (45). The text which Carson returns to most frequently, perhaps, is "Sappho 31", which, as well as being a key text in *Eros the Bittersweet*, is also explored in *Decreation* and *Men in the Off Hours,* and is quoted in full in all three texts, underscoring the importance of each word in the fragment:

> He seems to me equal to the gods that man
> whoever he is who opposite you
> sits and listens close
> to your sweet speaking
>
> and lovely laughing −oh it
> puts the heart in my chest on wings
> for when I look at you, even a moment, no speaking
> is left in me . . .(*If not* 63). (See Appendix B for Full Text)

"Sappho 31" has had a marked effect on Anne Carson's poetics. Several chapters of *Eros the Bittersweet* are devoted to explorations of this poem. This thesis argues that the erotic triangle depicted in "Sappho 31",which Carson immediately interconnects with that of the *Phaedrus* in the same book, provides the base line for triangulation-as-process and, as such, links to a significant amount of Carson's allusive writing.

Emily Wilson has praised Carson's translation of "Sappho 31", picking up on the last line: "But all is to be dared, because even a person of poverty…" (*If not,* 63) to observe:

> The great thing about this translation is its poverty. Unlike other translators, Carson adds no possessive pronouns or definite articles that are not present in the Greek. Sappho's speaker can no longer recognise her tongue as 'my' tongue; her eyes and ears and skin are no longer her own" (*LRB 26*).

In doing so, reveals how Carson's translation reflects the interior turmoil which causes Sappho's speaker to be: "…dead−or almost/ I seem to me", and connects to Carson's ideas regarding this section of the poem being an example of *ekstasis* (*Decreation* 160).

In *Eros the Bittersweet*, Carson is clear that the love triangle outlined in "Sappho 31" is not about jealousy:

> Were she to change places with the man who listens closely, it seems likely she would be destroyed. She does not covet the man's place. She directs no resentment at him. She is simply amazed at his intrepidity. This man's role in the poetic structure reflects that of jealousy within Sappho's feelings. Neither is named. It is the beloved's beauty that effects Sappho; the man's presence is somehow necessary to delineation of that emotional event – it remains to be seen how (14).

"Delineation" is a carefully chosen word here and two meanings of the word are in play: the man's presence is required to arrive at a precise description of this "emotional event" but the same word is also used in the context of borders or boundaries, and it becomes apparent that the man's presence is necessary to show the lines that run between the poet, the man who listens and the beloved. The faraway position that Sappho adopts allows her to see those lines and Carson identifies a "three-point circuit" visible in Sappho's mind, which is key to the power of the poem:

> For, where eros is lack, its activation calls for three structural components− lover, beloved and that which comes between them. They are three points of transformation on a circuit of possible relationship, electrified by desire so that they touch not touching. Conjoined they are held apart. The third component plays a paradoxical role for it both connects and separates, marking that two are not one, irradiating the absence whose presence is demanded by eros When the circuit-points connect perception leaps (*Eros* 15−16).

Carson's ideas regarding "Sappho 31", expressed in *Eros the Bittersweet*, are crucial to her erotic poetics in general, but also to her allusive poetics. The dynamics Carson identifies in that poem are mirrored in the triangulation she finds in the *Phaedrus.* These, in turn, flow through the process of triangulation that she engages in with readers.

Carson's commentary on "Sappho 31" in *Eros the Bittersweet* indicates a desire to expose the edges where Ancient Greek culture and contemporary culture meet. She provides a translation close to the original Greek for readers, but gives an interpretation which encompasses both Ancient Greek ideas and post-structuralist theories. Emily Watson praises Carson's translation of "Sappho 31" in *If Not, Winter* as close to the original Greek, and the translation of the poem Carson provides in *Eros the Bittersweet* is very nearly the same as that in *If Not Winter*[3], but her interpretation takes Sappho's words away from the, now, hackneyed idea of the eternal triangle. Carson sees wholly different connections. She looks to Ancient Greek ideas of eros as lack in this exploration of the dynamic of triangulation, but these also echo Lacanian ideas on lack as necessary for desire, and "the circuit of possible relationships" reflect a post-structuralist outlook, as does the triangle of subject, object and that which "comes between". Carson may be drawing on Freudian and post-structuralist ideas regarding desire as drive, and her suggestion that this third component in a triangulation marks that "two are not one", also has post-structuralist and Freudian overtones. Carson's third component is paradoxical because it both "connects and separates", facilitating a movement toward "touch not touching" (*Eros* 15−16).

In her theoretical writings such as *Eros the Bittersweet*, and the prose pieces in *Men In the Off Hours* and *Decreation,* she provides many such commentaries on the poem,

[3]There are minor changes: "…that man/ who opposite you…" (*Eros* 12) becomes "…that man/ whoever he is who opposite you" (*If Not* 63), the addition of "even" in "even a moment" and the removal of "then" in *If Not Winter,* as well as some changes in line breaks.

which are often argued at length and convincingly, and which are completely contemporary. Through this combination of translation from the Greek and contemporary interpretations of it, Carson allows these two worlds to meet, while also, and crucially, allowing the interface of connection to remain visible. Her poems taking Sappho as subject also provide a mediation , such as the two "TV Men: Sappho" poems in *Men in the Off Hours*, one of which groups the words from "Sappho 31" (118) into parts of speech. The other, where the connections with Sappho appear more tenuous, connects burning and the creative process, and may reference the line: "fire is racing under skin" in the same Sappho poem, as well as the reputed burning of Sappho's books by order of Pope Gregory VII. Through this silencing of Sappho both poems interconnect. The poem "Mia Moglie (Longinus' Red Desert)" takes the lines: "…greener than grass/ I am and dead− almost/ I seems to me" (*If Not* 63) in explorations of the self and clinical analysis, which links to explorations on *ekstasis* in Sappho, Weil and Porete in the same book. In this poem Carson isolates each word of these three lines from "Sappho 31" between couplets (See Appendix A for the full poem):

I

In the clinic she met a girl whose problem was *she wanted everything.*
Bolts of everything hit the table.
seem
Now she is well she says of this girl who has turned out to be herself.
"Sublimity is the echo of a great soul."
to me
What is that antenna for? she asks a man. *To listen to the noise*
of stars— "as I believe I said," Longinus adds (*Decreation* 68).

This poem is part of a series, "Sublimes", in which individual poems interweave and interact through words and phrases, so that: " …she wanted everything." recalls the first line of "Ode to the Sublime by Monica Vitti", and the poems are also in dialogue with the essay "Foam", which precedes them, and the quotation: "Sublimity is the echo of a

great soul" condenses ideas explored in that essay. "Foam" does not mention Sappho, although Longinus' *On the Sublime* preserved the fragment of "Sappho 31" for posterity. In "Mia Moglie (Longinus' Red Desert)", part of "Sappho 31" is between the lines, and the part of Sappho's poem chosen, where the poet turns her gaze from outside towards what is happening inside her, connects with the essay "Decreation: How Women like Sappho, Marguerite Porete and Simone Weil Tell God", where Carson frames these lines of "Sappho 31" as a moment of *ekstasis,* and uses the line "I seem to me*"* (interspersed between the final lines above) in support of her argument. The phrase from Sappho's poem creates a tension with: "this girl who has turned out to be herself.", and places, in a psychoanalytic context, considerations of *ekstasis,* discussed in relation to religious experience in the preceding essay which triangulates Weil, Porete and Sappho.

In his paper "The Erotic Poetics of Anne Carson", Chris Jennings explores Carson as mediator: between Ancient Greek and English in her role as translator: "between text and white space" in her work on fragments (926), and between genres, as poet: "Juxtaposing genres within a work not only enables her writing to slip between and beyond generic boundaries, it destabilizes those boundaries, defining genres by relation rather than internal coherence. Carson's poems, essays, and even interviews mirror this relation on a larger scale" (924). The relational approach Jennings identifies in Carson's writing, together with the disruption of categorization which her writing "slips between", is suggestive of post-structuralist thinking, and his framing of Carson as "mediator" is an interesting one. This mediation between the Ancient Greek culture and the contemporary is the main focus of his paper.

Jennings explores mediation as part of Carson's erotic poetics of "triangulation" first advocated in *Eros the Bittersweet*. Speaking in the context of mediating between genres, Jennings rightly asserts: "This triangular paradigm describes the radical

constitution of Carson's poetic vision, and the underlying structure of her writing". This connection between vision and triangulation is an important one, and necessitates an interrogation of the idea of "stereoscopic vision"(*Eros* 73). Jennings observations regarding vision and triangulation appears to circle around the concept of a dual perception in Carson's writing: "Carson possesses a kind of oracular vision that stems from her ability to bridge worlds and to confer her perception of things invisible by plotting their relationship to the visible" (935). However, his description of Carson's original way of seeing as "oracular" is less precise than the type of "stereoscopic vision" Carson suggests is required to see triangulation.

Sappho's original utterance can be seen to follow the same path across time as that of Demosthenes, to Longinus and onwards, but in the case of "Sappho 31", there have been an almost endless series of reiterations and interpretations, which have had profound effect, spilling between genres and academic disciplines, crossing boundaries on a large scale. It is this impact which prompts Page Dubois' assertion that Sappho is not so much a person as: "a node within a network of knowledge, connections, attachments and projections" (*Sappho* 7). Carson positions the triangle described in "Sappho 31" as a baseline for her allusive poetics and, in doing so, allows the erotic current which she identifies in that poem to interconnect with the individual writers which appear in her work to provide a sense of history, and thereby reasserts Sappho's key position in lyric poetry.

In his paper "Sappho and Shelley: Lyric in the Dative", Xavier Buxton offers a close reading of Sappho's fragment in the original Greek, and explores several commentaries on the text, ranging from Longinus to Dolores O'Higgins, including that of Carson in *Decreation,* and he quotes from that book: "Sappho is staging a scenario in the little theatre of her mind" (160). Buxton refers to Carson's referencing of the: "triangular figure formed by Sappho, the girl and the man" (344), and asks several questions: "But

where does Sappho herself stand? Is she an actor or a spectator in this theatre? What kind of triangle is this? How can the Sapphic eyes which 'set the stage' simultaneously see themselves upon it?" (344)

Buxton's argument in answer to his own questions is an instructive one. Like Emily Wilson, he notes the lack of certain pronouns in the poem, and makes the pressing point that the speaker enters and leaves the poem as an indirect object, in the dative case, through the mirroring phrases "he seems to me" (*phainetai moi/ φαίνεται μοι*) and "I seem to me" (*phainomai emoi/ φαίνομαι ἐμοι*):

> She enters as μοι (moi), as an indirect object (dative), supplementary to the principal drive of the sentence, which, like the scene described, would be coherent without her. . . .The speaker seems an extra in the drama: while the man and the girl sit 'opposite' and yet 'close' to one another, she is at the acute end of the triangle (345). (my brackets)

Buxton notes that by the end of the poem: "Sappho has been doubled into Sappho−as−subject and Sappho as speaker" (346). The dative places "Sappho−as−subject" at the acute end of the triangle and also places Sappho−as−speaker in a liminal position, from where she is able to see the dynamic between the three individuals in the poem , and also what is happening inside Sappho−as−subject. In "Decreation", Carson noted this positioning as an example of *ekstasis*, and links Simone Weil, Marguerite Porete and Sappho through this idea. This liminal positioning is one that Carson often adopts herself. The position of Sappho as far away at: "the acute end of the triangle" , is also a familiar location for Carson to take, far enough away to be able to view the "scenario" (*Decreation* 160).

An instance of Carson acting as: "a bridge between worlds" (Jennings 935) in a poem is to be found in "Essay on What I think about Most" (*Men* 30−36). This long poem spans seven pages of *Men In the Off Hours* (2000), and the subjects of Carson's thoughts are error, metaphor, the meaning of words, and the possibilities which the space around

fragments provides. Aristotle and the Ancient Greek poet, Alkman, are named numerous times, and are often directly quoted. There is even a full in-text reference, which merits a full line: "(*Rhetoric*, 1410b10-13)" (*Men* 30). As well as considering Aristotle's ideas on metaphor, in the context of "error", Carson quotes lines from a fragment by Alkman. Two other fragments of Alkman's poetry are *Partheneia*, in which this male poet speaks in the voice of a young girl. In her paper, "Male Poets and Maiden Voices", Anne L. Klinck notes the similarities of these *Partheneia* with Sappho's poetry: "Like the songs of Sappho, these poems reflect the affections and admirations of a close-knit female circle. The homoerotic language of Alcman's *Partheneia* has been frequently, though not universally, acknowledged" (276−277).

In choosing Alkman as the subject of a poem named "Essay on what I think about Most.", Carson may be prompted by an interest in the gender fluidity that his Partheneia , (Alkman fragments 1and 3) suggest. In this poem Carson quotes from another fragment of Alkman, which concerns hunger:

> Alkman fragment 20:
> *[?] made three seasons, summer*
> *and winter and autumn third*
> *and fourth spring when*
> *there is blooming but to eat enough*
> *is not* (*Men* 32).

This quotation comes nine stanzas into this twenty four stanza poem, and the Alkman reference takes up a full verse. Carson has readied readers for the fragment by two pages of poetry exploring Aristotle's ideas on error and metaphor, and she paraphrases Aristotle's argument by framing metaphor as " an interesting and valuable mental event"(30). In the poem her interest in *"*words*"* is to the fore, and she quotes from Aristotle's *Rhetoric* that "There are 3 kinds of words./ Strange, ordinary and metaphorical". She quotes and paraphrases what Aristotle "says" regarding metaphor through seven stanzas, and introduces Alkman's fragment in an original, but simple way: "The poet does not seem to

know/ that 2+2=4". The poem's three seasons with a fourth added seem to take hold of Carson's mind, and she does something similar in "Decreation: An Opera in Three Parts" which also explores hunger, and has a fourth section:

> Alkman's poem breaks off midway through an iambic metron
> with no explanation
> of where spring came from
> or why numbers don't help us
> control reality better (*Men* 33).

Carson places herself a mediator between the original utterance and present day readers, giving her own particular reaction to the words, the final two lines being a completely contemporary and unique interpretation, but one that, like Aristotle's metaphor, prompts readers to say: "How true, and yet I mistook it!" (31)

Carson gives reasons why she likes Alkman's fragment: "First that it is small/ light/ and more than perfectly economical./ Second that it seems to suggest colors like pale green/ without ever naming them" (33). Through these reasons Carson may be bringing together Alkman and Sappho, perhaps seeing the similarities that Klinck suggests: the smallness and lightness given in the first reason seeming to echo Alkman 3 (a Partheneion) where the beloved of the speaker is compared to: "a soft feather", the "pale green" of the second reason perhaps referencing the "greener than grass" of "Sappho 31". The final reason which is arrived at through considerations of grammar in Alkman's poem (the verb 'made' in the first line has no subject), is that:

> . . . it manages to put into play
> some major metaphysical questions
> (like who made the world)
> without overt analysis. *(Men* 33)

These lines might serve as a reminder that Carson's thinking encompasses not only classical scholarship but also "major metaphysical questions", and an acceptance of the postmodern idea of history as fragmentary, borne out by her refusal, in the poem, to have her thinking determined by "Strict Philologists" because: "as you know the chief aim of

philology/ is to reduce all textual delight/ to an accident of history" (34). She does not want to fill the space that precedes the fragment and is content to: "leave the question mark there".

Carson's mediations take various forms, and often exploit the tension between reach and grasp in allowing readers to arrive at their own moments of discovery. In *Nox,* most of the left-hand pages contain what at first sight appear to be dictionary definitions of selected words , in the same order as they appear in "Catullus 101": "Multas per gentes et multa per aequora vectus/ adventa has miseras, frater…" (n.p.). Readers soon realise that these are no ordinary dictionary definitions, the words are interpreted according to what Carson takes from them, and the unascribed examples appear to be Carson's own. Many of the examples have a lyrical beauty which reflect the prose poetry on the right-hand pages. Each definition contains an example using the word *nox,* sometimes used in a fairly prosaic manner, for example:*"Stellae per noctae visae:* stars visible at night". They may also be lyrical: "*vectus:… per noctem in nihilo vehi:* to vanish into nothing in the night" (*Nox* n.p.). The forensic questioning of self that someone might engage in after loss, could be contained in an example under "*advenio …advenientes ad angulos noctis:* reaching to the very corners of the night" (n.p.). This might also describe the feeling of complete estrangement from others who do not have this feeling of grief.

Sometimes the smallest words reveal the most, so that the preposition "*per*" has various meanings and examples which may reflect postmodern concerns within Carson's poetics, such as distance, motion, boundaries, space, surface and perception:

> (with expressions of motion)….. (a space, mass, surface, etc)…(a barrier or boundary)…(an aperture or vent) …(indicating the medium through which things are perceived; along (a line, route or direction); …(a specified distance) along with(a liquid especially bodily fluid, in motion) … (*Nox* n.p.).

As well as providing insight into the translation process, such "definitions" again overlay classical and contemporary narratives, providing the bridge between cultures that Jennings identifies in Carson's earlier work. However, *Nox* also provides an insight into the fragmentary nature of these texts, and their haphazard survival, as well as the things that grief is unable to say, and this will be discussed further in the next section.

Speech and Silence

"Putting a door on the female mouth has been an important project of patriarchal culture from antiquity to the present day" (*Irony* 121).

In *Economy of the Unlost (Reading Simonides of Keos with Paul Celan)*, Carson gives close reading of the texts of both writers, which give an indication of the complexities of intertext, and discusses Celan's *Sprachgitter*, translated as "Language Mesh". Carson gives an account of the meaning of this compound word, and asks whether Celan's phrase suggests that this mesh facilitates, blocks or "salvages" speech:

> *Sprachgitter* is a word Celan uses to describe the operations of his own poetic language, in a poem about strangeness and strangers. It is also the name of his third book of verse, published in 1959. The word is a compound of two nouns whose relation is ambivalent. *Sprach* refers to language; *Gitter* means some kind of lattice, fence or woven mesh. For people living cloistered lives, Gitter is the grillework or *fenestra locutaria* through which they speak to those outside. For fishermen, it means a net or trap. For mineralogists, the lattice formation of a crystal. Does Celan use Gitter to imply passage, blockage or salvaging of speech? Mesh can do all of these. Celan may mean all of these (58−59).

Carson suggests that the terms "sprach" and "gitter" have a tension which works both for and against each term in this compound noun, and that this net or lattice both blocks and smooths the way for speech. The meaning of "gitter" varies according to context, it is an invisible grillework of communication, it is filament net which floats and catches, it is a crystalline structure which repeats itself as it grows. Carson is concerned with speech, but also with silence of many sorts, including the silence which arises from the blockage of speech, and the mesh of Carson's allusions, together with the mediations she makes, raises

awareness of the passage, blocking and salvaging" of speech, referred to in relation to Celan's poetry in the above quotation.

The epigraph from "The Gender of Sound" which begins this section, like the spillage described in "Foam", from which this thesis takes its title, evokes a sense of history. The epigraph forcibly reminds readers of the absence of women writers and thinkers from the canon, and the misogyny prevalent in Ancient Greek society and literature, which Carson summarizes succinctly in the same section of *Glass, Irony and God* :

> There are the Furies whose highpitched and horrendous voices are compared by Aiskhylos to howling dogs or sounds of people being tortured in hell (*Eumenides*). There is the deadly voice of the Sirens and the dangerous ventriloquism of Helen (*Odyssey*) and the incredible babbling of Kassandra (Aiskhylos, *Agamemnon)* and the fearsome hullaballoo of Artemis as she charges through the woods (*Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*) (*Irony* 120).

Page Dubois, in her article "the Homoerotics of *the Phaedrus*", notes that women are excluded by Plato from the very type of dialectic which allows for "the living, breathing word". She asserts:

> The delightful erotic play of the *Phaedrus,* explicit and implicit, seems to allow only for relations between men. The genre of the philosophical dialogue excludes women. The result is the exclusion of the female from eros, from philosophy, from a vision of the truth. (*Pacific Coast Philology* 10).

While Plato's "genre of the philosophical dialogue" excludes the female, as Dubois observes, there is mention of Sappho in the *Phaedrus*. Sokrates, in light-hearted vein, is pursuing his argument privileging speech over writing and appeals to: "the skilful men and women of old who have spoken about these matters" (12), and when challenged by Phaedrus to name them, he says: "I must have heard someone—perhaps the fair Sappho or Anacreon the wise…"(13). While this is a fleeting reference, in his notes on the section Robin Waterfield comments that: "it was pointed out by W.W. Fortenbaugh ('Plato *Phaedrus* 235c3*'Classical Philology,* 61 (1966) 108-9) that mention of these two poets is

followed by verbal and thematic allusions to several of their poems in the subsequent speeches of Socrates" (80). These intertextual connections with Sappho's poetry, suggest a certain influence on Plato, as well as indicating Plato's skill in interweaving lyrical allusions in his philosophical dialogue. As Fortenbaugh's article was published in 1966, it is possible that Carson was aware of these intertextual references. Sappho is between the lines, and is also named in the *Phaedrus*, and naming for Carson can be an invocation. The placing of Sappho's name in the mouth of Sokrates may have provided a motivation for the placing alongside of the triangulations of "Sappho 31" and the *Phaedrus.* In such an alignment, Carson figures scholarly enquiry as desire, and as having a place in lyric, but is also asserting a parity between creative and philosophical endeavour and between the thought of Plato and Sappho, possibly as a response to the "exclusion of the female from eros" in the dialogues which Dubois identifies.

"The Gender of Sound" moves of from descriptions of female monstrosity in Greek myth, to discussions of recent examples of misogyny and an anecdote of Ernest Hemmingway's, in which he describes being unable to listen to Stein's voice. Carson introduces this anecdote by the statement: "One of the literary patriarchs who feared Gertrude Stein most was Ernest Hemmingway" (121). There are many examples of historical misogyny available to Carson in considering the question: "How do our presumptions about gender affect the way we hear sounds?" She itemises several in this article, observing in her concluding paragraph that: " I have cast my net rather wide", in her mingling of evidence different eras and "different forms of cultural expression". In this essay on the silencing of women or the negative reception of women's voices, she takes the opportunity to refer to negative criticisms of her own scholarly writing, which critics: "like to dismiss as ethnographic naïveté" (136). Lee Upton may be responding to this

observation in “The Gender of Sound”, as well as refuting the criticisms she notes of “misplaced erudition” (24) when she asserts:

> The surfaces of her own poems are riddled with silence points as well as paradoxes that make us confront our most common conceptions because of the very boldness of her ability to collapse representations of time and space, to usher the ancient dead and the modern dead and living contemporaries into one space and synchronous time. (105).

There are silence points of various kinds in Carson’s work, and they may indicate the unsayable, the absence of utterance, or the supression of speech. Voices may be silenced, or ridiculed, as is the case in several of the examples Carson gives in “The Gender of Sound”, and they can also be misrepresented or misappropriated. This misrepresentation of women’s words is worked through in the series of “TV Men” poems. “TV Men: Antigone (Scripts)” provides a context for this misrepresentation: “[for sound-bite purposes we had to cut Antigone’s script from 42 seconds to 7: substantial changes of wording were involved but we felt we got her “take” right.]” (*Men* 101). What follows completely misrepresents Antigone’s words in previous verses so that: “I want to make a lot of money. *Just kidding*” in verse two, becomes: “Other things I like: a lot of money” (101). Antigone’s statement: “God’s will is not some sort of physics, is it” (100) becomes: “Projects? Yes: physics” (*Men* 101).

“*TV Men: Sappho”* (118), the second poem of that same title in the book, is divided into couplets. “Sappho 31” is broken into parts of grammar, which disappear immediately after being itemised so that, for example, the pronouns from the poem are listed in one line: “He She Me You Thou disappears”. The verbs form another line: “Laugh Breathe Look Speak disappears”, and nouns are listed as follows: “Tongue Flesh Fire Eyes Sound disappears”. These lines are followed by couplets containing adjectives and prepositions from the poem, interpersed with descriptions of the preparations on set and commands given. Sappho finally speaks at the end of Carson’s poem, staring into the camera and beginning with a change of gender. She echoes the end of “Sappho 31” before

being silenced: “Since I am a poor man− / Cut” (*Men* 118). This change of sex may refer to Catullus’ changing the gender of the speaker in his Latin translation of the poem. These final two lines reference where the fragment of “Sappho 31” breaks off, but also serves to stand for a history of ascribing the thoughts of women to men, and the suppression of women’s voices.

The change of gender in “TV: Men Sappho 31”, discussed above, evokes the stealing of the wife’s notebooks by the husband in *The Beauty of the Husband* after which he: “uses my starts to various ends” (9). This is a betrayal only in in matters of eros but also in matters of *logos*:

> You know that cool sly verb write. He liked writing, disliked having to start each thought himself.
> Used my starts to various ends, for example in a pocket I found a letter he'd begun (to his mistress at that time)
> containing a phrase I had copied from Homer: ’εντροπαλιζομένη is how Homer says Andromache went after she parted from Hektor−“often turning to look back”
> (*Beauty 9*)

The phrase “that cool sly verb write” resonates with comparisons of speech and writing in *Eros the Bittersweet*. The husband is able to misappropriate the speaker’s words in a way that is not usually possible with speech, where it is possible to identify the speaker. The overlaying of betrayal in the context of desire for the beloved and the desire to gain knowledge is completed in the use of the wife’s words in a letter to the husband’s mistress.

Recently, perhaps on foot of Carson’s involvement with the Human Rights Organisation “Reprieve”, Carson has spoken for human rights in her poetry, particularly in the case of Faisal Bin Ali Jaber, whose family were the victims of a U.S drone strike in Yemen in 2012 , and the prose poem “Fate, Federal Court, Moon” (*LRB 39*), published in 2017, describes a court hearing regarding this case. The performance piece *Lecture on a History of Skywriting,* in which Ali Jaber speaks, translating sections of the work into Arabic, in collaboration with Carson and her partner Robert Curry, also obliquely refers to

the drone strike. “Fate, Federal Court, Moon” considers the tensions between legal language and ordinary speech, partly through the word “hearing”. As the poem moves on, legal language gathers strength, swinging from words most people might understand such as “clerks”, “appellant”, “warrant” and “precedent” to language specifically used in the case:

> The fate of me totally losing the thread of the argument as we distinguish ‘merits’ from ‘standing’ …The fate of proportionality, a matter of context. …The fate of the precedent called ‘al Shifa’ with which everyone seemed familiar. … The fate of ‘plaintiffs who have no chance of being harmed in the future due to being deceased’ (*LRB 39* 30).

Carson puts the last legal observation within quotation marks and, in doing so, preserves the full effect of this statement, which has appalling power to wound: an example of the inhumanity which may be contained within legal frameworks.

The failure to grasp the meaning of legal terms and phrases which affects understanding, is laid side-by-side with failure to hear, which also causes a breakdown in understanding. Whereas the judges in the Federal Court can hear the lawyers, those watching in the gallery find it difficult to hear. The government lawyer “talks too fast”, and there is “The fate of straining to hear what Faisal’s lawyer, with his back to us says/ to the judges”. Carson places the irony of fighting to get a “hearing” in the legal sense, and then for the lawyers not to be properly heard, in the ordinary sense, and this chime’s with the surmise in the poem that the government lawyer is “asking the court to step back without knowing what it is stepping /back from” (*LRB 39* 30).

An advocacy for those who are often voiceless is also in evidence in the pamphlet “Zeusbits”, in *Float,* and in the poem “Clive’s Song”. The title of the latter refers to Clive Adrian Stafford-Smith, a Human Rights Lawyer with Reprieve, “now striving for people on death row or places like Gitmo/ for thirty-five years” (*New Yorker 2017*). “Zeusbits” presents a Trump-like Zeus with titles like “Zeus Outlines his Economic Theory

(Layman's Terms)" and "Zeus Pauses Amid Writing his Autobiography". The first two lines of the penultimate poem "Zeusgas" carry an image and irony that sears: "Immigration to Olympos is not allowed but who then will clean the blood/ off the trees?" (*Float* n.p.), and the last lines of the poem are as follows:

> From then on whenever the women are crossing the border
> Zeus farts a big blue blizzard.
> Boughs go wild FBI stays home. Most of the women die in the passes but any who don't
> are keen to work.
> They work noiselessly (*Float* n.p.).

The women who cross the border are noiseless and, in "Clive's Song", Clive's client is also silent, locked away in Guantanamo, in a situation that defies logic, as he: "has been cleared for release/ and also informed/ he will never leave" (*New Yorker 2017*).

In explorations on translation Carson asserts that words themselves can be silent. In "Variations on the Right to Remain Silent", Carson identifies two kinds of silence: "physical silence and metaphysical silence." She describes the former as happening when: "looking at, say, a poem of Sappho's inscribed on a papyrus from two thousand years ago that has been torn in half. Half the poem is empty space"(n.p.) She provides examples of how a translator may address this physical silence: "with blankness or brackets or textual conjecture", but concludes that: "Metaphysical silence happens inside words themselves. And its intentions are harder to define" (*Float* n.p.).

Conclusion

My research question concerns the dynamics of allusion in Carson's poetry, and how these dynamics might affect readers. Speech act is an important aspect of this dynamic, and the utterances that Carson uses in her poetry and prose have often survived because they have performative power. Nomenclature and quotation are the most

noticeable form of allusion in Carson's work, and they have, therefore, been a significant motivation for criticisms of overuse of erudition in her writing.

However, the frequent use of quotations in Carson's work stem from her explorations in *Eros the Bittersweet* of Plato's theories in the *Phaedrus* regarding *logos* as "the living breathing word"(131), and writing as subordinate to that speech. This chapter takes as its title the spillage "from soul to soul" which Carson identifies in "Foam" and quotation may be a way to keep allusion as close as possible to *empsychos logos* or the "living breathing word". *Logos* is also described as erotic by Carson as theorist (*Eros* 123), and this chapter asserts that the triangulation of Sokrates, Phaedrus and the *paidika* which Carson identifies in the *Phaedrus* carries similar weight, in the context of desire, as the triangulation she identifies in "Sappho 31", the former as a paradigm for the erotics of "coming to know" and the latter to illustrate desire for the beloved.

The use of verbs to indicate speech, which often accompany the quotations or paraphrases used by Carson, are also an indication of her considering such allusions to be a form of speech act. These utterances are given energy by the interpretations that Carson gives her readers, which Jennings has framed as a kind of mediation or: "a bridge between two worlds" (935). This chapter has also viewed these interpretations as Carson finding a means to avoid Sokrates' charge that writing is mere repetition, and to give the words the energy of speech: "that happens between people when they talk" (*Eros* 132), while also keeping the edges where differing cultures meet before readers.

Carson's interest in speech and writing as performative, together with her explorations into the limits of meaning, converges with the references to Austin and Derrida in her writing, and the tension between speech as performative, and the limits of meaning runs through Carson's poetry and theoretical writings. Sokrates' metaphor, in the *Phaedrus*, of the *paidika,* or beautiful boy, as embodiment of text, reflects Carson's

reference to individual writers rather than the texts within her poetry, so that she is reading "Emily", not *Wuthering Heights,* at her mother's kitchen table in "The Glass Essay". This fusion of writer and text creates a hybrid which allows the mother-speaker-Emily triangulation in The Glass Essay" to mirror the three individuals in "Sappho 31", or the Sokrates -Phaedrus -*paidika* triangulation in the *Phaedrus.*

Speech act is an important component of this allusive dynamic, and the utterances that Carson uses in her poetry and prose have often survived for thousands of years because they have performative power, but their survival is also a reminder of the words which have not survived. Carson pays attention to the silence. She is interested in fragments, but also in voices which are not heard or which are misrepresented, and her poems such as "Fate Federal Court Moon" (*LRB 39*) reflect this, as do her prose explorations such as "The Gender of Silence" (*Irony* 119−137). The interpretations which accompany the quotations she uses can also raise awareness of the silence which surrounds them. Dubois notes the absence of the female from Plato's dialogues, and therefore, she asserts, "from eros" (*Pacific* 10). Carson's placing of the triangulations of "Sappho 31" and that of the *Phaedrus* together in *Eros the Bittersweet*, asserts Sappho's key position in lyric poetry. However, Sappho is not entirely absent from the *Phaedrus*. Plato's naming of Sappho, and the intertextual references to Sappho which follow it, may have prompted this laying alongside of the two, demonstrating a desire to bring Sappho from between the lines to an equal position in Carson's exploration of eros.

It should also be noted that while Sappho may indeed be: "a node within a network of knowledge" (Dubois *Sappho* 7), what survives of her writing is fragmentary. "Sappho 31" was only preserved through its inclusion in Longinus' *On the Sublime*, the same text in which Carson identifies the spillage from Demosthenes to the present. In the prose introduction to "The Life of Towns", in the context of lines of connection, Carson asks the

question: “Can you punctuate yourself as silence?” She continues in a manner which indicates her interest in edges and nothingness: “You will see the edges cut away from you, back into real emptiness, some would say” (*Plainwater* 94). The emphasis on utterance in Carson’s poetry is given shape only by considering her continued interest in silence.

The phrase “watch this spillage” addresses readers directly and the echo of “the passionate moment” ends with “you reading my account” *(Decreation* 45). The next chapter looks at references to reading in Carson’s theoretical writings and poetry, and the effect that reading Carson might have on readers.

Chapter Three " Autobiography of Read"

> "But there are levels of hybridization occurring within Autobiography of Red (easily transliterated as Autobiography of Read), and the reader is not immune to them" (Battis 199).

This chapter explores Carson and reading, and considers how reading is manifest in her theoretical writings and her poetry, her relationship to readers, and responses to reading Carson. In interview Carson has spoken about the juxtapositions she makes as accidental, but has also given insight into her methods regarding them: "once I happen to have Simonides and Paul Celan on my desk together, what do I do with the link? What I do with it depends on all the thoughts I've had in my life up to that point and who I am at that point" ("Art of Poetry 88"). For Carson, many of the thoughts she has had in her life, and not a little of who she is, have been brought by reading.

The writers Carson favours in the allusions she makes reflect her classicist training in the Ancient Greek and Latin poets and philosophers she mentions, but are also suggestive of a post-structuralist outlook. In *Powers of Horror,* Kristeva gives an indication of what constitutes: "great modern literature" and connects it to "the abject" as follows:

> In a world in which the Other has collapsed, the aesthetic task …amounts to retracing the fragile limits of the speaking being … Through that experience, which is nevertheless managed by the Other, 'subject' and 'object' push each other away, confront each other, collapse, and start again−inseparable, contaminated, condemned, at the boundary of what is assimilable, thinkable: abject. Great modern literature unfolds over that terrain: Dostoyevsky, Lautréamont, Proust, Artaud, Kafka, Céline (18).

Kristeva describes the tension between "subject" and "object" in terms with which those who read Carson's writings will be familiar. There are several references to Proust, Kafka and Artaud in Carson's poetry, and the poetry itself appears to: "unfold over that terrain" , providing a: "secondary structuring of abasement", (24) as Upton identifies, but also working at: "the boundary of what is thinkable or assimilable". The desire to work in this

territory, as well as her interest in the philosophy of Derrida and Searle, accounts for the many descriptions in Carson's writing of meaning becoming lost or almost lost, so that in a discussion of Velasquez's painting *Las Meninas* she describes a point where: "we disappear into ourselves in order to look" *(Eros* 72), or when reading Gertrude Stein in "Variations on the Right to Remain Silent": "She drifts out of sight" (*Float* n.p.). .

This chapter considers the kind of allusion made evident in "reading with", and the less identifiable allusions which are more in the nature of influence or atmosphere in Carson's writing. The boundaries between allusion and intertext are particularly in evidence in the interconnecting allusions Carson makes within and between her texts, which can activate intertextual connections in the mind of readers which move far beyond the context of the intermesh of allusions she makes. The response of some critics to reading Carson and instances of reading in Carson's poetry give insight into the erotics of reading. Carson's invitation to readers into an "space for imaginal adventure" *(If Not* xi), and the materiality of some of Carson's books are also discussed.

"It's almost like being in love."

Carson laid out her thoughts on the all-consuming power of reading early in her writing career. *Eros the Bittersweet* may be viewed as an exploration of desire, but it is equally an exploration of reading as a context for the erotic act of gaining knowledge. Carson cites examples from texts of the nature of desire as a madness but also something which works the body into a kind of fluidity, in which lovers melt or become loose-limbed: "In Greek the act of love is a mingling (*mignumi*/ μίγνυμι)) and desire melts the limbs…Boundaries of body, categories of thought are confounded" (*Eros* 10). Ian Rae, in his article "Verglas: Narrative technique in Anne Carson's 'The Glass Essay'", notes how: "intertextual allusions (between distinct authors and texts) transform into intertextual

echoes (within Carson's poem), and Carson thereby achieves the effect of blurred identity between Brontë and the speaker"(174). He asserts that Carson uses intertext to cause readers to feel this blurring happening by demonstrating how language: "draws the reader into a vortex of thought and emotion by establishing systems of association that become part of the speaker's subconscious response to phenomena" (174). Rae identifies the use of intertextual associations as a poetic device in "The Glass Essay", and it is a device she uses elsewhere in her poetry. The speaker blurs with Emily because her visits to her mother prompt her to fear she's transforming into Emily Brontë (3), and because she is reading *Wuthering Heights,* and the novel pervades her mind. Carson's is similarly affected by reading.

Eros is also bound up with lack because, Carson explains, the Greek word *eros* denotes "'want', 'lack' 'desire for that which is missing'" (*Eros* 10). This lack may heighten the erotic charge of desire for a beloved, but is also present in the reach and grasp that is the process of coming to know, because, as an idea or theory is grasped, it also simultaneously creates awareness of something not yet known. Such a process may be engaged in by experience, or experiment, or, as is often the case for Carson, by reading. Sappho's *glukupikron (γλυκύπικρον)* or "sweetbitter", also participates in our desire for knowledge, and Carson feels her way towards why this is: "There would seem to be some resemblance between the way eros acts in the mind of a lover and the way knowing acts in the mind of a thinker" (*Eros* 70). In the same paragraph she observes that these acts of eros and acts of knowing are uniquely similar, and possess a similar "electrification". She goes on to quote Aristotle: "All men by their very nature reach out to know (*Metaph*. A 1.980a21)" and continues: "If this is so, it discloses something important about the activities of knowing and desiring. They have at their core the same delight, that of reaching, and entail the same pain, that of falling short or being deficient" (*Eros* 70−71).

Knowing, for Carson, allows for the same kind of heightened perception as erotic love, and the implication is that it can lift you towards a clear and complete understanding. It is necessary to note the preposition "towards": readers reach for knowledge and feel the thrill of that exploration, and the more knowledge is gained the greater the lack of knowledge is felt, just as, in the height of desire, there is never enough contact with the beloved. Part of this desire may be about engagement with text, as when readers are drawn into the bittersweet emotion of lovers in a story, (Carson takes a romantic novel by Longus as an example), but according to Carson: "A much more interesting act of love is going on at depth, in the whole metaphorical undertaking of setting one icon against another" (*Eros* 87). This act of love is an example of "triangular tension" and the icons set against each other are "the most beautiful" painting of the history of Eros and Longus' novel, which he had written, Carson relates: "because 'Longing (*pothos /πόθος*) seized him to 'create a rival image in writing'" (*Eros* 86).

The triangle of desire discernible in the *Phaedrus* point towards the homoerotics of reading, and how readers may be captivated, and therefore most desirous, of characters or writers of their own gender, or may move through genders as they read. One example of triangulation Carson describes in *Eros the Bittersweet* is taken from Virginia Woolf's novel, *The Waves*, where Neville watches his beloved Bernard approach: "As he approaches I become not myself but Neville mixed with somebody−with whom? −with Bernard? Yes, it is Bernard, and it is to Bernard that I shall put the question, Who am I?" (*Waves* 83) Carson sees this as a triangulation because: "Desire moves out from Neville himself, ricochets off Bernard and bends back to Neville, but not the same Neville" (*Eros* 37). There is an interplay of likeness and other as Neville, through desire, mixes with Bernard and becomes "not the same". This suggests that lovers may not be content merely to love, they may want to inhabit the beloved, and it may be added that readers can become

lost in their reading, mixing with the characters, images and ideas on the page, and find out more about themselves, about "Who am I?" by the act of reading. Ian Rae identifies this blurring of the speaker and "Emily" in "The Glass Essay".

In the chapter "Ruse" (*Eros* 12−16) Carson first introduces the idea of "triangulation" and asserts that the addition of a third component between lover and beloved piques desire through intensifying the lack which eros demands: "The third component plays a paradoxical role for it both connects and separates, marking that two are not one, irradiating the absence whose presence is demanded by eros" (*Eros* 16). In "Sappho 31", desire runs like a current between the three participants because, although the poet desires the beloved, she also appears to want to be, in some way, like the man who listens, to be able to be "equal to a god" by being in proximity to the beloved without (seemingly) experiencing the body shock described in the poem. Male-female, love-hate, self-other move between the three components. Such triangulations allow for a rejection of the binary in favour of fluidity and are spaces where hybridity can thrive. The most avid readers are not content to love a text, they inhabit it, and in doing so they too "triangulate", imbued with the fluidity allowed them by eros, and "mingling", as the Greeks would describe "the act of love" (*Eros* 10), with the erotics of the page.

"Reading with" and Intertext

Perhaps the most notable example of Carson's "reading with" is *Economy of the Unlost.* The close readings of the works of Simonides and Celan the book contains give insight into the complexities of intertextuality, and the prologue "False Sail" outlines the kind of intertextual territory one word can evoke , as Carson describes the "gathering in" evident in Celan's poem "Matiére De Bretagne":

> There is a poem of Paul Celan that seems to be concerned with the gathering in of certain poetic goods to a store that he calls "you." Among these goods are the lyric

> traditions of the poetry of courtly love, of Christian mysticism, of Mallarmé, of Hölderlin, not to say Celan himself (11).

Carson examines how Celan uses this "you" in the poem, immediately after these lines, but then returns to some of the tropes in this poem throughout the book, so that the section "No Not Nothing" may be considering the negation in Celan's writing, of which "the nothing" of the lines below are an example:

> Hands, the thorn−
> courted wound, there is ringing,
> hands, the nothing, its seas,
> hands, in the gorselight, the
> bloodsail
> is heading for you.
>
> You
> you teach
> you teach your hands
> you teach your hands you teach
> you teach your hands
> to sleep] (*Economy* 13).

Carson identifies "you" as the focal point " that is why the whole of Celan's poem gathers us into a movement− towards you −that sails to the end. But you, by the time we reach you, are just folding yourself away into a place we cannot go: sleep". Through the context of sleep the poem links to Simonides poem about Danae and her sleeping child.

Both André Furlani in 2003 and Karla Kelsey, over ten years later, note the importance of "Celan's 'du'" (Furlani 102) for Carson. Kelsey sees the use of "you" as a means of including the reader in the dynamics of the page: "in her most engaging turns she dares to fold us, her readers into Celan's pronoun, this you"(90). Kelsey acknowledges this "you" as "Celan's pronoun" and Furlani, in an essay which gets its title from Carson's "The Glass Essay", "What kind of withness would that be?" (*Glass and God* 51), quotes from Celan's "The Syllable Pain": "There appeared in your hand: / a You, deathless, / in which all things I came to itself" (91). He usefully outlines how the single pronoun "you" can be an important example of allusion or "withness". He suggests that "Celan routinely

appeals to an unidentified auditor, a you both intimate and unknown− a mobile token of company ghostly, domestic and readerly. Carson sometimes invokes this auditor as well" (90). Furlani's phrase "a mobile token" highlights an important function of this "you", which perhaps removes it from the sphere of Celan's influence, in that it has the possibility of being vocative or impersonal, singular or plural, it is inclusive, it is genderless, it moves away from the tiresome "I" and, as such, cannot be said to belong to any one poet, be it Celan or Whitman, who has also been identified as using "you" fluidly in his poetry.

Throughout *Economy of the Unlost*, Carson enacts the ideas regarding intertext that she is exploring, and the book shadows Celan's poetry by the many allusions to his work within text, and the many interconnections woven into the book. The titles of the chapters relate to tropes in Celan's poetry. Chapter One is entitled "Alienation", and the subsequent chapters are "Visible Invisibles", "Epitaphs" and "Negation". The Epilogue is "All Candled Things". Stephen Willet discusses the title of the epilogue in his criticisms of Carson's viewing of Simonides fragments through a framework of Celan's abiding concerns as both forced and superficial: "C. gets the Epilogue's title of 'All candled things' from 'Die Ewigkeiten', but only quotes the first five lines because (presumably) she wants to pull out 'alles Gekerzte' without regard to its contextual meaning". Willet's criticism, which suggests she uses this latter phrase without due regard to context, serves as an example of the type of review which Carson had in mind in "The Gender of Sound" regarding her "mingling of evidences" which, she asserts, some critics "like to dismiss as ethnographic naïveté" (136).

The interconnection of text is also referenced in the selection of Celan's poem "Language Mesh", and Carson allows this poem to spill into her arguments so that Celan's "In the Daytime/ Hare's pelt sky" links obliquely to the relationship between poet and patron in Ancient Greece through the word "hare". In the book, Simonides is also a hybrid,

stranded between the traditional system of *xenia*, (ξενία) "the state of privileges of a guest, hospitality: hospitable reception, entertainment" (*Liddell* 470), and the newly arrived monetary system. He is a *xenos*, or guest, but also an employee: "both friend and hireling" of his patron Hieron. A snub at dinner survives through an epigram of Simonides, where his portion of a hare is too little and too late, and it is through this that: "Simonides sits watching this rich and ancient reality fall apart like an overcooked hare" (20). The hare jumps into this section, perhaps prompted by the chime in the name Hieron, with whom Simonides has a relationship of *xenia*, but also close to hand through the lines of Celan quoted earlier in the book. In *Economy of the Unlost* Carson weaves single word connections through the text that are a conduit to other writers, particularly Simonides, and Celan in a "reading with". In doing so, she activates the reader's mind to the further interconnections which are beyond her control, and which may spring from their reading or lived experience. Intertext, like "the day" at the end of *Red Doc* > , "…sails out and out/ and out (164).

How Celan is present in Carson's writing has been critiqued both positively and negatively, and Andre Furlani, in his essay in *Canadian Literature* refers to criticisms levelled at Carson for her convergence with Celan: "in a recent diatribe David Solway charges Carson with pilfering both from Celan and Celan scholar John Felstiner, (whose Paul Celan: Poet, Survivor, Jew describes the devastating consequences of the attack on Celan)" (85). The writing of Carson and Celan is allusive and both have been exposed to accusations of "pilfering" in their work, and Furlani makes a case as to why this is unjustified. Furlani also outlines what he considers to be Carson's motivations for bringing Simonides and Celan together: "In 1999 she published *Economy of the Unlost: Reading Simonides of Keos with Paul Celan,* using the Bronze Age Greek poet as a means to explore the epitaphic quality of Celan's verse" (85). Carson gives insight into "reading-

with" in the "Method" section of *Economy of the Unlost* where she discusses the juxtaposing of these two writers:

> They keep each other from settling. Moving and not settling, they are side by side in a conversation and yet no conversation takes place. Face to face, yet they do not know one another, did not live in the same era, never spoke the same language. With and against, aligned and adverse, each is placed like a surface on which the other may come into focus. Sometimes you can see a celestial object better by looking at something else, with it, in the sky (7−8).

Carson placed Celan and Simonides together three years before *Economy of the Unlost* in an article called "Writing on the World: Simonides, Exactitude and Paul Celan", where the two were juxtaposed in considerations on "exactitude", and the third component within the text appears to be Italo Calvino, whose praise of "exactitude" is considered in relation to Simonides in the context of speech and silence. As Simonides' epitaphs were cut into stone, the following surmise by Carson fuses his exactitude as a poet and the meticulousness and skill of the stone cutter, so that it might be said that Simonides, in another leap across time, works alongside Basil Bunting's mason who: "listening while the marble rests,/ lays his rule/ at a letter's edge, till the stone spells a name/ naming none" (*Briggflatts* 13).

Simonides actions, particularly in the context of exactitude, are also reminiscent of the actions of the cartographer: "Simonides, for his part, must have spent a good deal of time drawing mental lines and positioning data, measuring shapes in his mind's eye and cutting away the inessential, counting off letters and reckoning prices" (*Arion* 3). The use of the word "exactitude" has an echo of Jorge Luis Borges' "On Exactitude in Science", and the "vast Map" which was created by the Cartographers Guilds: "whose size was that of the Empire, and which coincided point by point with it" (325), and which subsequent generations found useless. This scientific exactitude, as Borges describes it, which attempts to illustrate the world on the same scale as the world itself, and with the same detail, differs

from the exactitude which Carson identifies in Simonides and Celan which requires economy of various kinds, but Carson's word also appears to refer to mapping.

The term "exactitude" provides a conduit to Borges, but there is a difference between Borges' map, which appears to mirror the world, or "empire"− even in relation to its exact dimensions, and the process of triangulation in Carson's poetics. The never-complete matrix of triangulation in Carson's work gives an orthographic reading of a space, just as a plan of a house provides an orthographic reading of a house, viewed from above: its entrances and exits, its connections and walls, the apertures for light, its moving spaces; but makes no attempt to mirror the house itself.

The connection with cartography is borne out by the first line of "Writing on the World: Simonides, Exactitude and Paul Celan": "A poet is someone who writes on the world" (*Arion* 1), and any idea that the preposition "on" is used to mean "about" is dispelled as she continues: "Simonides used different instruments and various surfaces…"(1). The exactitude of Simonides and Celan is praiseworthy for Carson, just as exactitude in language is desirable for Calvino, but this quite early linking of the two writers, two thousand years apart, with the metaphor of cartography, is significant in Carson's allusive poetics in the context of triangulation-as-process. (Appendix C. provides an image of triangulation in cartography.) Through Borges and the subject of "exactitude", a link is established between "withness" and the dynamic of individual "triangulation" as outlined in her critique of "Sappho 31" (*Eros* 12−17).

In her essay "To Gesture at Absence: *A Reading-With*" Kelsey uses Carson's terms in describing *Economy of the Unlost* as a "juxtaposition of Simonides and Celan", and this description acknowledges a certain even-handedness of focus on both writers which appears to be lacking in Furlani's description, who sees Simonides' writing as a means to an end: that of better understanding the "epitaphic writing" of Celan (85). Kelsey relates

"reading with" to Carson's considerations on nothingness in this exploration on Celan and Simonides, and Kelsey suggests that a bar to considering nothingness is that it is not detectable by the senses. She quotes Carson's observations on Empedocles' experiment which proved that air, although invisible, was a substance (90-91).

Kelsey notes the similarities that become evident in juxtaposing Celan and Simonides, citing their similar relationship to certain "void centric topics" such as death and alienation, but makes a telling observation regarding the differences which also become visible: "…exposing the great void between them. This ultimate revelation comes with the last question of the book, Do words hold good?" (91) This question evokes consideration of the arguments of Austin and Derrida, but also highlights the tension between traditional and postmodern narratives regarding language and meaning which Carson's work exploits. Carson's interweaving at word level is aided by the shifting meaning of words, but she is careful to keep the relationship between words and silence before readers. Kelsey's essay linking "reading with" and considerations on nothingness, is a reminder that Carson's juxtapositions involve an overlaying of writers who are "aligned", but also in opposition.

Kelsey indicates a breadth and interconnectedness in *Economy of the Unlost*, and begins with her own thoughts on absence and presence which sweep, like Carson's vision, both wide and forensically: "The no-longer-present becomes absent, lost. The empty space in a universe, atom, room" (88). This broad sweep is also applied to Carson's voice and suggests she: "smooths her voice over a broad register". The interconnectedness which this chapter has noted in *Economy of the Unlost* prompts Kelsey's descriptions of the chapters as "rooms", while also connecting to poetry through the term "room" translating as "stanza", which supports her observations regarding lyric in Carson's scholarly writing. She gives more insight into that interconnectedness in her concluding sentence, which she

asserts may apply across the body of Carson's work: "By including and writing into a community of voices − poets, scholars, and other varieties of language makers – Carson holds open textual space to the praise of thought and song that might otherwise be lost" (93). While individual triangulations which juxtapose writers and thinkers reveal what might otherwise be invisible, triangulation-as-process facilitates this holding open of the textual space which Kelsey identifies.

Critics have noted "withness" in Carson's other works. Kristi Maxwell opens her essay, "The Unbearable Withness of Being: On Anne Carson's *Plainwater",* with a list of possible ways of being with: "Anne Carson's *Plainwater* studies companionship, or, perhaps more accurately *Plainwater* is a study of being with- being with others, *with* oneself, *with* texts, *with* language, *with* bodies of water, *with* bodies of land" (56). Maxwell's "withness" appears to go beyond the context suggested by *Reading Simonides with Paul Celan* to an idea of withness as all-encompassing for Carson, and likens it to a "being alongside". She refers mainly to *Plainwater,* but quotes from Carson's "On Reading" (*Glass and God* 138) and the fusion of Madame Bovary and the Rockies, in support of her argument. It can be argued that Carson's phrase "reading with" contains both the idea of being alongside, as Hareton reads "alongside" Cathy in *Wuthering Heights,* and that of "looking through", just as readers, Carson asserts in *Float,* look through Stein, to see Picasso and Napoleon in a new way. Maxwell's explanation of "withness" as being alongside is useful as it seems to usher in the person Carson alludes to, as two people might read together, but it fails to fully consider the idea of "reading with" as a lens might be used to aid reading, or Carson's exploration, in *Economy of the Unlost,* on the way in which writers in juxtaposition might become lenses through which to view each other so that: "each is placed like a surface on which the other may come into focus" (8).

Carson as Reader

Carson is an avid reader. The erudition manifest in her work is testimony to this. It is largely what she reads which provides a margin to the territory where allusion and intertext may be looked for in her writing, and this margin is moving and moveable. The intimacy with ancient sources, and her ability to find connections between disparate ideas from individuals who live in different times and spaces, which is part of the mechanics of the triangulation process in her allusive writing, is largely due to the wealth of knowledge she has acquired by reading. She is "avid" in the true sense: a greedy, eagerly desirous reader, like Phaedrus who Plato describes as being animated by "visible joy" as he reads to Sokrates (*Eros* 122).

Carson writes of the act of reading in several places in her poetry, both the speaker reading and characters such as Geryon, who "burst into tears", while reading Proust. A notable instance of Carson's reading is in "The Glass Essay". This poem is described by Brian Teare as: "among the earliest of Carson's poems to figure reading as a form of recuperative self-fashioning, is fittingly a poem about reading poetry in a time of erotic and existential crisis…" (31). One of the early poems in the series provides a triangulation of mother, daughter and Emily Brontë, the subject of the speaker's reading:

Three

Three silent women at the kitchen table.
My mother's kitchen is dark and small but out the window
there is the moor, paralyzed with ice.
It extends as far as the eye can see

over flat miles to a solid unlit white sky.
Mother and I are chewing lettuce carefully.
The kitchen wall clock emits a ragged low buzz that jumps

once a minute over the twelve.
I have Emily p. 216 propped open on the sugarbowl
but am covertly watching my mother. (*Glass and God* 4)

Ian Rae notes the triangulation evident in these lines, and the tensions between the three women, stating that "Three" makes the triangular circuit between the speaker, her mother, and Brontë explicit in its opening line, which he observes: "momentarily employs the third-person voice and perspective …Carson heightens the fragile tension between these women (the speaker is afraid of turning into her mother or Brontë) by introducing the first direct reference to glass" (Rae 69−70). The "third person perspective" suggests a liminal position with which to view the triangle of "the three women", while the "fragile tension between these women" noted by Rae, seems to accept a further triangulation which allows for the fluidity between the living, the dead and text which is a feature of Carson's work, while also giving a reminder of the eroticism of reading. The bittersweet nature of reading as desire, as well as that of becoming the beloved, is revealed in the third stanza of "She": "Whenever I visit my mother/ I feel I am turning into Emily Brontë" (*Glass and God* 3). She has no more choice about this than a lover has about dissolving into the object of their desire, as Neville becomes Bernard in *The Waves*, or as a lover in Ancient Greece might do during lovemaking.

Rae links the title of "The Glass Essay" to an environmental phenomenon "*Verglas*" which, he says, "…can be translated literally from the French as 'glass-ice' and is akin to the English terms 'silver thaw' and 'black ice'" (164). Rae suggests that the allusions within "The Glass Essay" are a means to blur the identities of the speaker and Brontë: "the author makes the reader feel this transformation taking place by showing how language draws the reader into a vortex of thought and emotion by establishing systems of association that become part of the speaker's subconscious response to phenomena" (174). Rae's identification of Carson's ability to use language as a means to draw readers into this "vortex" by systems of association can be extended to the system of allusive juxtapositions which is capable of similar effect. Rae's linkage of the title to the environment underscores

the interior/ exterior split within the poem, but the title may also reference the "Glass Town" of the "elaborate sagas" (xiii) the Brontës created in their childhood, which takes as its subject matter: "the complex love-hate relationship between Northangerland and Zamorna" (*Alexander* xxxii), and is therefore suggestive of memories of childhood which a visit to a mother may evoke.

A much later instance of reading is found in "Wildly Constant", from *Float*, where Carson states: "I came to Stykkishólmur/ to live in a library" (n.p.). Carson went to Iceland to collaborate with the artist Roni Horn, one of several writers to do so over the life of the "Vatnasafn/ Library of Water" installation. In their article "Tongues of glaciers: sedimenting language in Roni Horn's Vatnasafn/ Library of Water and Anne Carson's 'Wildly Constant'", Elisabeth D. Harvey and Mark A. Cheetham give context to the work, and to the fact that the ice for the installation was collected from the "tongues of glaciers":

> "Tongue" is a technical geological term that refers to the elongation of a glacier, usually into a body of water, creating an interface between ice and water. The term is significant for our purposes because it mirrors the imbrication of geology and speech in the installation: Horn's exploration of the liquid and frozen properties of water is intertwined with the attention to language that she and the authors resident in the Library make central to their enterprise (19).

These "tongues" are taken from a space familiar in Carson's work, the shifting border between states: the ice outside in "The Glass Essay", the volcanic transformations present in *Autobiography of Red* , the movement between liquid and solid and, here, between "geology and speech". Harvey and Cheetham respond to the Horn/Carson collaboration for Library of Water by asking the question: "If glaciers had tongues, what would they say?"(20). They comment that to hear what they would say and, perhaps, to fully apprehend the installation, requires an openness to the shift between language, mind and solidity: "To hear this language would necessitate cultivating a different kind of ear, one attuned not just to metaphor and mind but also to its insistent materiality" (20). The collaboration with Horn requires an openness to the sculptural materiality of Horn's

installation. However, openness to "metaphor and mind" is equally key in interacting with the collaboration.

Carson's description of the installation which in *Wildly Constant* states the bald facts: "The library contains not books / but glaciers. /The glaciers are upright" (*Float* n.p.) and with these lines, inside and outside overlay. The image is captivating but is quickly replaced by a feeling of unease: the glaciers are "melted", and Carson asks: "What would it be like/ to live in a library/ of melted books?", referencing the intertwining of water and language in Horn's installation which Harvey and Cheetham describe. This question also references reading as desire and the Sophoklean metaphor, outlined in *Eros the Bittersweet*, of desire as melting ice in the hands of a child, an example of the bittersweet nature of Eros: "If ice-pleasure consists, to some degree, in novelty, then ice must melt in order to be desirable" (114) or, as she says later in the same book: "…Eros moves. You reach. Eros is gone" (166). Reading as a vehicle towards knowledge is a process of reach and grasp, and is never wholly satisfying, almost always pointing to the necessity of further reading, in order to know more, and to attempt to fill the gap that reading may present.

In "Wildly Constant" Carson is reading Proust, whose writing and re-writing could be viewed as reflecting the fluidity of the surroundings, and the choice of author might also be prompted by the context of "The Library of Water", which is a space created for gender fluidity. *The Albertine Workout*, published one year prior to *Float*, has several sections devoted to considering the idea that: "Albertine is believed by some critics, including André Gide, to be a disguised version of Proust's chauffeur, Alfred Agostinelli" (6). She relates Albertine's death in a car accident to Agostinelli's death in a plane crash, as well as

other indications. She concludes in section 57 with "…one final spark to be struck from rubbing Alfred against Albertine"[4](20).

In "Wildly Constant" Carson tells readers what Proust says about memory and tears, again prompting considerations of the body and of bodily fluids, connecting with the poem "God's List of Liquids" (*Glass and God* 62). She is reading a letter from Proust which she dates and quotes. In *Economy of the Unlost* Carson observes: "Remembering brings the absent into the present, connects what is lost to what is here. Remembering draws attention to lostness and is made possible by emotions of space that open backward into a void. Memory depends on void, as void depends on memory, to think it" (38). This seems to be playing through these few lines from Proust: "*We think we no longer love our dead/ but that is because we do not remember them;/ suddenly/ we catch sight of an old glove/ and burst into tears*" (*Float* n.p.). The last line proves to be the end of her reading: " Before leaving the library / I turn off the lights./ The glaciers go dark". These glaciers are interior, in that the library shelves have "gone dark", but they also reference the outer environment and summon an image of nightfall on the glaciers in the Icelandic landscape. "The Glass Essay" is shot through with references to Emily Brontë, *Wildly Constant* to Proust. In both cases the reader loses focus and in both the interior and exterior mingle together, as the thoughts of the reader might mingle with the page.

In the reach and grasp that coming to know demands, reading can be both a challenge and an excitement for Carson. In "Variations on the Right to Remain Silent", Carson describes that struggle:

> Often when reading Gertrude Stein, I have the sense I'm getting the gist and I ride along a while in good faith, then all at once she switches tracks and there I'm left standing, as it were, at the station. She drifts out of sight: Further and whether. Then she zooms back, intent on an ending and proud of her central contrivance (*Float,*n.p.).

[4] The final spark is as follows: "…Let's consider the stanza of poetry/ that Proust had inscribed on the fuselage of Alfred's plane− the/ same verse that Marcel promises to engrave on the prow of/ Albertine's yacht… (20)

"Merry Christmas From Hegel*"* provides an instance of reading as a source of struggle but also suggests that, after such struggles, reading may be a means to look at the world somewhat differently:

> If I hadn't been trying on the mood of Hegel's particular grammatical indignation that Christmas Day, I would never have gone out to stand in the snow, or stayed to speculate with it, or had the patience to sit down and make a record of speculation for myself as if it were a worthy way to spend an afternoon, a plausible way to change the icy horror of holiday into a sort of homecoming (*Float* n.p).

The performative process of reading and writing described here, again suggests desire for knowledge and desire for the beloved are in dialogue, and that the former may assuage the struggles with the latter, and it may be noted that the struggles encountered in reading Stein, though they may come from "lack", are of a different and more positive order to those encountered in relationships. In general, reading for Carson seems to provide lasting impact which is not always set before readers as naming or citation, but which remains tangible in her work.

"this smell in your head…"

> I glimpsed the stupendous clear-cut shoulders of the Rockies from between paragraphs of Madame Bovary. Cloud shadows roved languidly across her huge rock throat, traced her fir flanks. Since those days I do not look on at hair on female flesh without thinking, Deciduous? ("On Reading" *Glass* 138)

Although a feature of Carson's poetry is the use of quotation, many of the allusions Carson makes in her writing are more of a convergence or echo which, although less easy to identify, are more of a testament to the influence of reading and its ability to colour readers perceptions to lasting effect. In the above quotation from "Short Talks", the young speaker is reading in the car on a family trip, and the views through the car window are superimposed on images in her mind provoked by descriptions from *Madame Bovary*. This interplay of exterior, (through glass), and the (interior) mind of Carson, as speaker, reprises the reading of *Wuthering Heights* and the viewing of the moor through glass in "The Glass

Essay", which comprises the first section of the same book, although here the interior and exterior are not split, but melt into each other, in a similar way to the fusion of the library and the glaciers in *Wildly Constant.*

Unlike the reading in Roni Horn's library, which prompts a movement from inside to outside in the time of the poem, the last line in "On Reading" focuses on the lasting impact of such reading, because the speaker says that any sight of hair on female skin still provokes a bonding of landscape and body in her mind. What passes through Carson's mind often ends on the page, and can permeate her work in a more fluid, less tangible way. The phrase "female flesh" has a lascivious feel, and the homoerotics of reading again come to the fore, raising the question, perhaps deliberately, of whether the flesh belongs to Carson herself, Madame Bovary, another woman, or all three mixed together, as Neville mixes with Bernard in *The Waves*.

In interview with Will Aitken, Carson describes how reading can infuse her mind, and the distinction Carson makes between reading past writers, and the act of writing in the present, is also revelatory about Carson's attitude to reading:

> If I read Virginia Woolf or George Eliot describing emotional facts of people, it seems there's a fragrance of understanding you come away with, this smell in your head of having gone through something that you understood with people in the story. When I think about my own writing, I don't feel that (Art of Poetry No 88).

To try to identify this "fragrance" in Carson's poetry is, perhaps, an impossible task, because it is manifested in and between the words and lines, and has connections which include the use of a certain preposition such as the Greek *pros* (προς)[5], meaning towards or across, which Jennings identifies as triangulating in Carson's writing (927), or the Latin *per* which Carson connects to so many postmodern ideas in her definition of the term in

[5] Jennings asserts that the act of translating causes an awareness of "the power of prepositions", and states that "According to Short Talk on Major and Minor (*Short Talks*, 28), prepositions are major things, presumably because they are the semantic equivalent of Carson's third term, connecting circuits that characterize the relationships between words" (927)

Nox (n.p). While being mindful of this many convergences with writers she favours can be identified by using the references she makes as an indication of the breadth of her reading, This section explores the influence of Virginia Woolf in Carson's poetry, using "The Glass Essay" and *Red Doc>* as examples of the kind of allusion that is more atmosphere than individual instance.

Although Carson, as speaker, is clear about the influence of "reading Emily" in "The Glass Essay", the influence of reading Virginia Woolf runs through in the same lines. That reading Woolf has had a profound effect on Carson is clear through the overt references she makes to her throughout her work: in her positioning of Woolf in relation to Thucydides in explorations on time and war in *Men In The Off Hours*; her placing of Woolf in an overlaying matrix of writers to explore: "coming from the sleep side" in *Decreation* (39); and in juxtaposition with Joan of Arc, Francis Bacon and several others in her exploration on "the untranslatable" in *"*Variations on the Right to Remain Silent" (*Float)*. The "the smell in your head" which Carson comes away with after reading Woolf, not only gives an understanding of "emotional facts of people" ("The Art of Poetry 88"), but also, for example, permeates the line: "Spring opens like a blade there" (*Glass and God* 3). This phrase, both syntactically and in its interplay of nature and the knife, echoes Woolf's "Darkness fell as sharply as a knife…" (*The Voyage Out* 219). Darkness can be seen falling because Helen Ambrose orders that the windows in front of the dining table remain uncurtained, just as Carson leaves her "drapes" open in "The Glass Essay" in order to see "Moon. Air. Sunrise" (*Glass and God* 27). Before this description, while still onboard ship, Rachel Vinrace, who is Helen's niece, is reading *Wuthering Heights* and, in the chapter following Helen's dinner party, the two women peer unseen through a hotel window in a similar way to Cathy and Heathcliff peering through the window at the Lintons at Thrushcock Grange.

The unusual linking of Sappho with Margaret Porete and Simone Weil in *Decreation* (157−162), may have been suggested by *The Voyage Out*. Hirst's reading of Sappho during a church service (336), which follows considerations of how Christians: "tell God", and whether the service had relevance to the experience of those listening or pretending to listen. Hirst is reading the "Hymn to Aphrodite". One of the reasons that Carson gives for this unusual threefold positioning of Weil, Porete and Sappho is that: "some historians say" that Sappho was a Priestess of Aphrodite, and she quotes another "kletic" (or invocational) hymn to Aphrodite in her essay (*Decreation* 178).In the Sunday service episode in *The Voyage Out* (333−338), there is a juxtaposition of Sappho with two other women who profess a Christian God, although in Susan and Rachel's case, they feel that the words of the service have nothing to say to them about their own experiences, contrasting with the ecstatic writings of Weil and Porete. In having Hirst read Sappho (in Ancient Greek and translation), Woolf leaves space for readers to consider whether reading Sappho might have provided the two young women with the words to address their own experiences, which the Christian service lacks (333−338).

Reading Woolf may also have had an influence on Carson's poetics beyond that of a source for examples of triangulation in *Eros the Bittersweet.* The liminal position she professes to adopt in order to see the lines of Sappho's erotic triangle and the volts that run through it, as well as the painterly language used to describe it, shadow that of the painter, Lily Briscoe, in *To the Lighthouse*:

> She took up once more her old painting position…becoming once more under the power of that vision …−her picture. it was a question, she remembered, how to connect this mass on the right hand with that on the left. She might do it by bringing the line of the branch across so: or break the vacancy in the foreground with an object (James perhaps) so (61).

Similarly, the square brackets used to invite readers to "a space of imaginal adventure" (*If Not xi*) in Carson's translations of Sappho may owe something to the impression they made on Carson when reading the same book, which she acknowledges in the essay

"Every Exit is an Entrance": "Achilles may remind us of poor Mr. Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse,* stretching out his arms in square brackets to his dead wife" (*Decreation* 26).

Reading, and where reading falls short as a means of describing feelings, is given prominence in Woolf, and readers of Woolf are as aware of what the main characters read as are those in their circle. In *the Voyage Out*, Rachel's relationship with Terence Hewet is partly forged by books: "When they did not meet, he was apt to send a note with a book or about a book, for he had not been able after all to neglect that approach to intimacy" (331). Waves, water and sails are tropes for both Woolf and Carson and there is a feel of *To the Lighthouse* in *Red Doc>*, particularly in the perspectives of Ida.

Woolf's writing may also stimulate Carson's interest in words as performative. One of the "emotional facts about people" that Carson might have come away with from reading Woolf, is that the words someone directs at another human being have power. Sometimes this power is beneficial, so that Hewet's saying the word "love" is positive for Rachel: "Upon that word he lowered his voice; it was a word that seemed to unveil the skies for Rachel" (*The Voyage Out* 198). However, they can inflict profound hurt, as when Hirst scorns Rachel by likening her to a schoolgirl:

> She could not say that she found the vision of herself walking in a crocodile with her hair down her back peculiarly unjust and horrible, nor could she explain why Hirst's assumption of the superiority of his nature and experience not only galling but terrible−as if a gate had clanged in her face (271).

Hewet, to whom she attempts to relate the incident, guesses what happened and, though "secretly amused", understands that it can have a lasting effect and is: "determined that Rachel should not store the incident away in her mind to take its place in the view she had a life" (271) .

To read the conversation between Mrs Ramsay, her son James, and James' father, whom James sees as a tyrant, is to have moment of revelation and a recognition regarding the extent that, not just insults, but facts have the power to wound, and can engender anger

and violence in the mind of those affected. Mrs Ramsay and James have been making plans to go to the lighthouse and Mr Ramsay says: “It won’t be fine”. This causes a violent reaction inside James: “Had there been an axe handy, a poker, or any weapon that would have gashed a hole in his father’s breast and killed him, there and then James would have seized it”. Woolf goes on to describe Mr Ramsay as: “lean as a knife, narrow as the blade of one, grinning sarcastically, not only with the pleasure of disillusioning his son and casting ridicule on his wife. . . but also some conceit at his accuracy of judgement” (*To the Lighthouse* 11). Mr Ramsay’s statement might be considered mild by any bystander unaware of the power he holds in that household, and the husband’s statement :“Oh no we’re not enemies he said. I love you! I love you both!” (*Beauty* 16) contains far more power to wound than each individual word would suggest.

Reading is a performative process for Carson and can be a stimulus to writing, which in turn will have a performative effect on those who read it. By identifying the texts she reads by the names of the people who wrote them, Carson focuses on those she reads as individuals and by the practice of naming individual writers in her work she sustains a tension between writer and text. Reading can also pass into her so profoundly that it colours not only what she thinks, but what she sees, to lasting effect, so that the hair on female skin prompts a verbal reaction which fuses mountains and Madame Bovary. In considering the influence of Carson’s reading it is necessary to look close at the instances of allusions, but then to pull back and discern a fluidity, or “fragrance” which may have begun to build from something read years previously, washing through Carson's poetry and poetics.

Reading Carson

> Longus expects a lot of his reader.The privileged position of knowledge you enjoy as you read Daphnis and Chloe does not simply rest on believing things will end

> well. Longus assumes, and plays upon, the whole history of erotic *topoi* and grammatical acumen available to a literate audience. He wishes to give you a sustained experience of that register of mental activity, metaphor, which best approximates eros (*Eros* 90).

The above quotation describes Carson's imagining of Longus' expectations of his readers, but there is an easily identifiable convergence with Carson's challenging of her readers. Every reader will come to Carson's poetry in their own way, but they may find, as some critics have done, that a change happens through the reading of Carson. Several of the contributors to *Ecstatic Lyre*, a book of essays on Carson's work, claim reading Carson has had a profound effect on them.

Dan Beachy-Quick states that reading *Eros the Bittersweet* has altered the way he reads, and he feels the "erotics of the page" on returning to it. His description of the effect of reading Carson as a "scent" is reminiscent of Carson's description of reading George Eliot or Woolf as "a smell in your head you come away with" (*Art of Poetry 88*). Beachy-Quick describes the gradual change wrought by reading *Eros the Bittersweet* in his essay "What Kind of Monster am I?", and the necessity of rereading Carson to fully experience her work is mentioned by several critics:

> It is only on returning to her book that I realize its fundamental importance to me, though I had long felt its influence, the way one remembers the necessity of something which cannot be wholly grasped, say the scent in the air only after the flowers have been walked past. But returning I find that this book has been for me the guide into how it is I want to read, a little lover's manual on the erotics of the page (18).

Lily Hoang embraces the erotics of reading Carson in her essay on *Red Doc >*, which also discusses its prequel, *Autobiography of Red* (*AoR*) , describing the effect in her body of reading in a way reminiscent of "Sappho 31": "Yeah, so *AoR* changed my life−as a writer, a reader, it may have catalysed mutations in my very personhood, or, at least, right there in the spine, just like Nabokov said great literature would do" (173). Graham Foust,

writing on the process of rereading *Economy of the Unlost,* succeeds in describing the subtle but profound change reading Carson can bring about:

> The more I reread …the more I find it impossible to write about. Rather, I write around it, through it, under its spell. …Carson's long essay has leant certain contours to my mind rather than having simply filled it with content.…To be sure, Carson's book is illuminative, and perhaps one reason for this is that it's got some holes in it (82).

Here is the crux of the joy and difficulty about reading Carson, readers may be spell-bound by her words but find it difficult to pin down the reasons why. Writing: "under its spell" can result in critics of Carson sounding *Carsonesque*, their writings full of dichotomies and sliding ideas. In his introduction to *Ecstatic Lyre,* its editor, Joshua Marie Wilkinson, selects one phrase or question from each essay: "to give a sense of the variety and intelligence…" (5). For Timothy Liu's very personal response to Carson in "On Anne Carson's Short Talks", where Liu gives his own responses as short talks, Wilkinson selects: "I was ill and could not attend, so I stayed home and YouTubed Anne's reading while Prokofiev went on making a racket" (6). The reference to Prokofiev satisfies the allusive requirement, while "YouTubed", though in common usage, turns noun to verb, a conceit often found in Carson's writing, whereas the informal word "racket" gives it a casual, contemporary feel. Similarly, for Anders Monson, Wilkinson selects Monson's rhetorical questions: "Is a question a question or just an opening for your consideration? Is it us opening and considering?" (7).

Regardless of the stylistic similarities that can occur when critics write about Carson, it is possible that a real and important change can happen on reading her work. Two of the contributors to *Ecstatic Lyre* may best express this change. For Graham Foust, the change occurs in the mind, and he states that reading *Eros the Bittersweet* :"has leant certain contours to my mind rather than having simply filled it with content" (82). Lily Hoang describes reading *Autobiography of Red* as giving rise to: "mutations in my very

personhood" which she sites in the body, rather than the mind: "right there in the spine, just like Nabokov said good literature would do" (173).

This shift in thinking (and feeling) that can occur from reading Carson, may also allow for a movement away from the binary, and Harvey and Cheetham's exploration of "the negotiation of gender" which they identify in the *Vatnasafn/ Library of Water* collaboration provides insight into this. They cite Horn's work *Pronouns detain Me* and her poem "No No Pronouns No", both from 1992, and find similar concerns in Carson's "Pronoun Envy" from *Float,* which takes as its subject the Harvard Divinity School female students' protest of 1971. Harvey and Cheetham give several examples which point to Horn and Carson's concerns regarding gender fluidity, drawing on examples from Horn's work to support their assertion that: "Gender is closely allied with the qualities of water for Horn" (25).

Regarding Carson, they cite *Autobiography of Red, If Not, Winter, The Albertine Workout* and *Red Doc >* to support their contention that: *"*Adopting a "queer" poetics, she explores the boundaries of normative heterosexuality as well as disturbing the marginalized nature of conventionally defined homosexuality" (25). They see "triangulation" as important in this collaboration, pointing out several triangles in "Wildly Constant", among them that: "Three central figures inhabit the poem: Carson, the narratorial voice; Currie, the sleeping husband; and Roni Horn, who appears as a ghostly, quoted presence". They also note that "Threes also echo the structure of Horn's installation: the twenty-four columns of glacial water; the floor strewn with "weather words"; and the reading room and archive" (23). This collaboration is a space for fluidity, a place where: "Boundaries of body, categories of thought are confounded" (*Eros* 10).

In their identification of Carson's: "disturbing the marginalized nature of conventionally defined homosexuality" in her work, Harvey and Cheetham flag an

important shift in thinking that may happen through reading the body of Carson's work, which arises from her complete disruption of the normative in whatever context she works on; where categories, genres, the binary and "normative heterosexuality" (Harvey and Cheetham 25) are confounded, and may drop almost entirely from her readers' field of vision. Triangulation-as-process facilitates this change by populating the space of Carson's allusive juxtapositions with homoerotic writers and thinkers.

Reading Carson can be performative because it may change readers perceptions of the world, and cause changes within the body, as Hoang relates. It can also lead to creativity. Throughout Carson's work, she encourages this creativity within readers, as can be observed in her translations of Sappho in *If Not, Winter* . In her introduction "On Marks and Lacks", Carson explains the extensive use of brackets as an "aesthetic gesture toward the papyrological event" (xi). She continues: "I emphasize the distinction between brackets and no brackets because it will affect your reading experience, if you allow it. Brackets are exciting….brackets imply a free space of imaginal adventure" (xi). Carson's translation of "Sappho 12" in the same book may serve to indicate how brackets may give a suggestion of the papyrus as object, and the obliterated sections it contains, as well as prompting curiosity and creativity in readers. The use of brackets around the words in "Sappho 12" demonstrates how effective this can be:

]
]
]
]thought
]barefoot
]
]
]
] (*If Not* 23)

The word “barefoot” allows the brackets to act like footprints, leading to the two bare words, and away again, and readers thoughts may do the same. This imbues the miniscule text that survives with maximum charm. Fragments are a physical manifestation of how desire for text can be heightened by absence, in a similar way that desire for the *paidika,* according to Sokrates in the *Phaedrus* (*Eros* 122−123), is heightened by absence. Carson does not only work with fragments of Sappho like that from “Sappho 12” above, she also discusses, for example, Alkman, Simonides and Celan, whose work has often only survived as fragments.

It is her work on the latter which informs Kelsey’s essay “To Gesture at Absence: A Reading-With” in the context of a philosophical “exploration of nothingness” (88) which has continued from ancient times. She observes that this:“places Carson's project on this edge between presence and absence. To the fragments themselves Carson applies the tools of the scholar, working into the textual-material landscape in order to work outwards to absence” (88). As emphasised throughout, this thesis acknowledges this absence as an abiding concern of Carson’s, so that, in “Variations on the Right to Remain Silent” she explains that, although as a classicist she is trained to be exact and to: “believe that rigorous knowledge of the world without any residue is possible for us”, she is excited by the thought of what is beyond this academic rigor: “This residue, which does not exist− just to think of it refreshes me” (*Float* n.p.).

For Carson reading is a training of: “energy and thought upon the written word” (*Eros* 44). It is also a creative act. By inviting readers to engage their imaginations, Carson hints at how that word, and the space around it, can fly beyond the page, and suggests a collaboration between the writers from ancient times, as well as those more recent. Carson has often collaborated in her work, these days most often with her partner, Robert Currie.

She has collaborated with musicians, artists, choreographers (notably for a dance inspired by *Nox*), professionals and students. She has collaborated loosely and intensely. In interview with Peter Streckfus, she describes the loose collaboration process for *The Mirror of Simple Souls,* an opera-installation on the work of Marguerite Porete:

> We looked at it (the libretto) together, and they decided to do it as a class project. I gave the students the libretto, which has seven songs in it, and I assigned two people to each song. Each song became a room…..They had to learn how to build a room for example. They just did it. I didn't consult with them from September until December" (*Ecstatic* 216).

In the same interview she describes the preparations for another opera in the series *Fight Cherries*, explaining that, due to financial constraints: "You need the collaborative thought processes to be simultaneous and to have momentum from the moment it starts to the time the curtain goes up" (216).

Bianca Stone's essay regarding the collaborative process she engaged in with Carson and Robert Currie for *Antigonick,* gives insight into Carson's concerns in the artistic process:

> The *objet de arte* that is *Antigonick* (and *Nox* for that matter) reveals an intricate process of collaboration. Anne Carson and her partner , Robert Currie, have been dedicated to cultivating the uses of collaboration and hybrid genre for years. It is the literal collaboration of two minds , but also the collaboration with another work of art, (in the case of Antigonick, Sophokles, as well as Beckett, Hegel, etc whose substance appear throughout; and me, as the artist-at-large) Carson is less about borrowing or interpreting from her sources than she is about breaking and rebuilding the possibilities of her art. In this way, her work is never set, but always moving. It is a collapsing of categories: poetry and art (152).

The idea of Carson's work as "never set, but always moving" echoes Carson's explanation of her method, that juxtaposing Celan and Simonides causes a "Moving and not settling" which is desirable for Carson, and Stone probably takes her cue from Carson's poetics as she lists Sophokles, Beckett and Hegel, and suggests that their "substance" is present in the book. She explains that the visual aspects of the book do not illustrate the text: "just as her *"translation"* does not function as a translation to merely read Sophokles' *Antigone*

again"(153). She asserts that: "everything vibrates" around Carson's text which she makes: "so relevant today." However, Currie, Carson and Stone are not the only collaborators in the artistic process which is *Antigonick,* as Stone explains: *"*the collaborative efforts of this book− presented through the use of image, text, structure, and blank space− invite the reader to engage in process and product simultaneously"(153). Following on from the quotation which begins this section, Stone adds the reader as creator:

> The use of images on vellum to overlay the text provided an ingenious method of having it both ways. The drawings and the text could be viewed separately *or* together. The end result is the reader creates a whole new creation each time she opens the book (153).

For Stone, in conjunction, perhaps, with Carson, the reader creates something new in every interaction with *Antigonick,* and the materiality of other books by Carson invite creative interaction, so that both *Nox* and *Float* encourage reader interaction with the book as art-object. Readers are creators in a physical sense, and may also reference aspects of Carson's poetics within that interaction. To read *Nox* it must be first removed from its box, which might suggest a container for *memento mori*, in keeping with the book's subject matter. Its accordion book structure may reference the historicity in Carson's work, and the concertina design encourages readers to play with the book as object, stretching the book so that all the pages appear side by side, turning the extended book over to the blank side to reveal that, like fragments: "half the poem is empty space" ("Variations on the Right to Remain Silent", *Float* n.p.) , and also suggestive of the silence of grief, or the unsayable. The materiality of *Float* reflects Carson's observation on the cover card that "reading can be freefall" (n.p), and readers may shuffle and stack the variously coloured pamphlets in any order, or may lay them alongside each other in a manner suggestive of a map.

Conclusion: "Let no one enter here who is ignorant of geometry"

The research question is partly concerned with the effect that the dynamics of allusion and intertext in Carson's poetry may have on readers. The erotics of reading may be felt by Carson and her readers alike. In Carson's work, part of the process by which "the erotics of the page" are achieved involves Carson herself, her readers and the "ancient dead and modern dead, and living contemporaries" whom she "ushers in" (Upton *105*) in an overarching triangulation. Carson often invites readers to interact with text, as when she suggests that brackets are a space for "imaginal adventure" (*If Not* xi), and the materiality of some of her books invite reader interaction with the book as object. This space for imaginal adventure may also be one where intertext may move, and further intertextual connections may happen in readers' minds.

The quotation which begins this section, as well as being the inscription above Plato's Academy, is an epigraph for the chapter "Ruse" in *Eros the Bittersweet*, where Carson quotes "Sappho 31" in Greek and English, and where triangulation is introduced in relation to the poem. Carson's work frequently shows interest in etymology, and the etymology of "geometry" concerns measurement of the world. The epigraph of "Ruse" is a reminder of philosophical discourse in a chapter which explores lyric poetry. The reference to geometry may indicate the triangle which Carson identifies in her close reading of "Sappho 31" in the chapter, but might also suggest a wider context, a means to gain some bearing on the world, or a world. Kelsey notes how Carson's writing into a "community of voices" assists her in holding open a "textual space" for readers. Carson might express this space as "a world", but in Carson's allusive writing , this world is often the product of reading:

> We speculated about writers' purposes (to seduce readers?) and we are finally led to suspect that what the reader wants from reading and what the lover wants from

> love are experiences of a very similar design. It is a necessarily triangular design, and it embodies a reach for the unknown (*Eros* 108).

The next chapter considers the kind of vision Carson suggests is necessary to view the dynamics of triangulation, gives examples of triangulation in Carson's allusive writing, and explores triangulation-as-process.

Chapter Four Triangulation : "How these lines do paint themselves."

> Towns are the illusion that things hang together somehow, my pear, your winter. I am a scholar of towns, let God commend that. To explain what I do is simple enough. A scholar is someone who takes a position. From which position, certain lines become visible. You will at first think I am painting the lines myself; it's not so. I merely know where to stand to see the lines that are there. And the mysterious thing, it seems a very mysterious thing, is how these lines do paint themselves (*Plainwater* 93).

Triangulation is an important aspect of allusion and intertext in Carson's writing, and various types of triangulation interlink within and between Carson's texts, normally made up of "individuals" who might be writers or the characters they create. Every individual triangulation has a purpose, beyond showing the interconnectedness of a textual landscape. In almost every case, these triangulations are an attempt to give rise to a new idea, and make visible: "the difference between what is and what could be…" (*Eros* 17). I have selected texts which span much of her writing career, from both her poetry and the theoretical writings with which it is in dialogue, ranging from "The Glass Essay", published in 1994, to the prose poem "On Davey" in 2019. Some of these examples illustrate the individual triangulations to be found in Carson's work, and some illustrate the process of triangulation evident within and between texts.

The dual perspective prevalent in Carson's writing is particularly evident in the juxtapositions she makes. This placing alongside may involve the juxtaposition of terms such as "my pear, your winter" in the above quotation from "The Life of Towns", the consideration of desire for the beloved and desire for knowledge in *Eros the Bittersweet*, and the positioning alongside of "lyrical investigations" (Konchan 37) and poetry, which is a feature of much of Carson's work. This dual perspective springs from considerations on metaphor, and has been widened to allow the holding and disseminating of ideas from antiquity and postmodern ideas simultaneously. Allusion in Carson's poetry is key in her erotic poetics, not only in providing instances of desire for "coming to know", but also in

allowing Carson's readers to derive a sense of history from her work through the dynamics regarding time which such allusions create. Triangulation in Carson's writing is a mechanism which both widens and intensifies the field of vision through the interconnecting of each utterance, whether it be an utterance from writers or the characters they create, and each instance of triangulation as a moment of intensification and "electrification" (*Ero*s 139). This process is as capable of providing a shift away from the binary, and is one which places the homoerotic triangulations of "Sappho 31" and the *Phaedrus* at centre.

In this chapter, I consider the convergences and differences between the open-ended, ever building cartographic activity of triangulation-as-process, and Deleuze and Guattari's theory of the rhizome and the map. In order to explore triangulation-as-process in the context of allusion and intertext, it is necessary to outline the process in cartography, and Rachel Hewett describes this in non-specialist terms in her book *Map of a Nation,* in the context of an early triangulation by Cassini and Picard. She describes the physical measuring of a baseline between two points in the French landscape, which, in turn, connect through sight lines to a trigpoint or target point. In terms of "Sappho 31", the baseline might be the line of connection between the speaker and the beloved, and: "that man / whoever he is" (*If Not* 63) provides a third "target point", which, Carson suggests, allows the dynamics of triangulation to happen:

> An imaginary triangle had thus been created, whose sides extended between the two ends of the baseline to the trig point. Cassini knew the length of the base from actual measurement, and with his theodolite he had discovered the two angles between the baseline and the two sightlines that stretched from its ends to the trig point…Cassini then repeated this process, using each side of the first triangle as the base for a new triangle that extended to a new trig point. Cassini replicated these measurements over and over again, building triangles on triangles, until a complex network of sight lines and measurements extended over the landscape (68).

In *Eros the Bittersweet*, the triangulation Carson identifies in "Sappho 31" overlays with that of the *Phaedrus*, and the current running through these two triangulations travels along the network of triangulations explored in this chapter. Every reader of Carson may find different interconnections, and a different "network of sightlines". I have provided a diagram of one possible beginning in Appendix E.

Lines of Connection

This chapter begins with a quotation from "The Life of Towns", a group of thirty poems, some as short as three lines, as well as the short prose piece from which the above quotation is taken, which appeared in *Grand Street Magazine* in 1989, and the majority of which were later published in *Plainwater* in 1995. In its earliest published form, it comes shortly after *Eros the Bittersweet*, and the prose introduction above adds to the idea of "triangulation" outlined in that book. *Eros the Bittersweet* views desire for love and desire for knowledge as being uniquely similar, and uniquely erotically charged.

The quotation which begins this chapter describes a perspective where Carson is looking from a distance. However, the poems which follow sometimes give the impression of viewing almost microscopically to view a drop of paint on Rembrandt's brush, for example, ("Town of Bathsheba's Crossing" 98), or forensically, so that in "Memory Town" there is "A buried site of radioactive material./ You think 8 miles down is enough?" (101). Carson identifies herself as a scholar in the introduction, and, as such, takes a position which is not just a position in an argument but is a place from which she is able to see "lines" which are not usually visible. She does not create these lines, they "paint themselves". These "lines" recall the triangulation explored in *Eros the Bittersweet*, which, here, allows for connection between seemingly disparate things. Carson gives examples of these disparate things as "my pear, your winter" and expresses a desire to see how they "hang together". How they "hang together" is perhaps a third component, and an

analogous mind might allow coldness or biting or "hanging" from boughs to come between them, a scholar might find them contained in the same poem, or in an artwork. Whatever the similarity or difference, once they are juxtaposed, connections happen.

In *Eros the Bittersweet* the focus was the erotic dynamics of the triangle itself. In this introduction to "The Life of Towns" Carson steps back in order to identify how she positions herself to see the triangulations she describes. She explains that she wants to make a real attempt to have her readers see the connections between seemingly disparate things: "I am not being trivial. Your separateness could kill you unless I take it from you as a sickness" (*Plainwater* 94). This sets readers up to expect connections between poems, but in "The Life of Towns" these are loose and not always easy to see. Some poems connect through the naming of writers and thinkers: "Freud Town", "Sylvia Town", "Höderlin Town", "Pushkin Town", "Lear Town" and "Emily Town", and Rembrandt and others are named within poems. "Emily Town" appears to link to Glass Town, part of the landscape of the young Brontës' imaginary land of Gondal (Alexander xiii), and to "The Glass Essay". These are writers who Carson frequently refers to in her work, and each name links to other texts, so that the title "Freud Town" links to "Freud (1st Draft)" and "Freud (2nd Draft")" in *Men in the Off Hours.* Similarly, Hölderlin's phrase "*leiblicher* blue" describes one of the colours of a dawn meeting between the fifteen year old speaker and her lover in "Tango V" of *The Beauty of the Husband* (23). Such allusive interconnections provide a framework on which the series of poems rests.

Others are more indirectly referenced, for example, the titles of some of the poems, "Death Town", "Love Town", and "Memory Town" are reminiscent of the titles of chapters in Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities*, *cittá* being translatable as "town" as well as "city". Carson uses an example from Calvino's work, *The Nonexistant Knight*, to illustrate eros as lack in *Eros the Bittersweet* (65), and his ideas are discussed in the essay "Writing

on the World: Simonides, Exactitude and Paul Celan", where, as well as juxtaposing Celan and Simonides, Carson draws similarities between Calvino and Simonides through the context of exactitude: "I think Simonides and Italo Calvino might have agreed that determining the true relationship between speech and silence, which is the essence of exactitude, is a matter so delicate it verges on paradox" (*Arion* 15). Carson continues with other paradoxical statements, quoting Heidegger: "Mortals speak insofar as they listen", before giving the poet's version: "You have to 'listen your way with your mouth' says Paul Celan" (15).

"The Life of Towns" gives attention to listening, and there is a thread regarding sound through most of the series. "Apostle Town" contains the line: "We went./ Shouting sideways at one another. /Along the road" (*Plainwater* 95), and "Lear Town has: "Clamor the bells falling bells./ Precede silence of bells" (96). Lines in other poems refer to sound or the lack of it: "'In the middle of nowhere.' / Where. Would that be? Nice and quiet" ("A Town I have Heard Of" (105), and "The moon screamed past us" ("Town of the Death of Sin" 105). Perhaps the most remarkable reference to listening is in "Town of the Sound of a Twig Breaking", which demands, in one line, a shift in perspective from the hunter to the prey, and manages to convey something paradoxical about listening at the same time:

> A hunter is someone who listens.
> So hard to his prey it pulls the weapon.
> Out of his hand and impales.
> Itself (104).

This dual perspective imbues the image with maximum impact, as the mind struggles to create the action described, but also serves as a reminder that listening, as well as the activity of reading explored in the previous chapter, are active and performative for Carson.

In his paper on "The Erotic Poetics of Anne Carson" published in 2001, Chris Jennings links the prose piece at the start of "The Life of Towns" with Carson's exploration of the erotic triangle in "Sappho 31":

> Carson gives her writing a triangular structure by binding the terms juxtaposed not only to each other but to a liminal position between them. This perspective conceives connection from contiguity and serves as 'the third component' that both 'connects and separates' the terms in order to reveal 'the lines that are there' (923).

Jennings refers to Carson's assertion that: "A scholar is someone who takes a position" at the beginning of "The Life of Towns", and asserts that it is a "liminal" one. The liminal positioning which Jennings identifies, together with the more distant vantage point Carson may adopt, is necessary to view triangulation and triangulation-as-process respectively. In the paper, Jennings' finds triangular connections in a variety of contexts in Carson's writing, usually situated around a mediation between Ancient Greek culture, from which Carson derives many allusions, and the contemporary. The poems in "The Life of Towns" contain several quotations, some unascribed: one taken from Christopher Marlow's *Barabas, the Jew of Malta*: "Riches in a little room / Is a phrase that haunts" ("Emily Town" 98). Although the introduction to the series of poems demonstrates Carson's concerns with lines of connection, the poems themselves also show an interest in folding naming and quotation into her poetry, and prompts the imagination to draw lines of connection between those names and utterances.

Distance

Carson's poetics demand a range of distances, and scholarship on Carson has identified various types of distance in her work. While emotional distance and alienation runs through Carson's poetics, the erotics of coming to know often involve a vantage point. A liminal position suggests both proximity and distance, a position which is not central to the action from where the scenario may be viewed more fully, but Carson's poetics often

demand a vantage point that is higher and more distant, so that, for example, she is peering down through the cracks to another world (*Margins of Mind* 2.20−2.39), or when the speaker in "On Davey" is looking between the boards of a pier at a driving sea of history (*LRB 41*). Triangulation-as-process provides a more remote vantage point, reading distance to provide a sense of a wide cultural space.

In *Autobiography of Red,* Carson writes: **"**How does distance look? Is a simple direct question/ it extends from a spaceless / within to the edge/ of what can be loved" (43), and the space covered by this "distance" sets up a tension between interior: "a spaceless within" and exterior: " the edge of what can be loved". This description suggests an emotional distance which many of Carson's narratives transmit. However, the verb "look" also provides the question with a dual perspective because it is possible to consider what distance looks like, as a volcano might look like a geometrical shape from a distance, or the distant image at the end of *Red Doc>* , which echoes the conclusion of Woolf's *To The Lighthouse*: " . . . Well not every day/ can be a masterpiece./ This one sails out and out/ and out" (163−164). A key dynamic in Carson's poetics is a liminal positioning to look at: "how the lines do paint themselves", as well as positioning at a more distant vantage point which triangulation-as-process allows, and so Carson's question may prompt considerations of what looking from this liminal position, or looking from a great distance, is like. In this short "simple direct question" Carson references her theoretical writings regarding the stereoscopic vision required to allow the invisible to become visible, but also suggests emotional distance which apprehends the "edge of what can be loved".

Distance as an abiding consideration in Carson's writing has been explored by Lee Upton in her book, *Defensive Measures,* where she connects defence and: "how poems create the illusion of a certain 'distance' between poem and reader, and between poem and ostensible subject" (17). It has also been considered by Sarah Jackson in the book *Tactile*

Poetics which takes examples from *The Beauty of the Husband*. Jackson, in a chapter entitled "Dis-Tanz: 29 Tangos", connects Carson and Derrida's assertion that a poem demands distance. She gives interesting descriptions of the distances evident in the relationship of the husband and wife in *Beauty of the Husband*, and paraphrases Carson's discussion of "Sappho's poetics" (87) in *Eros the Bittersweet* to conclude: "Thus in *Eros*, first published in 1986, fourteen years prior to *The Beauty of the Husband*, Carson has already formulated the non-contact at the heart of desire – the not-touching at the heart of the poem" (87). For Jackson, Carson's allusions are a means to keep the poem "slippery" by: "making rapid leaps and awkward arabesques from Homer to Holmes, from the history of grapes to the Battle of Borodino, from beauty to truth to lies. Refusing to simply write *about* dancing, the language and form of Carson's poem *perform* dance, resisting arrest" (91). While Jackson responds to the feeling of alienation in Carson's explorations of desire for the beloved, she fails to note Carson's celebration of distance in her poetics, which call for a liminal positioning, and a more distant vantage point, in the process of coming to know. Both positionings are also required in order to experience the dynamics of triangulation, and Carson's aim is to collapse the distances between past and contemporary culture.

Upton identifies the structures of distance in Carson's poetics, but is careful to refer to the distant between the ancient and contemporary as "perceived":

> In Carson we have a kind of extended or refracted quotation and reflection on texts; her poetics is structured by distances− the perceived distance between our contemporary situation and the events narrated in the ancient text, and/or the canonical text, and by a secondary structuring in abasement, the story of love for an unworthy object (24).

As in Jackson's account, Upton gives an interesting reading of this "secondary structuring of abasement", but she also identifies the integral role of erudition in Carson's work: "Carson's conjectural erudition is not, however an incidental aspect of her poetic but

inherent; it is a source of subject matter and process" (105). She sees the "disciplined acts" she lists as "a form of motivation; they evince mental and emotional drives as exhilarating habits of mind" (106). These "emotional drives" and "exhilarating habits of mind" are perhaps symptomatic of the erotic desire to know, but, while referencing *Eros the Bittersweet* in explorations of distance and lack in the book, she fails to connect it to this erotic desire for knowledge on which at least half of *Eros the Bittersweet* hinges.

Upton's chapter, "Scholarship and Debasement, overlaying the defences in Anne Carson", puts forward an argument regarding the poetry's ability to allow: "a single kernel of an obsessive story of betrayal" to re-emerge in Carson's writing (104). Her book was published in 2005 and refers mainly to *The Beauty of the Husband* and *The Glass Essay*, and also discusses *Autobiography of Red.* While asserting that Carson's erudition is integral to her poetry, she also frames the use of allusion and the scholarly tone as something unexpected:

> At points, Carson's poetry gives the illusion of explaining itself, but part of the difficulty is that it is relentlessly broad in its allusiveness, sometimes scholarly in tone, and at the same time beset by passions that we are unaccustomed to seeing in poems that wear their cerebral pedigree so overtly (106).

Distance may suggest alienation and "abasement" and may, to some extent : "keep the poem slippery", but it is also a key dynamic in Carson's allusive poetics, in the outside position required to view individual triangulations, and the distant viewpoint from which to consider triangulation-as-process. By considering the erotics of desire for the beloved and desire for knowledge as "two halves of a knucklebone" (*Eros* 123), as Carson asserts, distance and the collapse of distance becomes part of the dynamic which keeps these twin desires interplaying and overlaying.

Vision

> Truth will be attained by the writer only when he takes two different objects, states the connection between them− a connection which in the world of science is

> provided by the law of causality− and encloses them in the necessary links of a well-wrought style; truth – and life too− can be attained by us only when, by comparing a quality of common sense to two sensations , we succeed in extracting their common essence and in reuniting them to each other, liberated from the contingencies of time, within a metaphor (*Proust* 246).

The ability to readily grasp metaphor is an important aspect of Carson's allusive poetics. It is probable that the place Carson knows, where: "you will stand and see pear and winter side by side as walls stand by silence" (*Plainwater* 94) is poetry, or any type of imaginative writing. The dual perspective tangible in Carson's writing may have its origins, not only in the ideas of Jakobsen and Lacan, which will be discussed later in this section, but also in the "metaphors and subterfuges" which Carson ascribes to "poets and novelists" in *Eros the Bittersweet*, and which may be identified in the above words of Proust, a major influence on Carson. These words may serve as a reminder that juxtaposition, in the Proust quotation the juxtaposing of "two different objects", and the relation between the two, can be crucial to both writers: for Proust in attaining "truth−and life too", and for Carson, in the context of seeing lines of connection between seemingly disparate terms and ideas, because: "Your separateness could kill you unless I take it from you as a sickness" (*Plainwater* 94).

Carson uses the idea of stereoscopic vision, originally a term in classical scholarship for the type of perception necessary to apprehend metaphor (Stanford 120), to illustrate the kind of perception required to apprehend the triangulation in "Sappho 31", which allows the invisible to become visible (*Eros* 17). "Sappho 31" provides an image and insight into erotic desire, and its effects externally and internally. This poem has kept its power for two thousand years because it is a searing description of an instance, but also because it throws revelation and recognition onto the reader which takes it well beyond that instance, in what Carson calls: "an ideal overlaid on the screen of the actual, in a kind of stereoscopy" (*Eros* 17).

To apprehend the kind of dual perspective Carson describes here it is useful to go back to the source of the phrase "stereoscopic vision" , William Bedell Stanford, and his book *Greek Metaphor: Studies in Theory and Practice*, published in 1936. In *Eros the Bittersweet,* Carson acknowledges Stanford as the originator of the idea in this literary context (*Eros* 73). Stanford explores several kinds of metaphor, one being "sense blending" or synaesthesia, such as "soft whisper" or "sharp scream" (50), and gives the example of a "flailing argument" as an argument that does not stand up, as a person might flail their arms when falling (100). He uses the term stereoscopic vision to describe the kind of perception needed to apprehend metaphor and, in the chapter "Homer's Use of Metaphor", he states the following: "…the essence of effective metaphor is a clear and definite understanding of the two apprehensions of this unity from differents, this synthesis of hitherto dissociates, without which the metaphor lacks full imaginative power and effect" (120). This "unity of differents" is an important motivation for Carson's use of juxtaposition.

Stanford uses various examples of metaphors in his argument that it is necessary to have an understanding of the component parts of a metaphor in order to arrive at this "clear and definite understanding", but also argues that the ability to synthesize these "differents", requires both the synthesis and the antithesis of the two concepts to which it refers. Stanford's explanation of how metaphor works, requiring both synthesis and antithesis, is useful in explorations of the application of "stereoscopic vision" in Carson's poetics, so is reproduced here in more detail. He is discussing the phrase: "the ship ploughs the sea", and considers it from the viewpoints of (in original order) a newspaper reader, a sailor, a farmer and a "cultivated reader of literary works":

> To the first the phrase is a non-representational *cliché* for a ship in action; it provokes no single image of any definition, much less the dual images of a metaphor; to him it is a non-figurative holophrase expressing an unimaginative fact −a ship moves. Suppose that the second, the sailor, has never seen or heard of how

> a plough works; to him the phrase 'the ship ploughs the sea' is only an odd way of describing an action only too familiar to him.…If the farmer, knowing much of ploughs, but nothing… of ships and seas the phrase is enigmatical or senseless…So it is only to the curious and well-informed reader that the phrase contains both an antithesis, and at the same time a synthesis, of two equally definite concepts−and so to him alone is it a true metaphor (101-102).

This idea may be applied in simple terms to the juxtapositions Carson makes, so that a reader may be familiar with Thucydides and with Virginia Woolf, but may only come to synthesize the two through the mediation of Carson, on reading the prose piece, "Ordinary Time: Virginia Woolf and Thucydides on War" (*Men* 3−8), and the poem "Thucydides in Conversation with Virginia Woolf on the Set of the Peloponnesian War" (*Men* 115).

Carson summarizes Aristotle's ideas on metaphor in "Essay on What I Think about Most", which begins with the word "Error". She links this to Aristotle's observations in the *Rhetoric* where he classifies words into: "Strange, ordinary and metaphorical", and to his favouring of metaphor because: "It is from metaphor we get something new and fresh" (50). She gives a contemporary interpretation of Aristotle's words, suggesting that: "Metaphors teach the mind/ to enjoy error/ and to learn/ from the juxtaposition of what is and what is not the case" (51).

This last phrase regarding juxtaposition has strong echoes of the result of seeing the triangulation in "Sappho 31" where: "the difference between what is and what could be" becomes visible (*Eros* 17). In *Eros the Bittersweet* she considers Aristotle's ideas on metaphor and *epiphora* which results in: "bringing two heterogenous things close to reveal their kinship" (72), and her own account of the ensuing synthesis might serve as a description of what may happen in the mind of readers when faced with the juxtapositions in Carson's allusive writing: "A virtuoso act of the imagination brings these two things together, sees their incongruence, then also sees a new congruence, meanwhile continuing to recognize the previous incongruence through the new congruence" (72). While Carson

describes the mind accepting a congruence, she is also clear that an awareness of difference is retained.

This desire to keep the edges visible may be detected in any dual perspective she presents to readers, and this is perhaps why the mechanism of the stereoscope is particularly useful to Carson in that, when looking through the lens, it provides the complete convergence of two photographs, or two moments in time to allow an extra dimension or "ideal", while movement away from the lens allows for a view of "the actual"; two touching photographs and the place where the edges of those instances meet. The mind perceives three things: the two connecting photographs and the overlaid image seen through the stereoscope. In this act of overlaying these two photographs, these two "differents", a new space opens. (Appendix D shows a photograph of a stereoscope.)

Carson connects Stanford's ideas regarding stereoscopic vision and later theories such as those of Roman Jakobsen, who paired poetics and linguistics, and metaphor and metonymy. Carson demonstrates a continued interest in Jakobsen, but is selective in the aspects of his theories that she absorbs into her poetics. There are references to Jakobsen in *The Albertine Workout*, published almost thirty years later than *Eros the Bittersweet*, "appendix 33 (a) on the difference between metaphor and metonymy" is a short section, and has an extract from Jakobsen's account of a clinical investigation[6] : "Since this question has arisen, here's the difference: a group of children asked to respond to the word "hut," some said a small cabin, some said it burned down" (33). More questions are raised regarding the experience of the children for whom "hut" is contiguous to "It burned down", than metaphor and metonymy. This leads to " appendix 33 (b) on the difference between metaphor and metonymy", and the observation that while it does not illustrate

[6] "To the stimulus *hut* one response was *burnt out*; another, *is a poor little house* …The same stimulus produced the following substitutive reactions: the tautology *hut* , the synonyms *cabin* and *hovel;* the antonym *palace*; and the metaphors *den* and *burrow"* (*Language* 110).

anything regarding metonymy and metaphor, the account does: “speak to the fragility of the adventure of thinking” (34) and the lasting impact of the: “haunting and exemplary *small cabin* that may or may not have *burned down*”. Carson concludes that it is a very good example: “we just don’t know of what” (34). The “appendices” suggest that, regardless of Jakobsen’s overlaying of linguistics and poetics, the perspective of the poet and the scholar of linguistics, who, here, appears more interested in results than lived experience, may indeed differ, indicating Carson’s tendency to adopt only certain aspects of any given theory. Jakobsen’s term “split referent” is summarized by Carson as: “an ability to hold in equipoise two perspectives at once” (*Eros* 73), and is introduced along with Stanford’s term “stereoscopic vision” in her discussion of the triangulation she identifies in “Sappho 31”.

In *Ecstatic Lyre*, two critics have noted the idea of “split referent” and “stereoscopic vision” in *Eros the Bittersweet*, but tend to frame this as far more bitter than sweet, relating it to ideas regarding “erotic crisis” and “blocked vision” which, perhaps, reflect the narrative of emotional disjunct that is often found in Carson’s poetry, while failing to note Carson’s insistence in the book on Sappho’s poem being transformative, and revelatory, as well as expressing eros as lack. Martin Corless-Smith extracts the following quotation: “Sweetbitter eros is what hits the raw film of the lover’s mind. Paradox is what takes shape on the sensitized plate of the poem, a negative image from which positive pictures can be created” (*Eros* 9). He takes this metaphor which likens “Sappho 31” with the creation of a photograph, or filmic instance, and frames it as rupture: “Here we have the rip of consciousness, if you like, in the act of peeling the Polaroid negative off its positive, so that we have both sides of the desired union reft in the forging of the image of desire” (24).

Much of Corless-Smith's chapter is an exploration of Bataille's theories regarding the "erotic crisis" (22), which this reading of Carson's film metaphor supports because a rip is necessary to access a Polaroid image. Immediately before the quotation from *Eros the Bittersweet* above, which prompted the Polaroid analogy, he comments that when he started reading the book he immediately noticed: "an increasingly dwelt upon metaphorical slip" (24), and he expands on this as follows: "A movement from a split to a triangulation. In describing the action of metaphor, that which like bittersweet itself: 'brings two heterogeneous things close to reveal their closeness' (73), Carson enumerates the effects as 'triangulates, haunts, splits, wrenches and delights'. Notice two making three" (Corless-Smith 22).

While Corless-Smith continues by quoting Carson's reference to stereoscopy: "the ideal is projected on the screen of the actual, in a kind of stereoscopy" (*Eros* 17), he does not appear to consider the significance of the idea as a means to understand, rather than to "notice", how two things may triangulate, so two becomes three. He comments only on the use of the term as: "Carson continuing the film metaphor" (22). The language Corless-Smith uses to describe triangulation both in the context of "Erotic crisis" and in that of "lover and beloved", speaks little of Carson's "delights", describing it as "the rip of consciousness" or "rupture" , and he asserts: "It is the worrying of two into three that plays throughout Carson's book" (24−25).

Carson notes the pain evident in the expression "bittersweet" and comments that: "Eros seemed to Sappho at once an experience of pleasure and pain" (7). This pain is usually bound up with the lack felt at the absence of a lover, but can also be present in the reach and grasp of scholarly enquiry, and she also describes the pain that a moment of stereoscopy might bring:

> Within a pun you see the possibility of grasping a better truth, a truer meaning, than is available from the separate senses of either word. But the glimpse of that enhanced meaning, which flashes past in a pun, is a painful thing. For it is inseparable from your conviction of its impossibility. Words do have edges. So do you (35).

This idea of a pun being painful, might derive from the common use of "painful" for the effect that a pun might provoke, but here also suggests the pain that the "reach and grasp" of scholarly enquiry might entail.

Jessica Fisher, in her essay "Anne Carson's Stereoscopic Poetics" identifies stereoscopy as an example of "blocked" vision: "Indeed, Carson has been continually obsessed with forms of blocked visual perception, primarily with stereoscopy, which serves as a figure for desire's triangulated structure" (11), and that Carson's "understanding of desire is fundamentally Lacanian" (11). In the chapter "Gone" in *Eros the Bittersweet,* Carson explores the idea of eros as lack and uses a quote from Lacan's *Ecrits* (1966, 17−43*)* in support of her argument: "Desire…evokes lack of being under the three figures of the nothing that constitutes the demand for love, of the hate that even denies the other's being and of the unspeakable element in that which is ignored in its request" (*Eros* 9). At the end of the chapter Carson summarizes this and other love triangles as: "Whoever desires what is not gone? No one" (11).

There is a feeling of alienation and loss running through Carson's poetry which is in keeping with Lacanian ideas on the split subject, as Fisher suggests, and there are narratives which may explore: "both sides of the desired union reft in the forging of the image of desire" (24), as Corless-Smith observes. However, it is necessary to consider stereoscopy in the context of two kinds of desire: that for the beloved, explored in the various failed and failing relationships that Carson describes, and that for "coming to know" which is illustrated by the allusion and intertext in Carson's poetry and the scholarly investigations she undertakes.

In such a context, stereoscopy provides an enhanced vision. Self and other is one dualism that can be triangulated through this "stereoscopy", or this ability to "hold in equipoise two perspectives at once" (73), but there are many other dualities to which Carson turns her stereoscopic gaze: time and timelessness, life and death, truth and lies, absence and presence, love and hate, far and near, and these, and indeed theories of self and other, may be explored in the context of desire for knowledge in which lack enhances the "reach and grasp" of enquiry. This may provide an excitement that appears present in the title of one of Carson's monographs "Just for the Thrill': Sycophantizing Aristotle's 'Poetics.", published in 1990, shortly after *Eros the Bittersweet*. However, Fisher's assertion regarding blocked vision holds true for the descriptions Carson has offered of the translation process, so that she is looking through cracks (*Margins of Mind* 2.20−2.39) , and may also apply to looking at waves of history, a history which can only be partially viewed through the planks of a pier: "spilling over the boards at my feet" in "On Davey" (*LRB 41*).

Fisher ends the chapter by quoting from "Variations on the Right to Remain Silent", which became a pamphlet in *Float* in 2016 but first published in *A Public Space* magazine in 2008: "I was trained to strive for exactness and to believe that rigorous knowledge of the world without any residue is possible for us. This residue, which does not exist− just to think of it refreshes me" (*Float* n.p.). Finding a non-existent residue refreshing is indicative of Carson's continued interest in nothingness, so that the one-eyed man in "Every Exit is an Entrance", for example, "dove into the nothingness of his eye" (*Decreation* 22), and one of the chapters in *Economy of the Unlost*, is titled "Negation", after Celan. Fisher finds herself similarly refreshed by thinking of this residue: "Desire, Carson might call it, which strips us of self and leaves us in the shimmering silence" (15) This stripping of self recalls the essay "Decreation", but it should be noted that, in that

essay, Carson identifies a conflict between Porete and Weil's desire to strip away the self and the need for them to write about it, or to "tell", as Carson puts it: "To tell is a function of self. This situation is a big problem for a writer. It is more than a contradiction, it is a paradox" (*Decreation* 172).

In *Eros the Bittersweet*, Carson describes the "stereoscopic moment" when readers of a novel:

> …stand at an angle to the text from which we can see both the narrated facts of the case and what the characters believe to be the facts of the case; two levels of narrative reality float one upon another, without converging, and provide for the reader keeping the moment of emotional and cognitive stereoscopy which is also the experience of the desiring lover (85).

Each allusive triangle may provide such "stereoscopic moments", a moment which might be described as transcendence, but may, equally, be described as the moment when things fall into place, and in doing so provide a glimpse into layers of culture, opening those: "cracks to another world, down there, which you can almost see, almost express, but not quite" (*Margins of Mind* 2.20−2.39).

Speech act takes a prime position in any theory regarding Carson's allusive writing. It is also, therefore, a key part of the dynamics of triangulation in the context of allusion. The "reach and grasp" that is required to pique the erotic desire of coming to know is often sparked by speech act, that is, by written or spoken utterances, usually brought to Carson by reading. These speech acts emanate from individual writers, and a fusion of writer and text is a tension which Carson keeps before readers. In her allusive writing, these writers, the utterances they make, and the characters they create, are at the nexus of each triangle, and are the "individual components" who make up each triangulation. Just as in the erotic triangle of "Sappho 31", these individual components do not move, but in juxtaposing them and exploring their relational dynamic or, as Carson terms it: "how those lines do paint themselves" (*Plainwater* 93), Carson often creates an electrifying connection. In

every case these connections provide an opportunity to bring something new to an idea or scenario, so that the relational dynamic Carson identifies may form a dialogue, or conversation, between individuals from different times and cultures, whose utterances may converge, overlay or clash on any subject Carson favours. Allusion is a manifestation of desire in Carson's writing, and allusions often take the form of quotation:

> It is nothing new to say that all utterance is erotic in some sense, that all language shows the structure of desire at some level. Already in Homer's usage, the same verb (mnaomai) has the meaning 'to give heed, to make mention' and also the meaning 'to court, woo, be a suitor (*Eros* 108).

Triangulation

There are several types of allusive triangulation to be found in Carson's writing. It is possible to find instances where Carson positions the writer as mediator or lens, as she does with Gertrude Stein in *Float*, or when she places herself as mediator in interpreting Alkman's poem in "Essay on What I Think about Most". There are triangulations such as Carson as speaker, her mother, and Emily Brontë in *The Glass Essay*. In other triangulations, Carson may step back to take a liminal position to show readers connections between, for example, Weil, Porete and Sappho. In almost every case what every triangulation makes visible, in addition to the "ideal projected on the screen of the actual " (*Eros* 17), is a sense of reaching across time and culture and genre.

This section gives close reading of parts of three texts by Carson: "The Glass Essay"; *The Beauty of the Husband* and the prose piece "Every Exit is an Entrance", together with the poem "Ode to Sleep" which links to it. Rae's close reading of "The Glass Essay" in the article "Verglas: Narrative Technique in Anne Carson's 'The Glass Essay'", is considered here, particularly with regard to the intertextual connections between individual words which he identifies, and the tropes in that series of poems which recur in

texts by Carson and *Wuthering Heights*. I discuss the triangulations in *The Beauty of the Husband* as a placing alongside of the two types of desire evident in Carson's erotic poetics, and suggest that readers may gain insight into the poem by considering these two types of triangulation. Some intertextual allusive triangulations are also identified. The poem "Ode to Sleep" has been selected as an example of Carson at play with intertextual connections in her framing of the poem as a way to "sum up" the essay on sleep "Every Exit is an Entrance" which precedes it.

"The Glass Essay" (1994)

"The Glass Essay" is a poem, (an essay in the sense, perhaps, of a search or hunt), which was published about five years after "The Life of Towns" appeared in *Grand Street* , and presents as a personal account of grief at the end of a relationship. Just as individual poems in "The Life of Towns" tend to focus on one writer, piece of writing or idea, so "The Glass Essay" focuses on "Emily" and the characters in *Wuthering Heights*, but Carson's grouping of lines of connection into threes is, perhaps, easier to identify in the latter.

Like Sappho in fragment 31, Carson is both poet and speaker, and places herself in a liminal position to see lines of connection, and finds the distance to depict a period of grief at the end of a relationship. The three figures in this long poem are the speaker, Emily Brontë and the speaker's mother. *Wuthering Heights* pervades the poem, and even the "atmosphere of glass" which Cason describes within the mother's house, has overtones of the "casement" through which Heathcliff and the ghost of Catherine are viewed at various times in the novel. Rae views the title as a pun on the French word for ice, "*glace*", and he considers several bilingual (French) connections in Carson's writing. Among the many interconnections he makes, Rae notes this "window" trope in Carson's poetry: "In this

atmosphere of glass, the window and *glace* motifs are juxtaposed" (169). Through this he is able to connect to the many ice motifs in Carson's writing, including "ice-pleasure" in *Eros the Bittersweet,* and the connection of ice and volcanoes in *Autobiography of Red.*

The titles of Carson's first three poems, "I", "She" and "Three" in the essay alert the reader the possibility of threefold dynamics in the poem. The poem "I" conveys the hypersensitivity of someone after a traumatic break-up:

> I
>
> I can hear little clicks inside my dream.
> Night drips its silver tap
> down the back.
> At 4 A.M. I wake. Thinking
>
> of the man who
> left in September.
> His name was Law. (*Glass and God* 3)

With the line "His name was Law", which is suggestive of the phrase "His word was Law", a triangulation may occur between texts and writers, in which Law, Mr Ramsay and Heathcliff participate because, although he is absent, Law's presence in the poem creates a desultory atmosphere throughout the essay, just as surely as the presence of the tyrannical patriarchs does in *Wuthering Heights* or in the Ramsay House in *To the Lighthouse*. Through the interposing of "word" for "name" this phrase evokes Lacan's "Father of the Law" and signals the entrance into psychoanalytical territory in the later poems in the essay.

Rae frames this name as a conduit to many intertextual connections, as well as connections within the poem: "The name 'Law' aligns the lover with the rule of the father, whose affections the speaker still courts" (174). He notes many aural connections between words in this paper, and here connects the easily identifiable aural link between Law and the psychiatrist Dr Haw to the mother who is addressed as "Ma" in the poems. He also, and successfully, links the "I" of the title of the first poem with the name "Law", and it is

instructive to consider these connections as an example of the complexity of intertext. The character Joseph speaks in the Yorkshire dialect in *Wuthering Heights,* and Rae observes that, even after Charlotte's revisions, "Aw" is used for "I" to indicate dialect in Joseph's speech: "Carson mimics Emily's interest in dialects through her fascination with terms such as "whacher,", and the dialogue between self and other in "The Glass Essay" can be read as a dialogue between "I" and "Aw"—" (177), and adds insight to considerations of self and other in the poems by asserting the following:

> In retrospect, one can view the entire poem as a meditation on 'I' that proceeds through marital (Ma, Pa, Law), psychoanalytical (Haw), and heroic (hawk) definitions until it reaches the religious state that Brontë characterizes as the 'awful time', when Self encounters the 'sterner power' of Thou (quoted in Carson, "Glass" 33) (177).

Rae's reading is an insightful one, but in the context of allusion and intertext it also reveals the complexities of intertextuality, and is a reminder that the thesis can only give an overview of the intertextual connections in Carson's poetry.

In the first poem of "The Glass Essay", the "I" of the poem is awake at a capitalised 4 A.M. The chime of clicks/ drips/ tap/ back/ wake drums in the mind as a dripping tap might for an insomniac, that this drip is "down the back" inflates the sense of discomfort and is also suggestive of a spinal tap, or lumbar puncture: a painful medical procedure. The speaker's face in the mirror, which: "has white streaks down it" (3), may suggest the ailing Cathy's reflection in her bedroom mirror in *Wuthering Heights,* or, given the connection evoked by "Law", may suggest Lacan's mirror stage, as the image appears other to the speaker (1285-1290).

The last line of the poem introduces the second individual in this triangle: "Tomorrow I am going to visit my mother". The title of "She", following on from this line, suggests that the pronoun refers to the mother, but the first line of "She" brings the Brontës to mind: "She lives on a moor in the north" and both feature in the poem. All three women

seem to intertwine as Carson tells of her "main fear": "Whenever I visit my mother/ I feel I am turning into Emily Brontë" (3). The blurring of the speaker and Brontë are evident in the following three lines, which also introduce the interior / exterior trope prevalent in the poem:

> my lonely life around me like a moor,
> my ungainly body stumping over the mud flats with a look of transformation
> that dies when I come in the kitchen door (3).

In "I", the speaker looks at her face in the bathroom mirror, and the words "room/ moor" provide a mirror image, but whereas the moor is transformative for the speaker and, Carson asserts, for Emily, this: "look of transformation" dies when entering the room. In "Three" the room is small and dark and time-bound in its marking of minutes, but the moor: "extends as far as the eye can see" (4). On entering the room, the transformation is over, and the moor is now "paralyzed with ice" and can only be viewed at a distance and through the lens of the window. There are "Three silent women at the kitchen table", and one of them is present through reading: "I have Emily p.216 propped open on the sugar bowl/ but I am covertly watching my mother" (4).

The interior/ exterior perspective that Carson often employs is evidenced in the next stanza where: "A thousand questions hit my eyes from the inside" (4). In this small, dark interior it is possible to go further inwards, but the questions hit the eyes, not the ears, and the questions are the speaker's rather than her mother's. Perhaps some are about her mother, some about her relationship with Law and some will almost certainly be about the book she is reading. In a later poem, "Hot", in "The Glass Essay", she says of Emily Brontë: "Her anger is a puzzle./ It raises many questions in me" (24). Perhaps one question is that which forms the last line of "She", the cryptic: "What meat is it, Emily, that we need?"(4). Rae identifies the theme of this section of "The Glass Essay" as visitation, and the aural interconnections he identifies facilitate understanding of the poem, and he connects this "meat" with the verb "meet", but he also sees an erotic and religious

connection: "…this section concludes with a second-person address that links "meat" as an idealized erotic and religious substance (the sacrificial body) to "meet" as a more commonplace human encounter…" (168).

The erotic and ecstatic connection may be underscored by Simone Weil's being the subject matter of several essays and poems in *Decreation,* published in 2005, and the book itself takes its name from Weil's theory of decreation which she explores in her book *Grace and God.* Weil had a religious experience which took place when reading George Herbert's poem of redemption, "Love (III) ", which describes another entering, beginning, "Love bade me welcome" and ending with the transformative lines:

> My dear, then I will serve.
> You must sit down, says Love, and taste my meat:
> So I did sit and eat (268).

Through the word "meat", "The Glass Essay" connects with "Decreation", and also to *Autobiography of Red*, where Carson's observation that fragments of the *Geryoneis* read as if "Stesichoros had composed a substantial narrative poem then ripped it to pieces and buried the pieces in a box with some song lyrics and scraps of meat" (6−7). This link allows the idea of "meat" as text to arise, and the performative power of reading is asserted, in *Autobiography of Red*, as Carson adds: "you could of course keep shaking the box" (7), concluding the section with an invitation to readers: "Here. Shake." The connection between "meat" and text is further reinforced, after these lines regarding the *Geryoneis,* as Carson quotes Gertrude Stein: "Believe me for meat and for myself" (7) The speaker in "Love III" is in grave distress as the poem commences and finds solace in God, but the speaker in crisis in "She" is unsure what will bring her solace, what "meat" she needs, suggesting that the she is in crisis in the contexts of both desire for the beloved and in the desire of "coming to know", so often delivered by reading.

A triangulation between the speaker, Weil and the mother presents itself in the use of this word, brought together by the idea of food, which the mother prepares, and which mother and daughter eat together in the poem, and the spiritual "meat" required by Weil, and the lack of it, which may reference Weil's rejection of food, as described by Carson in *Decreation* (223). The speaker may also be in the kind of emotional state where it is difficult to eat: hunger for the lover replacing bodily hunger. Carson's reading gives no "meat" at this point, as she turns to page 217 and a scene of casual but horrific violence:

> In my flight through the kitchen I knocked over Hareton
> who was hanging a litter of puppies
> from a chairback in the doorway… " (*Glass and God* 4)

The pages in *Wuthering Heights* which precede this quotation contain the violent scenes after Catherine's death, the sudden snow storm, the forcing of the window by Heathcliff, the knife fight between Heathcliff and Earnshaw, which results in the latter being wounded, and the speech of Lockwood to Heathcliff the following day, which prompts Heathcliff to throw a dinner knife at the narrator, a Heathcliff −Earnshaw− Lockwood engagement, connected by knives and violence. The narrative on the page bleeds into the poem "The Glass Essay" where it is also snowing on the moor, and: "Spring opens like a blade there" (1). Here the window remains intact and the wildness remains outside, now "paralyzed with ice." The horrible image of the hanging causes a change in a room so that "It is as if we have all been lowered into an atmosphere of glass" (*Glass and God* 22).

Rae frames this sentence as suggestive of a "troubled" relationship between mother and daughter, and it is partly this sentence which leads him to identify similarities between the poem and Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar.* The term "lowered" gives the sense of dangling from a rope, and the passive verb indicates a loss of agency. It is as if the people in the room are being hanged along with the puppies, but this lowering brings the "we" of the

poem into an "atmosphere of glass ". The connection of glass with "*verglas*" suggested by Rae, may be underscored by the term "lower", as a landscape threatening bad weather may be said to "lower" or "lour".

Her mother's voice, uttering commonplaces: "trails through the glass", and readers may be minded of lifelines as well as the hangman's noose, as her small talk filters through the atmosphere of glass. The poet makes no answer to any of these words until readers are told of an earlier event:

> and I was downstairs reading the part in *Wuthering Heights*
> where Heathcliff clings at the lattice in the storm sobbing
> Come in! Come in! to the ghost of his heart's darling,
>
> I fell on my knees on the rug and sobbed too
> She knows how to hang puppies,
> that Emily. (*Glass and God* 6)

At the beginning of "The Glass Essay", the speaker fears she is turning into Emily Brontë, but here turns into Heathcliff, showing the blurring that reading allows as Heathcliff sobs and she: "sobbed too". Although this takes place in the morning prior to the evening in the narrative, it seems to give relief enough, and to clear the atmosphere in the poem enough, to allow the speaker to answer her mother's question posed before these two stanzas: "That psychotherapy's not doing you much good is it?/ You aren't getting over him" (5). At first, she gives non-committal answers, but the final stanza of "Three" contains half her mother's question:

> What does it accomplish
> all that raking up the past?
>
> Oh—I spread my hands—
> I prevail! I look her in the eye.
> She grins. Yes you do (*Glass and God* 6).

The speaker's "ungainly body", which died in the final stanza of "She", comes back to life here. Hands spread and she is able to look at her mother, not covertly, but directly. There is a sense of the speaker's regaining power, which is underscored by her

saying: “I prevail!” In the light of Carson’s interest in the power of utterance, these two words deserve closer examination. In this situation, when grief has been all-pervading, readers might expect an affirmation such as “I will prevail”. To use the present tense “I prevail” gives the words a performative feel, imbuing them with a force similar to that of: “I dedicate this book to Keats” at the beginning of *The Beauty of the Husband* , and in saying “I prevail”, the speaker prevails and looks her mother in the eye. In the last line of “Three” the mother is witness to the speaker’s vital utterance in the time of her distress, and reaffirms its efficacy in her answer, which might serve as a ritual answer: “Yes, you do” (6).

To have an understanding of the power of utterance for Carson is to gain further insight into the exchanges between mother and daughter in “Three”. Rae considers links between *The Glass Essay* and Plath’s, *The Bell Jar,* and identifies “similar images of containment” in Carson’s poem. However, he identifies a more positive relationship between the speaker in the poem and her mother and notes the difference between the protagonist of *the Bell Jar* who: “avoids spending any length of time with her mother” and Carson’s speaker who “has traveled a great distance to work through her problems with her illness-plagued family…” (169). Rae refers to the mother’s words in “The Glass Essay” as “idle conversation” but also notes their importance as an emotional catalyst: “a volcano erupting in the Philippines, the thawing ice is translated into volcanic imagery that represents the swelling emotions of the speaker” (169).

Carson has the mother make small talk, not only as a way of underscoring the poet’s silence and the passage of time, but, also, to remind readers of the mother’s crucial presence. Consideration of the performative power of speech casts light on the interjections from the mother throughout the poem. There are “three silent women” at the beginning of “Three”, but these women also speak, and that speech has performative force. Emily’s

description of Heathcliff sobbing causes the poet to sob, and the speaker's performative "I prevail" provides a force by which she prevails. The mother's presence is required to be witness to the two vital words "I prevail", and her mother's reply "Yes, you do." is not only supportive, but also appears to complete a kind of domestic call and answer ritual to provide the conditions, laid down by Austin, by which these words can carry performative force. The speaker− mother−Emily triangulation is, to some extent, a healing one, as reading Emily prompts the outburst of sobbing which seems to provide the speaker with some release, and her mother participates by standing as witness to the speaker's words.

Rae's article provides an account of the phonic interconnections in the poem as well the influence of Carson's living in bi-lingual Montreal and gives a glimpse into the complexity of intertextuality. Although this section on triangulation identifies a sample of intertextual connections in Carson's writing, it does not suggest that this sample is in any way thorough or comprehensive, even for the few texts chosen.

The Beauty of the Husband 2001

The Beauty of the Husband provides triangulations of a different, more destructive, order. It begins with a clean, clear image which gives insight into the lasting power of suffering:

> A wound gives off its own light
> surgeons say.
> If all the lamps in the house were turned out
> you could dress this wound
> with what shines from it. (5)

The clarity of these words throws a picture into readers' minds, but they bring with them a complex idea of suffering and healing. The narrative tells a fairly simple universal story of love, betrayal and loss, which travels from this initial image of both probing and dressing a

wound, to the final lines which reference narcissism, lies, grief and an action which signals the end of the writing process:

> Some tangos pretend to be about women but look at this.
> Who is it you see
> reflected small
> in each of her tears.
>
> Watch me fold this page now so you think it is you (145).

The last line contains the idea of closure, in the folding of the paper, and also provokes questions as to whether it has been achieved, given that the final word is a "you" which could be the husband, keeping the focus on him to the very last word, but which could also be the reader, or the poet addressing herself.

Readers may also be reminded that wounds can be healed by cauterising as, throughout the work, Carson creates images that sear. In "Tango VI", Carson describes treading grapes with her husband and the sex which followed it:

> Tongue is the smell of October to me. I remember it as
> swimming in a fast river for I kept moving and it was hard to move
> while all around me
> was moving too, that smell
> of turned earth and cold plants, and night coming on and
> the old vat steaming slightly in the dusk out there and him,
> raw juice on him.
>
> Stamens on him (30).

These lines build an experience for the senses: taste, smell, touch, sight, and the familiar dual perspective: looking outside and far to the "dusk out there" and looking inside and near to the "stamens on him".

Quotations abound in *The Beauty of the Husband*, and references to Keats occur throughout the work. The title of "Tango I" states that the book is dedicated to Keats because of his "GENERAL SURRENDER TO BEAUTY" (5). Although some of the references to Keats would illustrate this surrender, such as "June that breathes out life for butterflies" (49). Many are associated with Carson's scholarly interest in crossings-out and under-linings:

> a sort of delphic abstraction a beautiful thing made more / beautiful by being reflected and put in a Mist/ note on his copy of Paradise Lost 1.321/ [there is a faint mark after beautiful read by one editor as a dash,/ by another as a slip of the pen, while a third does not print it] (103).

The book has themes of beauty and truth, but Carson quotes only briefly from "Ode on a Grecian Urn" (*Norton* 663), by referencing Keats' conclusion: "To say Beauty is Truth and stop" (*Beauty* 139), but quotes several lines from "On Indolence" throughout the book. There is a mirroring in these two poems by Keats. In "Ode on a Grecian Urn", the speaker is looking at the artefact, and the poem concludes with a contrast between the fleeting lifespan of human beings and the longevity of the urn.

In "On Indolence" Keats is experiencing a vision of "three figures seen" who were: "like figures on a marble urn,/ when shifted round to see the other side;/ They came again; as when the urn once more/ is shifted round…" (*Keats* 304). "On Indolence" addresses, not the object that is the urn, but a likeness of that object. Carson has said in interview, regarding the poems subtitle "A Fictional Essay in 29 Tangos" that: "calling [something] an essay means that it's not just a story but a reflection on that story, which is also a way of making it less personal or not only personal" (*Edge* 33). This may also be a reason for favouring "On Indolence" (*Keats* 304), which is a response to a likeness of an object rather than the object itself, when selecting quotations from Keats for the book. However, another reason for the selection may be that the "ghostly" figures which Keats sees are "Love," "Ambition" and "Poesy" and, for Carson, they may reference the "two kinds of love" (97) which she explores in *Eros the Bittersweet*, and the mirroring Odes may have been selected by Carson as representative of the mirroring of the "actual", that is the world of objects, and the "ideal", which Keats' three abstract ideas (ambition, poesy, and love) reference. The dedication to Keats may reflect the central position of both kinds of love in the book.

The first stanza of "Tango XVII" conveys the level of desperation that "desire for the beloved" might provoke:

Ray did not tell the wife about Dolor and Merced.
But she
had seeing scars
on her eyes from trying to look hard enough at every stone of every sidewalk in the city,
every window of every passing bus, every pane of every shop
or office block or telephone booth
to wring from it
a glimpse of the husband with someone else if such a glimpse was to be had…(73)

These lines reveal the terrible effects of desire and infidelity. The wife is gazing so hard that she has seeing scars on her eyes, trying to wring from her surroundings a glimpse of her husband with someone else. The erotic triangle from "Sappho 31", which Carson explores in *Eros the Bittersweet* in 1986 and goes back to in *Decreation* in 2005, blazes here.

How *The Beauty of the Husband* works through the dynamics of "Sappho 31", previously evinced in *Eros the Bittersweet*, can be examined by reference to many of the "Tangos" in the book, and "Tango XXII: HOMO LUDENS", merits close reading both for its love triangle dynamics but also for the language which conveys these dynamics. The first stanza of this tango is about omens, and they seem propitious, consisting of: "hearing someone say 'victory' as they pass you in the street" and catching the moment when: "all the little sulfur lamps in the grass/ all around the edge of the hotel garden" come on. The estranged husband and wife are in a hotel in Athens. Readers begin by thinking that the voice in the first stanza is that of the wife, who narrates most of the poem, but the second stanza reveals that this is an insight into the mind of the husband, and the 'victory' omen slides into place as the words of someone who loves playing war games. The husband is a *homo ludens*, (a man who plays), not only through his interest in toy soldiers but also as a player in relationships. The second stanza describes his thoughts further. He is thinking of aphrodisiac "oysters and glacé fruits", and of Mozart. His thoughts on the latter are shaped by what his wife told him at lunch, but the language used to frame his thoughts is full of

sexual innuendo, as he thinks of how Mozart, who is also "a man at play", "scored his Horn Concerto" (97) in different inks. Two lines later the husband's mood is described in similar terms: "Cheer is rampant in the husband now" (97)

Carson moves from describing the mind of the husband to positioning herself at a distance from where she can view the events of the "infinite evening" ahead, and: "The husband can be seen to rise as his wife crosses the garden" (98). This scene is reminiscent of that of Bernard crossing the garden to Neville in Woolf's *The Waves*, which Carson used as an example of triangulation in *Eros the Bittersweet*, where Neville mixes with Bernard to become a new Neville. That mixing does not happen here, the husband does not ask: "Who am I?", as Neville does (*Eros* 37). Instead he asks her: "Why so sad?" and a feeling of sadness steals into the lines, as do Nelly Sachs' words from a letter to Paul Celan.

The husband leaves, ostensibly to fetch her a tea. At this point in the "Tango", in the crucial time of the husband's absence, the full force of Nelly Sachs' sentence hits the speaker. "*Why sadness? This flowing the world to its end. Why in your eyes− (98)* and brings certain knowledge of her husband's continued infidelity:

> A man who after three years of separation would take his wife to Athens−
> for adoration, for peace,
> then telephone New York every night from the bar
> and speak to a woman
> who thought he was over on 4th Street
> working late (98−99).

Sappho's triangle becomes visible here again. The wife, the husband, the woman in New York, and a particular kind of infidelity which is unfaithful to both women becomes evident.

The "Tango" continues with a stanza which distils the accusatory language of a failed relationship:

> Who is this, what future is there
> I thought

You said
We never
When exactly day year name anything who I was who am I who did you
Did you or did you not …(99)

The questions are far from Neville's questions, not "Who am I?", which has the feeling of an exploration of self, but "who is this, what future is there". There is no real desire to know between this couple and there are no answers to these questions. Finally: "there is nothing more to say" and "I love you" is said, though it is unclear by whom, but: "joys and leaves of earlier times flowed through the husband/ and disappeared" (100). This flowing engenders another more damaging one as the husband's nose begins to bleed violently.

The detailed description of the blood flowing over his body contrasts with the wine which flows over him as they have sex in "Tango VI", which may have been one of the "joys". By placing the nosebleed so soon after the argument, Carson seems to offer a correlation between the two. This correlation raises questions regarding the performative power of speech. The husband seems to have all the power here: he is: "holding Yes and No in one hand" (100), and yet the nosebleed happens, although not perhaps as a direct effect of the speech. It brings readers back to considerations regarding the wounding power of words, and it is possible to see echoes of Woolf here, and how speech can wound to lasting effect, as in Lily Briscoe's negative mantra of Charles Tansley's words: "women can't paint, women can't write" (*To the Lighthouse* 56). It also evokes the "wound" at the beginning of *The Beauty of the Husband.* A nosebleed is dramatic but does not have the same lasting effect as "a wound" which "gives its own light" (*Beauty* 5).

The outcome of this nosebleed shifts power positions again as the wife is forced into the position of carer, and a connection seems to be re-established: "his head in her lap and his virtue coursing through her/ as if they were one flesh" (101). Whatever the nature of this connection , this moment is pivotal: "There is no possibility of coming back from such a moment/ to simple hatred,/ black ink". The line which follows this shows a

continuance of this feeling of resignation: “If a husband throws the dice of his beauty one last time, who is to blame?” (101) The “Tango” ends with a riff on games, picking up on the metaphor of dice throwing: “Husband and wife rested/ as players may rest against the rules of the game/ if it is a game,/ if they know the rules/ and it was and they did” (102).

The triangulation of husband−wife−other woman reveal the painful erotics of “desire for the beloved”, but the erotics of the desire to know are equally in evidence in *The Beauty of the Husband.* After the verbal exchange in the hotel room, the positioning of husband and wife again becomes key: “…They stood aligned,/ he at the door with his back to it/ she at the bed with her back to it” (100). The next line tells that “experts of conflict resolution” interpret such positioning as one which “ensures impasse”, but the angry stillness conveyed by these two lines allows readers to see the current that runs between the couple, which is as complex as the emotions explored throughout the poem.

It is also possible to see the beginning of a triangulation here, and with this word “aligned” a line may be drawn between husband and wife, which awaits a “third component” to come between them. Through the mind of the wife, a third person, Parmenides, enters the room. The three-fold dynamic created yields up explorations of truth and lies, the futility of such explorations, demonstrated by the direct quotation: “It is all one to me where I start−I arrive there again soon enough” (100), and the interplay of presence and absence, as the wife: “was thinking (about Parmenides)/ with part of her mind while throwing never ever liar at her husband”. Even as the wife hurls a small, energy-charged triangle of words “never ever liar” at the husband, her mind is partly engaged elsewhere.

In *The Beauty of the Husband*, there are many references to writers that Carson has read, and, most often, they are not positioned to interconnect with each other. In this essay Carson is not interested in scholarly investigations into Huizinga, Celan or Parmenides,

which such connections might offer up, as does the Porete-Sappho–Weil combination in *Decreation*. Her focus remains entirely on the couple throughout. The dynamic that flows between them is made visible through their words and actions, but there is more to see, and Carson brings in a series of others to be the third in this erotic triangle.

At its simplest, the husband–wife–Kafka combination, for example, provokes thoughts on skills (sexual or those associated with swimming) and whether, once learnt it, is possible to forget them. Similarly, the husband–wife–Mr Rochester triangle gives insights into jealousy: "Is it not Mr Rochester who grinds his teeth and tells us/ in less than two minutes with its gliding green hiss/ jealousy can eat to a heart's core" (*Beauty* 16). These third elements are ushered in to cast light onto the relationship of husband and wife. The focus of the poem never moves from this, and just as the wife had: "seeing scars on her eyes" (73) in her efforts to catch the husband with another, Carson scrutinises the relationship by probing the wound, (which "gives off its own light"), but also by wringing what insights she can from the third parties she ushers in: philosophers, poets and other writers she has read.

By employing the triangulation dynamic in this way something else becomes visible. The placing of those she has read as the third party in this erotic triangle raises questions as to whether either husband or wife, who is capable of thinking of Parmenides in the middle of a blazing row, are ever fully present to each other. In the scenario which Carson paints in "Tango XXII", she invites readers to consider this idea of a mutual lack of commitment, and in positioning the allusions she makes in the way outlined above, she creates a framework on which to travel to such a conclusion. Sappho is not referred to by name in *The Beauty of the Husband*, but the "fragrance" of her is easy to identify in the husband, wife, other woman love triangle depicted.

Close reading of the poem identifies the positionings of allusion in the poem, which allows a series of triangles to become visible, giving an understanding of how Sappho's

triangle is also the baseline of the framework underpinning the poem. To return to the dedication of the book to Keats, it is now possible to identify how Carson's division of references to Keats into those regarding beauty and those to more obscure texts, (such as *Otho the Great* or Keats' handwritten comments and marks on *Paradise Lost*), serves to illustrate the key mirroring of the two love triangles of husband−wife−other woman, and husband−wife−*paidika.*

The Beauty of the Husband makes extended use of naming. A list of those referred to would include, Homer, Plato, Aristotle, Hölderlin, Nelly Sachs, and Jonathon Swift, who arises in the reference, in Tango XXII, to the intelligent horses in *Gulliver's Travels*, "because she mentioned Houyhnhnms and he objected to being 'written off as an object of satire'" (99). Although the Swiftian reference is less usual in Carson's writing, most of the writers named interconnect to texts throughout the body of Carson's work. While it is possible to identify an instance where the same writer is mentioned in varying texts, it gives more insight to consider each writer as a nexus in an intertextual triangulation so that Swift, who is not referred to often by Carson, is the nexus for one or two intertextual triangulations, but Homer is the nexus for many overlaying and interconnecting triangulations of various kinds in Carson's poetry and lyrical essays.

She often places Kafka, Hölderlin, Plato and Aristotle in allusive triangulations. Kafka intersects with several texts, but in the context of swimming, *Plainwater* is perhaps the first that comes to mind. "Water Margins: an Essay on Swimming by My Brother" is in the form of a diary and each entry delineates each day into "Swimming" or "Not Swimming". The prose piece "Mimnermos and the Motions of Hedonism" in the same book, begins with the same quotation about swimming as that in "Tango VI", and a discussion regarding Kafka follows. Keats connects to "Every Exit is an Entrance" and to Kant and Lacan on the subject of sleep. Proust, referenced in "Tango XVIII", connects in

the context of memory and tears, with Roni Horn and the speaker reading in the Library of Water in “Wildly Constant”, and through this to considerations of gender, to Albertine and Agostinelli, and to Geryon. Although this matrix of allusions and juxtapositions is complex, it is, perhaps, easier to imagine this process of triangulation spreading across the field of vision, than the complex overlaying triangulations and interconnections that a word such as “Aw”, as identified by Rae, can involve.

“Every Exit is an Entrance” and “Ode to Sleep”

At the beginning of the scholarly investigation on sleep, “Every Exit is an Entrance”, Carson tells readers that she will explore the subject: “Not as practitioner ....but as reader” (*Decreation* 19), and the text explores the subject as it is represented in the wealth of texts she reads. At the end of the essay Carson refers to “Ode to Sleep” as a means to “sum up” the prose piece, but the poem is also an enactment of the kind of sifting and shuffling that can happen, in a state of half sleep, perhaps after writing “Every Exit is an Entrance”, so that, in the Ode, Carson speaks as both “practitioner” and reader. In the context of allusion and intertext it is possible to consider the two texts in dialogue with each other. This is not unusual in Carson’s writing, where references in a poem may connect to investigations which adjoin it, but here the allusions and intertext crowd in, as they might do in semiconsciousness. In this essay, Carson uses a series of interconnecting triangles to explore the ideal of sleep, and its lack, as part of the human condition. Odysseus, Penelope, and their son Telemachos provide a familial triangulation: Telemachos is “an insomniac”, Odysseus is: “a master of waking reality, yet his relation to sleep is troubled”. Penelope, on the other hand, is: “a master of sleep”. Carson elaborates: “She goes to bed dozens of times in the course of the story, has lots of sleep shed on her by gods, experiences an array of telling and efficacious dreams and evolves her own theory of how to read them” (27−29).

When the volts emanating from their relationship to sleep course between them, power lines shift, Penelope is the master and Carson tells us, she uses: “the trick of the bed” to flush Odysseus’ identity out. Similarly, after putting Odysseus off his guard by asking him to interpret a dream, which Carson believes is: “as blatant as an English movie with English subtitles” (31), she ultimately resolves the situation with the wedding guests by suggesting an archery contest. Telemachus is an insomniac who only sleeps well once in the Odyssey when, as Carson puts it: “Here Telemachos ‘takes the gift of sleep,’ lying down in the swineherd’s hut beside Odysseus. This idyllic, impossible night as substitute Penelope beside his own father is Telemachos’ happiest moment in the *Odyssey*” (28). Many of the juxtapositions are from Homer: Nausikaa, who is: “asleep when we first meet her”, and Achilles who is roused by his dream of Patroklos, after which: “Achilles jumps out of bed to perform the funeral rites enjoined on him by the dream…” (26). These two are on a tangential triangle from Odysseus of: “being roused from sleep”, Nausikaa by a goddess, Achilles by a dead friend, and, as Carson points out, Odysseus: “frequently feels the need to force himself awake,… Whenever he does nod off, catastrophes occur” (28).

“Ode to Sleep” gathers together allusions to, more or less, every writer mentioned in the preceding prose text, and , as well as providing an enactment of the crowded interconnections of half-sleep, seems to be a humorous exemplification of Kristeva’s ideas on intertext as a kaleidoscope (*Interviews* 190), so numerous are the references to other texts. The title of the poem has obvious Keatsian overtones, and Carson has cited examples from Keats' “Sonnet to Sleep” in the essay. This may give readers an expectation of a lyrical poem, but the first line which is close to ordinary speech, quickly dispels this idea: “Think of your life without it” (46). The juxtaposition of the grandiose, in using the title “Ode”, and the mundane, in this observation, which might read as if the subject under discussion was a washing machine, is a particular feature of Carson's poetry and part of the

dynamic which gives it such appeal, bringing together this reference to the poetic conventions of the past and day-to-day contemporary culture.

The interconnecting texts discussed in this section have drawn a certain amount of criticism. In a largely favourable review of *Decreation* in 2005, Casey N. Cep feels the crowding of allusions in this essay a step too far: "An essay like "Every Exit is an Entrance" praises sleep and offers an unrelenting catalogue of literary evidence, but does it fatigue when forced to accommodate Keats, Kant, Aristotle, Bishop, Woolf, Homer, Stoppard, and Plato in the space of 22 pages and one lyric ode?" Writing in *The Boston Review* shortly after the publication of *Decreation*, around the same time as Cep, Joyelle McSweeney has a more insightful take on the work, and ties it to a subordination of the "I" which she also sees as a trait in Virginia Woolf. This picks up on Carson's observation in the essay that: "Virginia Woolf offers us, through sleep, a glimpse of a kind of emptiness that interests her. It is the emptiness of things before we make use of them, a glimpse of reality prior to its efficacy" (24). Carson also notes a story called "A Haunted House" by Woolf, published in 1921, where: "The narrative voice shifts from "we" to "one" to "you" to "they" to "I," as if no one in the story can keep a stable skin on". Weil and Woolf appear to be looking, not at destruction, but a kind of purposeful unmaking.

In Weil's case this "decreation" is desirable in order to be with God. McSweeney identifies the "I" as subordinated and the reader being given a pivotal role in *Decreation*:

> Like Woolf, Carson undermines the purposeful "I" of these poems and essays in order to transfer the burden of truth-making to the reader. Carson's subtlety of tone directs us to read *Decreation* as a whole *and* as the sum of its parts, to recognize how meaning resonates across forms and subjects through a system of recurring motifs, turns of phrase, keywords, and figures. The different forms in which Carson writes, from the chiseled lyrics of the first 20 pages to the roving essays and airy dramatic pieces throughout, allow her to advance and efface her presence in the book by turns, and thus to unobtrusively steer us toward a reading of the whole.

Cep tentatively asks whether "Every Exit is an Entrance" is "unrelenting", McSweeney refers to "roving essays", but, in the context of triangulation-as-process, it is a smooth and

exact exposition on sleep, opening a cultural space on the subject of speech, only "unrelenting" in the sense that it explores the concept of sleep as part of the human condition. McSweeney's adjective "roving" gives the impression that the essay wanders, but this does not appear to be the case. Carson is attempting to map ideas of sleep from all she has read, and she does this by making a series of connections, unified by the ideal of "sleep". "Ode to Sleep" enacts the thoughts that come before sleep, in which any writing just prior to sleep might feature largely, but there is humour in her notion to "sum up" the essay by making an Ode, and the high-toned title, in conjunction with the cramming of allusions might be viewed as Carson at play, but may also cause a level of irritation.

This irritation is evident in Mark Scroggins' chapter on Anne Carson, written prior to *Decreation,* in *Intricate Thicket*, "Truth, Beauty and the Remote Control", and seems to stem mainly from her allusive poetics:

> Carson's favorite trick over the years has been to juxtapose or overlay elements, usually taken from sources that are widely disparate, either culturally or temporally, or both. Sometimes such juxtaposition seems to serve a didactic purpose; more often,it just elicits a pleasant shock of the strange (a shock which often doesn't survive multiple readings) (60).

In the same chapter he quotes the lines from "Freud's Letter to Ferenczi 7.5.1909" , selecting the lines: "Freud hesitates to name me/but/ let me tell you/ that was no/ pollen stain./ Here/I could paraphrase Descartes/ *The hand that busy instrument/* or just let it go" (*Men* 30) to support his criticism.

Scroggins impatience may be understandable in the context of what is a fairly obscure reference, and he also observes: "Who speaks here? What was that yellow stain on those suede gloves? Above all, who has made the 'error'?" (65). He asserts that he does not have a problem with the esoteric references, but is not prepared to spend much energy on checking them by: "thumbing through my Descartes". He views the poem's erudition as " a nimbus of teasing mystery", and also takes issue with Carson calling the poem an "essay" because "it has nothing to do with anything Cicero or Plutarch pioneered" (65). With the

reference to Cicero and Plutarch, Scroggins may be referring to Carson's interview with D'Agata, which has an exchange about the use of the term "essay" in the title of "The Glass Essay", as Cicero and Plutarch are referenced in that discussion. D'Agata refers to a short correspondence with Carson, where she uses "essay" as a verb, and suggests various essayists whom Carson may be like, proposing Cicero and Montaigne, while Carson, perhaps tongue-in-cheek, suggests Plutarch ("A_" 15−17). D'Agata asks several questions about the term "essay" in Carson's writing, and judging by the generally perfunctory answers, the subject does not appear to interest her greatly. Scroggins' criticism is too sweeping. It is possible to view the reference to yellow stained gloves as a means to pique curiosity, and inference might also be made from Carson's paraphrase, without thumbing through any volume. His observations provide insight into the type of criticism which the scholarly allusions and mixing of genres in her work can provoke.

Whether Carson was aware of Scroggins' paper, she was probably aware of negative criticism of her use of allusion. In a book which considers Simone Weil's ideas on "Decreation", and the necessity of suppressing the ego to experience the sublime, the allusions crammed into *Ode to Sleep* could be an act of "decreation" by which Carson deliberately lays herself open to criticism, and risks wounding the ego. She also provides a glimpse into the wealth of history on sleep, by plotting a path through it by the process of triangulation. "Every Exit is an Entrance" also exemplifies the dual perspective Carson favours, bringing Ancient Greek and post-structuralist thought together in her explorations. Carson quotes an Ancient Greek story about the cure of a one-eyed man, and surmises what an analyst of "the Lacanian sort" might say about it:

> the one-eyed man has chosen to travel all the way in the direction of his dream and so awakes to a reality more real than the waking world. He dove into the nothingness of his eye and is awakened by too much light. Lacan would praise sleep as a blindness, which nonetheless looks back at us What does sleep see when it looks back at us? This is a question entertained by Virginia Woolf in *To the*

> *Lighthouse*, a novel that falls asleep for twenty-five pages in the middle (*Decreation* 22).

Here Carson connects Ancient Greek thought, Lacan's ideas regarding "nothingness", which she had also referred to in *Eros the Bittersweet* and *Economy of the Unlost*, and Virginia Woolf in an exploration of sleep and perception. The question embedded in this exploration; "What does sleep see when it looks back at us?" is an example of a contemporary mediation by Carson, which causes the mind to double back on itself, inviting readers to the kind of vision that stereoscopy allows.

In the Ode, Carson makes connections to various tropes and abiding concerns, as well as to the preceding essay. In the poem time is an "outlaw", suggestive of Carson's rejection of linear time, but is also a reminder that sleep is no respecter of orderly sequence, and may put what you had for supper in a dream of your four-year-old self, and there is a sense brought from the opening line that this is a necessary part of "your life". Words and phrases connect to writers referred to in the prose piece, so that, for example, the "pillow" references Keats' line from "Sonnet to Sleep", quoted in the prose piece. Some of the words and phrases, such as: "punctuated" and: "only to see them form into a sentence" connect to the act of writing and its ability to invade the writer's dreams. The arms and legs, (found by dreaming), are in "morsels" from a "boiling pot" and recall the feast of his own children, served up to an unwitting Thyestes, or may refer to Lacan's body in pieces. The phrase: "you weep with sudden joy" echoes the Fool's song in King Lear, and also connects to the Shakespearean characters, Rosenkrantz and Guilderstern mentioned in the preceding prose piece. It suggests that writing is a fool's game, and the writer's "Bo-Peep" seems to be that of dreaming the line which will "save you" only to forget it on waking. The final lines refer to Elisabeth Bishop's "The Man-moth", and, also, references the hybridity of the poem, as the scholarly references crowd in.

To follow all these exits and entrances to other texts in “Ode to Sleep” would require a full chapter, but one particularly dense line may serve as an example of the intertextual connections in the “Ode”: “not much left but a pale green upsilon embalmed between butter and fly” (41). The Greek letter “upsilon”, recalls Woolf's Clarissa Dalloway dreaming of Greek letters in *The Voyage Out,* “embalmed” brings readers back to Keats' “O soft embalmer of the still midnight!” (19), as quoted in the preceding essay, and butter and fly refers to the butterfly of Guildenstern’s mis-cited reference: “A Chinaman of the T’ang dynasty—and by which definition a philosopher—dreamed he was a butterfly…” (36). The word “green” connects to Sappho: “I am greener than grass and dead/ almost I seem to me” (*If Not,63*), and this poem is the subject, later in *Decreation,* of the poem “Mia Moglie (Longinus’ Red Desert)” (67), which can be read in full in Appendix A. The phrase “pale green” links to Alkman, and Carson’s observation in “Essay on What I think about Most” that his poem: “seems to suggest colors like pale green/ without ever naming them” (33). However, there is something new in the pale green upsilon, which throws an image of a butterfly in flight to the reader, the unstressed beats of the dactylic “butterfly”, and is suggestive of how a word may cross-pollinate. The ideas that all these allusions bring, act on the reader in a similar way to sleep, sifting various seemingly unrelated things together to form a realisation, a “sentence” that is entirely new. Readers engage in this process with Carson by bringing their imaginations to it, and the intermeshing of allusions activate intertextual connections in the reader’s mind which may spread far beyond any original intent.

The lines “not much left but a pale green *upsilon* embalmed between *butter* and *fly*” brings together Sappho, Alkman, Woolf, Keats, Shakespeare, and Stoppard. This is formidable number of allusions in one line, even in a poem which is meant “to sum up” (40) a fairly lengthy essay. She is having fun in this poem, and crams as many allusions as

she can into it, while purportedly performing a task akin to writing a concluding paragraph. The interweaving allusions which connect "Ode to Sleep" and "Every Exit is an Entrance " which precedes it, create a cat's cradle of connection, which begins to move through the mind of the reader, and the threads of intertext may return to Carson's texts or may travel in any direction. Readers become conduits, creators or critics.

Triangulation-as-Process

> Metrics not the way to do this. Slap, slap the waves hit the pier, each one lifting, driving, slapping, spilling over the boards at my feet, gigantic formations like this spilling through history, each wave softly murderous, managing itself, driving on, driving and breaking, a roar apiece, all but inexhaustible or so you dream…(*LRB 41*)

The prose poem "On Davey", from which the above lines are taken, appeared in January 2019 in *the London Review of Books*. As with Carson's exhortation to readers to "Watch this spillage" (*Decreation* 46), Carson returns to analogies of spillage and waves and again relates them to the movement of ideas across time, or "history" as she says in the poem. In the introduction to *Sappho is Burning*, Page Dubois both questions and asserts the value of postmodern narratives in the context of history:

> Are we simply processes, discontinuous assemblages of the various appellations of gender, class, race, ethnicity? I both like and hate this story. The fluidity and heterogeneity and Deleuzian flux of the model are appealing, in some ways it seems to be a response to feminist critiques of the rigid, bounded, discrete metaphysical subject of post-Platonic western culture (1).

Carson's mixing of genres, her mingling of evidences from various eras in her poetry and scholarly writing, her bringing of writers from various pasts into the present in her work, her interest in fluidity and critiques of boundaries and her observations regarding gender, her juxtapositions, are all suggestive of this "fluidity, heterogeneity and Deleuzian flux", which indicate that Carson, too, finds these ideas appealing.

In the book *Lacan, Deleuze, Badiou,* Bartlett and Clemens summarize the rejection of the continuity of history in recent thinking as follows: "We see in almost all recent European philosophy a shift from the conceptual routines that accord a primacy to time-as-sequence to a disposition of the organisation of space, spaces, spatiality, or as (deformed) form or (ungrounding) ground" (13). While the latter two juxtapositions of seemingly paradoxical terms: " (deformed) form" and " (ungrounding) ground" have similar flavour to those encountered in Carson's writing, the shift from time-as-sequence to a "disposition of spatiality" requires consideration in the context of time, as it is framed in Carson's poetry and theoretical writings, and in the context of triangulation-as-process, which may be said to deliver a sense of time and history in Carson's work. Dubois further observes: "The model of the eternal postmodern present, chaotic and fluctuating, does permit a sense of boundarylessness, an exhilarating new way of conceiving community that imagines an endless process, multiplicity of ties and mergings with others" (1). This section considers how allusion and intertext in Carson's poetry disrupts boundaries, and provides a sense and the multiplicity of "ties and mergings", but also suggests that her work inculcates a sense of history.

In the context of her collaboration with Carson on *Antigonick*, Bianca Stone identifies the movement between dualities in the work: "*Antigonick is* a multidimensional transformation between artists, between text, image, blank space; tone and absence of tone; time and timelessness; bookmaking and the *collapsing* of the *idea* of the book" (154). Allusion in Carson's writing helps build a tension between what might be deemed "time and timelessness" and Carson's approach to time bears further consideration. In 2018, *The Well Review* included a pamphlet, "Ghost Q&A", by Anne Carson. Like *Float, Nox* and *Antigonick ,* the pamphlet is an art object: hand-stitched rather than stapled, the card cover has three equal sides which can be folded into each other to appear like a conventional

book, or can lean into each other like a triangular prism. Like some of the pages in *Antigonick*, the first page is translucent, and the title page is visible through it, but is slightly out of focus. The eight pages of spare text are not quite rectangular, the top and bottom of each are cut to a slight angle. The "Q&A" begins with Q asking (although there are no question marks): "how do you know you're a ghost".

What follows is an exchange which is a distillation, almost in the form of a list, of many of Carson's abiding concerns: sleep, dreams, grammar, verbs, parts of speech, terminology, contradiction, movement, and there are several seeming non sequiturs, for example: "Q no space no time/ A I go in after myself like a diver" (n.p.). There are references to Virgil: "Q in Virgil the ghosts are called 'shades'/ A Virgil's a shame culture, now we have guilt" (n.p), and the writer of complex novels and non-fiction, Thomas Pynchon: "Q who is that man/ A Thomas Pynchon/ Q No it's not" (n.p.). A answers Q's initial question by saying "it's the sliding", returning to this when asked: "are ghosts quiet" by responding: "well there's the sliding", and this "sliding" is reminiscent of Carson's observation regarding ghosts in Woolf's short story "The Haunted House", which has two ghosts moving through a house they had occupied centuries previously by "sliding from room to room" (*Decreation* 25). This verb, rather than the more usual verb for spectral movement, "hover", might suggest a slippage between life and death, mortal and immortal, and the hybridity which a ghost represents.

On the sixth unnumbered page of text in the pamphlet there is an exchange about time, ("they" in the first line appears to refer to ghosts):

Q how can they wait, you said time is wrong
A it's always now
Q is that like being a god
A gods have all time at the same time, which is quite different
Q kind of like a map spread out
A kind of like a map
Q or a big chair
A more like a big chair (n.p.)

In the context of time, gods are not like ghosts, but seem to operate more like readers of Thucydides who are set: "on a high vantage point above such facts, so that we look down as if at a map of the Greek states and see lives churning there" (*Men* 3). For ghosts, time is different: "it is always now". In these few lines from "Q&A", Carson makes a distinction between two dynamics of time, both of which are crucial in her poetics: "all time at the same time" and "always now" (*Eros* 118). This juxtaposition harks back to an idea explored in *Eros the Bittersweet,* which hinges on one Ancient Greek word, which contains both these dynamics, that of the term "*dēute*" (*δηύτε*), which Carson explains is a "complex word", and which she asserts causes an: "uncommonly stereoscopic effect: each of the two words that make up *dēute* has a different vantage point on time" (118).

In *Eros the Bittersweet,* Carson tells readers that "*dēute*" is a complex adverb , combining the particle "*dē"*, which "signifies vividly and dramatically that something is taking place at this moment", and *aute* meaning: "again, once again, over again" (*Eros* 118) She continues: "*Dē*, places you in time and emphasizes that placement: now. *Aute* intercepts 'now' and binds it into a history of '*thens*'" (118). Most readers are looking for poetry which says things differently, but which also provides a moment of recognition. Many poems provide this, without reaching into the past. Readers glimpse that moment of recognition as part of the ideal, so that, on reading a poem about grief, Wordsworth's "Surprised by Joy" (560), for example, readers who have grieved recognise the shattering moment of turning to say something to a loved one, and then remembering that they are dead. Readers may themselves reflect on the ideal, moving away from that particular moment to consider the ideal, saying to themselves that this is part of what "grief" is. To bring Catullus into the grieving process, to create a triangle of Carson, her brother and Catullus, as Carson does in *Nox,* is to allow "*dēute*" to flow between this instance and the ideal. The idea formulates that this same intensity of grief has been happening for two

thousand years and as readers journey through this in *Nox* it serves to intensify the performative power of Carson's explorations of her own grieving process.

Carson's description of the effect of "*dēute*" on readers may also serve to describe the effect on readers of allusion, and still more so of the power of the repeated pattern of allusions that triangulation offers, which opens a broad sweep to the two "different vantage points on time":

> A note of powerful, alert emotion is struck by the particle *dē* itself, which can waken a range of overtones from urgent pathos through various degrees of scorn.… This is a word on which the eyes open wide in sudden perception, then narrow in understanding. The adverb *aute* closes over that understanding like two hands joined in acquiescence, with a deep nod: again and again" (118−119).

"On Davey" contains triangulation both within the poem and between texts In this prose poem Carson pulls away from individual sources to juxtapose gods and humans on the matter of "falling", but allows the Greek (and Roman) idea of the gods to swell "through history" as the prose poem describes. In the poem war itself is triangulated, through three embodiments: Mars, the Roman God of War, Ares, the Greek god of War, and Davey, who "Came back from/ Vietnam addicted to falling"(*LRB 41*). Readers may recognise a triangulation between texts through the Vietnam veteran figure which recurs, also, in the character of Ray in *The Beauty of the Husband*, and Sad but Great in *Red Doc >*.

In the prose poem, "On Davey", a quotation from which begins this section, Carson considers war by looking at its embodiments, ancient and modern, human and divine, viewing them through each other and through the lens of "falling", a subject which she has already explored in different contexts, such as her uncle's dementia in "Uncle Falling", in *Float*. Through such original lenses, often made from one word, Carson enhances the reader's vision so that "perception leaps" (*Eros* 17), enabling them to glimpse the agitating forces, in this case those associated with war, through history. Once again, she takes an outside, but completely engaged, position.

Carson is standing on a pier looking through the boards at waves of the past and occupies the vantage point she so values. She returns to the idea of looking through gaps and cracks to view the past. Here, again, Carson's view is partly obscured, as she describes in interview with Eleanor Wachtel at the Montreal Jazz Festival in 2016, in answer to a question regarding the translation process, Carson describes the experience of translation as similar to looking through cracks in a surface down to an almost visible world (2.20−2.39). Later in the same interview Wachtel, referring to *Antigonick*, asks: "How do you go about separating the layers of culture from our own?" to which Carson replies: "I don't think I do. It's side by side in my head: her/ me then/ now" (7.27−7.36).

In "On Davey", Carson is not looking at cracks in strata, but at an active, moving sea full of energy. The phrase: "Metrics not the way to do this", is preceded in the poem by the triangulation of Davey, Ares and Mars. This triangulation, coming after the question: "What's 4 secs to a god?" indicates the rejection of linear time in this context, and a movement towards a spatial view of history as a wide, largely unknowable expanse. History is depicted as waves which are always moving and changing and have their own impetus: "driving on, driving and breaking, a roar apiece" (*LRB 41*), but which can only be viewed in a restricted way.

Bartlett and Clemens make an enjoyable pun in observing: "Whoever asks 'What is contemporary?' is already behind the times" (10), and then supply a summary of Badiou's ideas, agreeably exploiting the difference between the term "contemporary" and the phrase "our contemporaries":

> Philosophy, for Badiou, is contemporary to the material and materialist conditions that in their own time produce the new discourses of time, and also to the Idea itself as the composition of this contemporaneity. As such, Plato, Descartes and Hegel are our contemporaries, just as are Euclid, Galileo, the Horses of Chauvet, Eloise and Abelard, the Paris Commune and Category Theory" (10).

It is possible that any of these individuals, communities and ideas might be mingled in evidence in any of Carson's writings, but the question as to whether Carson views these as "our contemporaries", as Badiou does, requires further exploration.

D*ēute* interposes itself in this consideration. The dynamic of dēute is at its most meaningful in recent work highlighting drone strikes such as *Lecture on the History of Skywriting*, where Carson says: "surely Hector and Achilles looked into each other's eyes on the battlefield", and notes the banning of cross bows in 1092 because it was "inglorious due to its distance from death", before comparing this to contemporary warfare where "a soldier in Nevada can push a button and make five people in Pakistan burst into flames.", and she concludes: "without the face, no ethics" (34.29−36.12). Page Dubois desires a sense of history partly because she advocates: "a Marxist-feminist historicism, one that includes not only a narrative about the past but a vision of equality and emancipation in the future not only for women but for everyone" (*Sappho is Burning* 56). As the audience watch and listen to *Lecture on the History of Skywriting*, they might also watch the spillage from Homer through to the words of Pope Urban and onto the violent act of pressing a button in Nevada, and the conclusion: "without the face no ethics" is driven home by the full force of a "history of thens" (*Eros* 118). It is this particular section that Faisal Bin Ali Jaber translates into Arabic in the performance, but there are many instances of violence described in this performance piece, and the section where the Sky describes the burning of his/her mythic son Herakles drives home as the audience are brought to consider present day drone strikes (*Skywriting* 5.20−6.00). A sense of history matters here in holding governments to account for war crimes, but also because of the possibility of future change, as both Dubois, and, it seems, Carson desire. *Lecture on the History of Skywriting* is an example of Carson seeing "lines of connection" in a more crucial context than in

"Every Exit is an Entrance" for example, one which asserts the pressing need for a sense of history.

Triangulation-as-process is an open-ended means of charting a largely unknown sea or vortex of history and culture. The planar, ever-building nature of this system of triangulation, as well as its connection to cartography, suggests a convergence with Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's theory of the rhizomic map. In their discussion of the rhizome, they speak of history in terms which are not in opposition to the sense of history given through *dēute*:

> It is not a question of this or that place on earth, or of a given moment in history, still less of this or that category of thought. It is a question of a model that is perpetually in construction or collapsing, and of a process that is perpetually prolonging itself, breaking of and starting again (22).

The sense of history that Carson's writing fosters is not concerned with "a given moment" in history, but the repeated moment in a "history of thens" brought into the "now" at the moment of reading. Individual triangulations provide a hyper-real vision of an instance, such as that moment described in Sappho 31, but Carson asserts: "The poem floats towards us on a stage set. But we have no program" (12). For her too this poem does not have a particular "place on earth" , and she continues: "The action has no location"(13).

Triangulation-as-process aids readers to view this repetition of "thens", and to get some kind of bearing with regard to questions that concern us most, but Carson does not give answers. Triangulation is more concerned with a network of utterances, across genre and culture, rather than a tracing back to the roots of things. Her contemporary mediations are concerned with bringing these utterances into "now", and often eschew the tracing of utterances to a moment in the past. Deleuze and Guattari reject categorization, and Carson overturns categories of thought. The process of triangulation is perpetually in construction, and many different starts are possible.

In the context of vision there are significant differences, which may reflect the difference between the "high vantage point" which, Carson suggests, reading Thucydides allows and that of Virginia Woolf who is right in the middle of the action. Deleuze and Guattari make a suggestion to writers: "It's not easy to see things in the middle, rather than looking down on them from above, or up at them from above or up at them from below, or from left to right or right to left: try it, you'll see everything change (25). However, in the allusions she makes, Carson often takes the scholars position, a vantage point from which she can see the lines of connection.

In the chapter "Landscape, Navigation and Cartography" in her book *Muriel Rukeyser and Documentary*, Catherine Gander links Deleuze and Guattari with Rukeyser in the context of a "poetics of connection" (183), and the fostering of multiplicities that Gander identifies in the following quotation are also suggestive of triangulation-as-process: "If one applies Deleuze and Guattari's model of the map to Rukeyser's oeuvre, one might see each text as a 'plateau', between which proliferate connecting lines of thought. Such thought is characterised by its rhizomatic nature: It fosters multiplicities through multiple contact" (183). Gander's commentary on Deleuze and Guattari's theory also provides insight into the "tracings" they articulate, which they liken to " a photograph or an X-ray" (14).

Gander points out the "rhizomatic map" does not situate viewers at a vantage point: "A map / rhizome, according to Deleuze and Guattari, differs from the typical road or contour map, which situates the viewer in a position of visual privilege" (182). She considers several texts by Rukeyser in her book, so that it is possible to view: "each text as a 'plateau', between which proliferate connecting lines of thought" (183). The multiplicity of allusions within Carson's writing allow for lines of connection between strata, in Deleuze and Guattari's terms, but, in the context of allusion and intertext, the process of

triangulation, although planar, open-ended and overlaying, affords readers that "visual privilege". Gander's discussion of "tracing" identifies a visual privilege in those tracings, but points out the importance, for Deleuze and Guattari, of reconnecting the tracings to the map:

> Wishing to avoid the dualism they had derided earlier, the authors are careful not to set the principles of 'tracing' and 'mapping' in opposition, but rather explain their relationship in terms of method: '*the tracing should always be put back on the map*'. A tracing reproduces what is already mapped by means of selection and isolation,'like a photograph or an X-ray'(14). By organizing fragments of the rhizome into fixed, stabilised images which afford a hierarchical point of view, the tracing breaks and blocks the rhizome. This is why 'it is so important to . . . plug the tracings back into the map, connect the roots or trees back up with a rhizome (15) (182).

Just as Deleuze and Guattari's ideas of mapping and tracing are not opposed, so Carson's "waves of history" and the system of triangulation in her allusive writing work alongside. Carson suggests that such juxtapositions are accidental, and while this is not always be the case, the assertion seems to indicate a desire to allow for a random, rhizomatic, element, as does Carson's suggestion that the lines of connection "paint themselves" (*Plainwater* 93). Both assertions allow for a movement away from the idea of selection. Although the juxtapositions appear to partake of some of the qualities of "tracings," they do not exist in isolation, but are part of a system of triangulation, and this relational element is crucial for Carson. Triangulation-as-process has meaning only in the context of that sea of culture, and the focus remains there, but it does not appear to cause a block or stoppage, any more than triangulating a landscape causes damage to the land. While Carson's texts exist within that vortex of culture, her work demonstrates a desire to also move outside of the cultural vortex in order to view it, and triangulation-as-process assists this, in providing an orthographic understanding of that space. The relational dynamic which triangulation and triangulation-as-process articulate is crucial for Carson's poetics. It is through the viewing of individual writers and thinkers, not in isolation, but in

relation to others, that energy is transmitted, that new thoughts arise, and that: "the difference between what is and what could be" (*Eros* 17) becomes visible.

Conclusion

As Carson explores in *Eros the Bittersweet*, an individual triangulation is capable of providing an electrification of thought, and can make the invisible visible. Jennings and Rae, along with others, have identified such triangulations in Carson's work. It is, indeed, important that each erotic triangle has its own vibrant internal dynamic. However, what is vital is that such triangulations spread and overlap in an ongoing process which covers the body of Carson's work. No reference exists in isolation, no allusive triangulation, where sources from the past are ushered in, stands alone. All interconnect and spread intertextually and intratextually, providing an orthographic reading of a space, and a privileged vantage point from which the lines of connection can be viewed.

Bartlett and Clemens identify a shift in recent thinking: "from the conceptual routines that accord a primacy to time-as-sequence to a disposition of the organisation of space, spaces, spatiality…" (13). Carson's allusive writing is a means by which Carson embraces this shift while also providing a sense of history for readers. These two perspectives could be seen as opposed, but stereoscopy allows both narratives can be held simultaneously, and the process of triangulation in Carson's allusive writing is a means to deliver this idea. In the context of allusion, it is useful to consider the process of triangulation as a kind of orthographic representation, plotting the writers and thinkers that Carson has read in relation to each other in a manner which gives energy to the allusions she makes, and which also charts a cultural space, facilitating what might be deemed her: "including and writing into a community of voices" (98), which allows her to: "hold open a

textual space" (98), as Kelsey describes it. In doing so Carson widens the field of vision for readers.

In Carson's allusive writing, such a process of triangulation places at each nexus a hybrid of text/writer. The sense of history that this process of triangulation gives is one which rejects time-as-linear, but which accepts a space where now and "a history of thens" interconnect. This is a completely contemporary idea, integral to Carson's completely contemporary poetry. Triangulation-as-process also supports Carson's "queer poetics" (Harvey and Cheetham 25). The next chapter will explore how stereoscopic vision, and the triangulations which provide a "stereoscopic moment", facilitate Carson's exploration of contemporary ideas.

Chapter Five: Volcano Time?

"Volcano time? he said" (*Autobiography of Red* 144).

The stereoscopic vision required to perceive the dynamics of juxtaposition, triangulation as individual instance and triangulation-as-process, also allows for the holding of aspects of what could be deemed opposing theories, facilitating the simultaneous holding of postmodern narratives and a sense of history. The postmodern concerns evident in Carson's writing, such as dualities, gender, truth, fluidity, and the crossing of boundaries, are most often the subjects which the juxtaposition between writers and thinkers illuminate. The allusive triangulations Carson makes create a space away from the binary, where such concerns may move more freely, and with which readers interact.

In the chapter "Contemporary" in the book which is a comparative study of the theories of Lacan, Deleuze and Badiou, Bartlett and Clemens give a brief description of some of the ideas that the term does not encapsulate: "Thus time, language and spatial proximity are not the conditions of possibility for what is 'contemporary'" (37). In the course of their explorations of the similarities and differences of the three thinkers, whom they place at: "the heart of contemporary thought", they find a certain unity between the thoughts of the three in this context, although they is careful to also note a "strenuous dissension" in that unity: "Against the Kantian heritage for which the atemporal temporalising of the immaturity-maturity dialectic is primary, our three thinkers are united in their hostility to this heritage and its implications: no to discussion, no to representation, yes to the untimely" (47).

Carson does not fully embrace contemporary ideas on timelessness, or "the untimely", but rather she places "now" alongside a multitude of "thens". In the

introduction to their book, Bartlett and Clemens also set up an opposition between the version of the "contemporary" explored by Lacan , Deleuze and Badiou and: "the phenomenological tradition that stems, above all, from G. W. F. Hegel, and runs through Edward Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Jacques Derrida" (14). However, Carson, as theorist, seems to admit of aspects of the theories of many of those, in both camps, named above, and, as "On Davey" illustrates, holds both ideas of the contemporary, and "the waves of history" (*LRB 41*) as valuable.

Theories regarding Sappho, who holds a key position in Carson's poetics, can shed light onto Carson's ideas regarding time. In her book *Sappho is Burning*, Page Dubois begins her introduction by asking the question: "Are we now living in a world without history?" (1) She continues by itemising aspects of postmodernist theories and ideas in a series of questions ending with: "Are we simply processes, discontinuous assemblages of the various appellations of gender, race, class, ethnicity?". She finds the "fluidity and heterogeneity and Deleuzian flux of the model" appealing as a response to " the rigid , bounded, discrete metaphysical subject of post-Platonic western culture" (1). She returns to considerations of the "master narrative" by continuing her questioning as follows: "How could there be even a fictional sense of selfhood, of duration, if there is no sense of history? How could anyone ever act, be an agent, have principles and some possibly desirable sense of continuity with the past?"(2), and comments on all these questions by making the following assertion:

> Perhaps we must, after all, hold both these models of existence simultaneously, postmodernist and master narratives, conscious of dwelling both in the postmodernist present and also in relation to some pasts, multiple defining narratives. At least provisionally, we can move between these two ways of understanding being, as both a diffuse flow of contradictory, cacophonous appeals and directives, as an evolutionary, teleological story (2).

Carson disrupts this "evolutionary, teleological story" by bringing the past into what might be termed the "postmodernist present". Triangulation-as-process provides an

orthographic reading of a cultural space, providing readers with the differing vantage points of "now and a history of thens" (*Eros* 118). Explorations of the postmodern narratives which are abiding concerns in Carson's writing, are facilitated by triangulation, both as a manifestation of the desire for the beloved and the desire to know.

Carson's writing provokes many questions. One example of this may be found in the prose piece in "Decreation; How Women Like Sappho, Marguerite Porete and Simone Weil Tell God", and the poetry of the "Opera in Three Parts" which follows it, which might throw up questions about hunger and lack, and where hunger for a lover collides with hunger for food or hunger for God. Readers may wonder if *ekstasis* is a collision point in this exploration of the ideal, or what considerations regarding truth and lies, closeness and distance, might add to it. Just as a spillage is not contained at any one point and takes an uncertain path, so many possible answers flow in the mind. In the first instance the parameters of their movement is the allusive triangulation of Sappho, Porete and Weil which Carson has created, but readers may make their own explorations, moving beyond this triangulation, into that: "space for imaginal adventure" (*If Not* xi) which Carson's work may open up. It may be that Foust's response to reading Carson is a manifestation of this: "I write around it, through it, under its spell. …Carson's long essay has leant certain contours to my mind rather than having simply filled it with content…" (82).

The dualities signalled in Sappho's term: "bittersweet" and other abiding concerns of Carson's, such as distance, gender, fluidity and hybridity, may be folded into the triangulation dynamic found in her allusive writing. Carson's erotic triangulations allow for a movement away from the binary, and through this dynamic, dualities cease to throw up a paradox, or to be tied to a continuum between polar opposites, but move freely in an in-between space, or, as hybrids, become a component of triangulation themselves.

Just as Carson uses allusion and intertextual connections to blur the boundaries between speaker and what is read in "The Glass Essay", she uses the interweaving of poetry and her investigative essays to facilitate the blurring of both kinds of writing in her work, and: "to draw readers into a vortex of thought and emotion by establishing systems of association…" (Rae 174), not just in "The Glass Essay", which is the subject of Rae's investigation, but throughout the body of her writing. This chapter explores the role that allusion and intertext have in effecting the change that reading Carson's work might provoke, and suggests that the kind of "stereoscopic vision" necessary to apprehend triangulations, may also be used in consideration of dualities, hybridity and gender, creating a shift in perception away from the binary, and normative heterosexuality for readers.

Volcano time?

"It is generally anger dreams that occupy my nights now./ This is not uncommon after loss of love−/ blue and black and red blasting the crater open" (*Glass and God* 34).

The volcano, a common trope in Carson's poetry, is a paradigm for the triangulation dynamic in Carson's allusive poetics. From a distance they often appear triangular in shape, and, black against a white sky, they can resemble an image from a textbook on Geometry, but their interiors are the opposite of fixed. They are machines for transformation, turning solid to liquid and back again, and providing extremes of heat and cold. They are unstable, and transmit a feeling of instability to those near them. They bring to the surface what is usually hidden in the depths of the earth, and provide an aperture to allow insights into the layers of the earth and the boiling heat beneath, just as her writing provide a glimpse into layers of culture, a world readers can almost see: "but not quite" (*Margins of Mind 2.20−2.39*). Volcanoes, as perhaps one of the nearest features in the physical world to an ideal geometric triangle, suggest the ideal overlaid by the actual, but

are also mechanisms of transformation and instability. This tension between exactness and instability is part of the compelling nature of Carson's poetry, reflecting her poetics, and may also mirror the tension between the postmodern and traditional narratives she explores.

In the D'Agata interview in 1997, Carson discusses her interest in volcanoes, which stem originally from painting images of them when she explains was confined to the house after breaking her knee (22). There may be some humour in the reference to the "knee" which comes shortly before Carson ends the interview abruptly, by saying: "Now turn that off"(23). It is a detail which may contain a pun, as the Greek word for a geometric angle (used in the names of most polygons) is derived from "knee" (*gonu / γόνῦ*), and may also hint at a link between volcanoes and triangles. Several books by Anne Carson feature volcanoes on the cover: the Cape Poetry edition of *Glass and God* shows a single black and white sketch of an erupting volcano, while the 1996 New Directions edition of *Glass, Irony and God* has two volcanoes spewing red and yellow fire on the cover, and the Random House edition of *Autobiography of Red* also shows a photograph of a smoking volcano. This latter is not so surprising, as the book uses lines from Emily Dickinson, which reference: "the reticent volcano" as an epigraph, and much of the content rotates around volcanoes, stating several facts about them, and having Ancash and Herakles travel the world in the study of them.

The connection of *Glass and God* with volcanoes is less distinct but equally tangible. "That volcano in the Philippines at it again." forms part of the mother's small talk in "The Glass Essay" (5) The adjective "volcanic" is used in "THE FALL OF ROME" section, where poem "LVII" refers to Orvieto, and its famous cathedral: " On top/ arises/ a pedestal of volcanic rock/ on top of the rock is a word" (115). The instability of a volcano, and the extreme heat it is capable of producing is palpable in many of the poems in *Glass*

and God. In “The Glass Essay” readers may be reminded that glass is formed by heating sand to very high temperatures, and the trope of heat runs throughout: “What are the imperatives/ that hold people like Catherine and Heathcliff/ together and apart, like pores blown into hot rock/ and then stranded out of reach/ of one another when it hardens…” (14). Heat can have a curative effect, as when a fourteen year old Emily Brontë, bitten by a rabid dog, remedied herself : “taking red hot tongs from the back of the stove applied/ them directly to her arm”(18). Anger is more likely to be liquid than fire in “The Glass Essay”, and although it is spoken of a “black liquid” which may suggest its connection with bile, its movement has more in common with lava: “Anger travels through me, pushes aside everything else in/ my heart,/pouring up the vents” (35).

Carson discusses the relationship between anger and volcanoes in interview with D’Agata, Carson refers to *Autobiography of Red*: “a novel I’ve written that was all prose at first and very thick. Then I thought, ‘What if I break these lines up a bit? Maybe they’d move along more smartly.’ So now the novel is in verse” (20). The identity of the novel is confirmed at the end of the interview when gives a very brief, but unmistakable outline of the plot of the novel, which involves volcanoes. She refers back to painting volcanoes, and the words of a friend who observed:“’Oh, good. You’re dealing with your anger.’ And I said,‘What anger!’ So there’s that too” (22).

Pain may also be liquid, like the night in the opening poem of “The Glass Essay”, which recalls a spinal tap as it “drips its silver tap/ down the back” (3) or may combine heat and fluidity like the deadly progression of hemlock, that “secret heat” (80), in the poem “TV Men: Sokrates” in the same book. Carson hopes that Emily’s relationship with “Thou” “gave ease to anger and desire”, and quotes the words of “the psalmist” as to how this might work: “ In Thou they are quenched as a fire of thorns”. Carson goes on to profess her disbelief in the psalmist’s words and asserts that her own relationship with

Thou fails to provide this: “I am not quenched./ With Thou or without Thou I find no shelter” (42). This connection between fluidity and the Bible is picked up in the poem “God’s List of Liquids” in the book.

The term “quenched” evokes connections with heat and water and both are common tropes in Carson’s poetry and in her theoretical writings and often connect with considerations of gender. In the series of prose pieces at the end of *Men in the Off Hours*, Carson explores ancient Greek ideas regarding gender, sexuality and thought, in terms of heat and fluidity, using the thoughts of several Greek philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle and Hesiod to support her ideas. In the piece “Logics” she quotes Hippokrates: “The female flourishes more in an environment of water, from things cold and wet and soft, whether food or drink or activities. The male flourishes more in an environment of fire, from dry, hot foods and modes of life” (*Men* 132). Carson connects this Greek idea of female wetness with the portrayal of them as transgressors of boundaries in Greek philosophy and myth. She observes: “Mythical women frequently violate masculinity by enveloping male form in a fatal formlessness, as Euripides’ Klytemnestra encloses Agamemnon in a ‘garment that has no boundaries’” (134).

These mediations on the Ancient Greek attitude to women, together with their transgressing of boundaries, and her interest in hybridity, converge with those of Kristeva regarding abjection: “It is thus not lack of cleanliness which causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite” (*Powers of Horror* 4). Kristeva’s discussion of societies where: “religious prohibitions…are supposed to afford protection from defilement” in the same book also resonate through Carson’s interpretations of Ancient Greek culture:

> Ritualization of defilement is accompanied by strong concern for separating the sexes, and this means giving men rights over women. The latter, apparently put in

> the position of passive objects, are none the less felt to be wily powers, "baleful schemers" from whom rightful beneficiaries must protect themselves (70).

Such observations point to the Carson's willingness to hold both the postmodern narrative and the "evolutionary, teleological story" of "history or History" (*Sappho is Burning* 2) simultaneously, as Dubois suggests.

Carson gives Deianara and Nephele as examples of women: "tampering with boundaries", providing a triangulation in which to consider this formlessness. In the section "Wanton" she also notes the poet Archilochos' version of the female threat: "She came carrying water in one hand/ the tricky minded female, and fire in the other" (140). It is possible to overlay the trope of the volcano onto Archilochos' image : male and female elements of heat and fluidity combined in the "tricky minded female" or in the instability of the volcano's interior. For the Greeks, water may have been associated with the female, for Carson, it may equally be linked to the male: "Water is something you cannot hold. Like men" (*Plainwater* 117).

Lee Upton has noted the trope of the volcano in Carson's work, quoting from *Autobiography of Red*: "A healthy volcano is an exercise in the use of pressure" in support of her argument, which appears to draw on the triangle of sexual desire and the erotics of desire for the beloved, that: "The volcano itself is a kind of triangle , and its interior power intrigues as a figure for sexual obsession" (111). She continues, however, by quoting from Carson's essay, "The Gender of Sound", asserting that Carson: "links the voice to an interior that may suggest a volcanic metaphor as well" (111) and quotes Carson as follows: "Every sound we make is a bit of an autobiography. It has a totally private interior, yet its trajectory is public. A piece of inside projected to the outside" (*Irony* 130). Here the volcanic triangle identified by Upton connects with utterance, as well as gender, as do the lines from "The fall of Rome: a Traveller's Guide" regarding the cathedral in Orvieto,

where: “on top of the rock, is a word.”, and “every sound we make” may be emitted by Carson as poet or theorist, or by those whom she references.

Dualities

In her explorations on the erotics of triangulation in *Eros the Bittersweet*, Carson, as theorist, explores how eros may work on dualities. In the first chapter “Bittersweet”, she presents readers with a series of paradoxes, commencing with *glukupikron (γλυκύπικρον),* literally “sweetbitter”, and allows this paradox to immediately become a matter of degree. “There might be several reasons why what is sweet may also be bitter. There might be various relations between the two savors” (*Eros* xiii). Explorations of “Bittersweet” flow into those on friendship and enmity and love and hate. The language that these explorations are couched in also suggests a fluidity. The lines from Sappho which contain the word “bittersweet”, also describe Eros as *lusimeles,* or “limb-loosener”, a suggestion of a lover becoming liquid under its influence. Carson describes the paradox of love and hate as a “convergence” , hate “seeps”, love “creeps” . In the chapter “Ice-Pleasure” there are several pages of close reading of a poem by Sophokles which contains the metaphor of eros being like ice melting in the hands of a child (108−114). There is a fluidity but also a force: desire “forces itself irresistibly on her from without” (*Eros* 3). Desire pulls the lover in two directions.

Carson returns to considerations of the dualities first discussed in *Eros the Bittersweet* throughout her body of work, and often uses allusions to past writers and thinkers in her explorations. In doing so, Carson provides a space which detaches from the individual instance, and which may become a space of “no location”. Like the interior of a volcano, this space is full of movement and energy.

Absence and Presence

The visible and invisible can be considered, not just in terms of raising individual instances so that they might approach general truths, but to come to an understanding of allusion itself in Carson, in terms of visibility and invisibility and presence and absence. In the context of allusion, the visible and invisible are both present and are both vital. Carson's allusions range from the most concrete citation or quotation, which may usher the person who uttered the words before readers, to an occasional unascribed word or phrase, or echo in rhythm or syntax, that recalls the work of another. Sometimes the influence is as invisible and all pervasive as "the smell in your head" which Carson claims to come away with after reading Woolf or George Eliot. *(Art of Poetry* 88)

It is possible to say that, in Carson's work, an absence can be a type of presence. Allusions to Sappho's triangle, as well as ideas and images connected with desire which her poems provoke, are so prevalent in Carson's writing that the Ancient Greek poet may become present to readers as they notice her absence in a given text; in a kind of "Look. No Sappho." moment. The idea of absence contains the experience, or expectation, of presence, just as describing someone as having an absence of guile, indicates that there is an expectation for humans to be guileful. The expectation of finding Sappho between the lines of Carson's poetry or theoretical writings, could be said to arise as part of the "reach and grasp" that Carson's work requires of the reader, symptomatic of the desire of "coming to know" that is one half of the "knucklebone" alongside desire for the beloved. Carson places part of "Sappho 31" between the lines of "Mia Moglie (Longinus' Red Desert)" (*Decreation* 67), which appears to support the presence of Sappho between the lines elsewhere. The fact that this idea suggests itself in a poem about psychoanalysis may give an indication of the influence of that poem on Carson's poetics. The absence of Sappho

may be as palpable as the presence, and, in Carson's work, both are placed in the space where these dualities move and merge.

There is an expectation of presence, but this expectation is not fulfilled. This, for Carson, is lack, and as explored in *Eros the Bittersweet*, lack is eros: "There is something pure and indubitable about the notion that eros is lack. Moreover, it is a notion that, once adopted, has a powerful effect on one's habits and representations of love" (*Eros* 12). Carson expands on this in the context of knowledge and desire: "A thinking mind is not swallowed up by what it comes to know. It reaches out to grasp something related to itself and to its present knowledge (and so knowable in some degree) but also separate from itself and its present knowledge…" (171). Readers of Carson's work engage in this process of "reach and grasp": there is always more to know, and expectations are often overturned. As Graham Foust says, there are "holes" and, Carson asserts, through desire "two lacks become one":

> Reaching for an object that proves to be outside and beyond himself, the lover is provoked to see that self and its limits. From a new vantage point, which we might call self-consciousness he looks back and sees a hole. Where does that hole come from?…Desire for an object that he never knew he lacked is defined, by a shift of distance, as desire for a necessary part of himself (*Eros* 32−33).

Absence and presence hold an important position in Carson's allusive writing: "The blind point of Eros is a paradox in time as well as space. A desire to bring the absent into presence, or to collapse far and near, is also a desire to foreclose then upon now" (*Eros* 111). In Carson's poetics, absence and presence are bound up with lack, which is crucial for desire, and the desire for the absent lover to be present is to want to "collapse far and near".

Carson further discusses this "collapse of far and near" in *Decreation* and tells readers that Porete spoke of the "the Farnear" to describe the: "divine lover who fills her soul with truth" (*Decreation* 174−175). This lover comes from afar and becomes near

enough to “fill her soul”, coming from as far away as a god can be, to rest inside Porete. The “farnear” also allows for a blending of the interior and exterior world which is also a feature of Carson’s writing, and which can gives rise to lines which exploit the tension between interior and exterior, and between nearness and distance: “Presence and absence twisted out of sight of one another inside the wife” (*Beauty 100*).

Distance, and the collapse of distance, is one of the ways in which Carson links Simone Weil, Margaret Porete and Sappho in “Decreation” , and in doing so Carson seeks to reveal more about all three, the most obvious idea being that all three are motivated by desire, and that the symptoms of the desire for a lover are the same as those for God. The connecting of writing with “telling” in this essay is insightful, as is her exploration of distance and proximity as it applies to all three writers. Carson reminds readers that many of Sappho’s poems were hymns of invocation to the Gods, most notably to Aphrodite, and she quotes from a fragment to Kypris, (another name for Aphrodite), which, she tells us, was scratched on a piece of pottery, and which is an example of a type of hymn: “‘kletic’, a calling hymn, an invocation to God to come from where she is to where we are.” She relates this type of Sapphic invocation to Porete’s invented word “le Loing-prés” , which she translates as “the Farnear” and says: “I have no idea what this sentence means but it gives me a thrill. It fills me with wonder” (177). The adoption of a distant position is key to Carson’s allusive poetics, but so too is the collapse of that distance. Allusion in Carson can be viewed as a similar collapse of far and near, as figures from the past become present in her poetry.

Carson’s poetics also suggest a collapse of absence and presence through writing. She puts this simply in *Eros the Bittersweet*: “Letters make the absent present ” (Eros 99), but Carson’s poetry and theoretical writings also suggest the possibility of there being absence and presence simultaneously, existing in the space between. Her explorations on

ghosts in *Ghost Q & A*, and her ideas regarding crossouts in manuscripts from Keats or Virginia Woolf and in her own writings on the death of her mother in *Men In the Off Hours*, provoke questions regarding presence and absence: "Crossouts are something you rarely see in published texts. They are like death: by a simple stroke −all is lost, yet still there. For death *although utterly unlike life* shares a skin with it" (*Men* 166). The crossouts, sometimes almost to the point of obliteration, of lines describing her grief in *Nox*, continue this link between the crossout and death.

Another trope which moves with absence and presence in the triangulation space Carson creates is disappearance. In the pamphlet from *Float*, "Contempts: A Study of Profit and Nonprofit in Homer, Moravia and Godard", Carson interrogates this idea through observations regarding Brigitte Bardot in Godard's film, *Contempt*, in the first few minutes of which she is filmed nude:

> Her gestures are simple, transparent; her tone of voice quietly banal; her attitude as innocent as water. And somehow, from the pure center of this total and totally imposed exposure of herself, she disappears…to masculine judgement, to Godard's camera, to the moviegoers gaze−she eludes the transaction" (*Float* n.p.).

This seems to be a different kind of disappearance to that of Emilia in Moravia's book, who is only perceived: "through the lens of Riccardo's exasperation" and who is "always out of focus" (n.p.).

Unlike other dualities such as human and divine, or truth and lies, Carson privileges absence and presence alongside love and hate, giving them a pivotal role in her erotic poetics. She identifies: "an axis of paradox, absence and presence its poles, love and hate its motive energies" (*Eros* 11). As Carson views every allusive triangulation as an erotic one, the energies of love and hate may be taken as understood, lack, which for Carson is necessary for desire, moves between absence and presence but, in the context of dualities, absence and presence also provide a space in which to consider dualities as a matter of

degree, as well as an in-between. Triangulation provides the possibility to replace the paradox inherent in dualities with a space identified by Battis as “the between space” (198) which, she argues, to categorize would be to stigmatize (199).

Truth and Lies

In interview with Kevin McNeilly, Carson talks about trying to avoid interviews: “It just isn't a form that I find very useful, because I end up lying. There is this pressure to say something moderately wise in every space and you know in ordinary conversation in the world wisdom doesn't occur in every space. So it's unnerving” (*Canadian Literature* 12). The word “lying” here is a strong one, and it covers a wide variety of speech acts. Are readers to assume Carson might end up inventing something, or saying something she does not mean, or contradicting a known truth? Would it be a lie of omission or misremembering? Is the “lying” a heavily ironic response to Stanton’s intimations of her “errancy” in his article in the same publication? “Lying” is a word that is ready to hand for Carson, and considerations of truth and lies, begun in *Eros the Bittersweet*, continue to flow throughout her work.

In *Glass and God,* the “truths” that Carson reveal about God sometimes resemble those of medieval mystery plays, and his disgruntled wife shares personality traits with *Uxor Noah.* At other times, the truth reads like a modern religious text with a contemporary twist: “God had no emotions but wished temporarily/ to move in man’s mind/ as if he did: Christ” (62). Readers may come away thinking that the truth about God is unknowable, and that any detail regarding the divine moves in the space between truth and lies. The pronoun “he” itself, in relation to God, invites scepticism, given Carson’s explorations on gender and her later reference to the Harvard Divinity School strike of

1971, which arose in order to overturn the traditional gendering of God as a "He", in "Pronoun Envy" (*Float* n.p).

Considerations of truth and lies swirl through the erotic triangulations offered by *The Beauty of the Husband*. The husband: "lied about everything" (*Beauty* 33), and was "loyal to nothing…" (*Beauty* 9). Quoting from "Tango VIII "Poets (be generous) prefer to conceal the truth beneath strata of irony / because this is the look of truth: layered and elusive" (37), Eric C. Wilson describes *The Beauty of the Husband* as "an ironic experiment in what: "the true lies of poetry" (33) can do with marriage, this late in the game". He asserts that there is also a question whether Carson's speaker tells the truth. This is a question that Carson deliberately provokes: "I broke the glass and jumped. Now of course you know that isn't the true story, what broke wasn't glass, what fell to earth wasn't body. But still when I recall the conversation it's what I see – me a fighter pilot bailing out over the channel. Me as kill. (*Beauty* 16). This passage echoes Woolf's description of Terence Hewet's response to the onset of Rachel Vinrace's ultimately fatal illness in the *Voyage Out*. ". . .all around him he seemed to hear the shiver of broken glass as it fell to earth" (*Voyage* 418). Carson's description is a metaphor, which she views as a mistake with a greater truth within it. In "Essay on What I think about Most", Carson quotes Aristotle in aligning metaphor with a "mistake":

> Aristotle says that metaphor causes the mind to experience itself/ in the act of making a mistake/…At first it looks odd, contradictory or wrong. Then it makes sense./ At this moment, according to Aristotle, the mind turns to itself and says: 'How true, and yet I mistook it!'/ From the true mistakes of metaphor can be learned (*Economy* 30−31).

"The true mistakes of metaphor" may share the same space as "the true lies of poetry" (Eros 33). "I broke the glass and jumped." may not describe actions in the exterior world, but it is an insightful description of how the force of the husband's revelation about having a mistress works within the wife's body.

Floating in the truth/ lies in−between space, along with metaphors and "true lies", is the act of revoking what has been said. Ares attempts this in his "Sugar Aria" in *Decreation,* in the "Opera in Three Parts" which, while having sections entitled "Arias", has elements of a Greek play, including a chorus, and protagonists who are Greek gods. He adds: "Not really" to his braggadocio: "I get my sugar at a hectic nightclub./ I get it suddenly./ My sugar is sheer art./ Not really" (197). Ares boasts of his "sugar", (the meaning of which slides between sexual prowess, cocaine and a term of endearment in the Aria), in the reiterated lines: "It was easy in winter. / It was easy at evening./ It was easy hourly", but each time these three lines are followed by "Not really", which leaves the reader considering whether speech can be rendered ineffective by taking it back in this fashion. This device of having a character say something and then immediately retract it creates a dramatic tension, and ultimately leads the audience or reader to view Ares as a kind of glib charlatan, while still allowing his words to have impact. In the "Opera", Aphrodite is involved in an erotic triangle with Hephaistos and Ares, neither of whom are capable of making their words match their deeds, so that, alongside Ares' glibness, Carson depicts Hephaistos working with the chorus to build "the trap of the bed" in which to imprison Aphrodite, while crooning words of love for her.

Autobiography of Red includes a retake on Stesichoros' "Palinode", quoted by Sokrates in the *Phaedrus* (24), which indicates the lasting influence of that Platonic dialogue on Carson. With perhaps more success than Ares, (demonstrated by the reversal of his Helen-sent blindness), Stesichoros' "Palinode" takes back a previous poem about Helen, the details of which are only known because of "the Palinode", and the assertions he made about Helen in the previous poem were the cause of that blindness: "No it is not the true story./ No you never went on the benched ships. No you never came to the towers of Troy" (*Autobiography of Red* 17).

Readers might be sceptical about this change of heart and, in "Appendix C." of the book, Carson takes us through a deliberately pseudo-logical, comic progression of arguments numbered one to twenty one which flow towards and away from truth and lies, and which puns on the Greek derivation of Palinode, *palin* (πάλιν) or "back" and *hodos* (ὁδός) meaning "road" or "way":

> 8. If it was a strong remark about Helen's sexual misconduct (not to say its unsavoury aftermath after the Fall of Troy) either this remark was a lie or it was not.
>
> 9. If it was not a lie either we are now in reverse and by continuing to reason in this way are likely to arrive back at the beginning of the question of the blinding of Stesichoros or we are not.
>
> 10. If we are now in reverse and by continuing to reason in this way are likely to arrive back at the beginning of the question of the blinding of Stesichoros either we will go along without incident or we will meet Stesichoros on our way back (19).

This part of the argument, and much of the rest of it, suggests a moving and returning, and a series of reversals, in keeping with the flowing between truth and lies, logic and anti-logic that Carson favours. In terms of logic the conclusion can only be fallacious: "21. If Stesichoros was a blind man either we will lie or if not not" (20).

This is an example of the "true lies of poetry". To read Stesichoros' "Palinode" is an exercise in double-take. It is a flat denial, but rising under it is his previous poem which can be understood to have read the opposite, and the famous Homeric story of Helen of Troy. As Stesichoros' original poem is now lost, an idea of its contents can only be gleaned through the "Palinode", which, if the myth is to be believed, was written under a kind of duress, in that Helen sent blindness as a punishment for it. Truth and lies double back on themselves repeatedly in this example of taking back an utterance, and readers may perform the mental zig-zag between belief and unbelief which Carson's twenty one steps

in “Appendix C” reflect. As the reader’s mind performs these actions an instance of mimesis happens, as Carson frames it.[7]

The opera also gives an instance of letters being used to convey lies. At the start of each part, Carson provides an “argument” which gives context to the cast and to some parts of the piece, such as the “Chocolate Chorus”:

> Simone Weil’s life was caught in the net of her parents’ care…She did not want to be a woman. She wanted to disappear. Certain aspects of disappearance had to be concealed from the parents and so her many letters to them are repetitions of the one same glowingly factitious postcard that every good daughter sends home—*Dear people what splendid weather thanks for the chocolate I’m making lots of friends here kisses to all*—meanwhile she was dying…(*Decreation* 223).

A recent example of Carson exploring truth and lies is “Clive’s song”, a poem of seventy three lines, some as short as two words: “(Currie’s idea)”, which first appeared in *The New Yorker* in August 2017. Carson, as speaker, meets Clive, to whom she goes to look for “the limits of wisdom”, in the most mundane of situations, a diner, where they queue for breakfast. The poem is further pinned to the present and the mundane by the arrival of “Currie”, a reference to her partner, Robert Currie, with whom she also collaborates creatively. There are three people at this table: Carson, Currie and Clive Adrian Stafford Smith, a human rights lawyer: “now striving for people on death row or places like Gitmo/ for thirty-five years,”, and another triangle is described, that of Clive’s Moroccan client in Guantanamo, the “snitch” who has accused him (along with three hundred others) , and the “Americans” who reward the snitch: “every time he snitched/ he was allowed to visit the “love shack”/ where the Americans show porn” (*New Yorker* 2017).

[7] In interview with Kevin McNeilly in 2003, Carson describes mimesis as follows: “Well that's what imitation is for the ancients. It's simply a mirroring of the activity of the thought that you had at the time that you had it, and an attempt to make that activity happen again in the mind of the listener of the reader. Probably that's always what I'm trying to do” (*Canadian* 17).

In this poem, the dualities of truth and lies collide within the triangulations, which are founded in present day fact, to shows how the demand for proof of veracity can be wielded like a weapon, and how this demand contrasts with the words of the "snitch" being taken at face value by the authorities at Guantanamo:

> We sit and talk
> of Clive's upcoming trip to Guantánamo, where,
> although he's visited thirty-six times, they're questioning
> (this time) his signature.

At the end of the poem, Carson's perspective shifts to the familiar distant position to watch the line of Clive walking away: "in his saggy-butt pants, /looking not much like a high-powered lawyer," She moves into the poet/ scholar's distant vantage point now, and this also allows her to see the boundaries, or "limits", and the poem continues:

> and the limits of wisdom remain,
> well—as perhaps we, who tend to confuse the greetings of dogs and gods,
> prefer limits
> to do—more
> or less where they were.

The speaker in the poem, who appears to be herself, judging from the detail regarding her partner Currie, is in various positionings in this poem. Carson, as speaker, is within the group of three at the table, so is a component of the triangulation, but, as poet, she also steps out to a liminal positioning from which to view the triangulation. At the start and the end of the poem she occupies a more distant vantage point, so that she can see across time to the "man with lips of fire", and at the end sees the edges of wisdom. At the end of the poem space opens out to view these limits , and the possibility of a slight shift, indicated by their being "…more/ or less where they were" .

In "The Life of Towns", Carson explains that: "things hang together somehow" and the example she chooses to give of this is the seemingly random "my pear your winter". Although there is humour in her examples, finding connections between the two is, for Carson, anything but trivial:

> Your separateness could kill you unless I take it from you as a sickness. What if you get stranded in a town where pears and winter are variants of one another? Can you eat winter? No. Can you live six months inside a frozen pear? No. But there is a place, I know the place, where you will stand and see pear and winter side by side as walls stand by silence. (*Plainwater* 94).

Poetry provides such a place: a space where such analogies can move free of most anchorings, as widely as an analogous mind can take them. Carson bring comparisons between, for example, Simonides and Celan, into that same space, so that the writing becomes part poetry, part scholarly investigation, as in *Economy of the Unlost.* She also brings the juxtapositions of past writers and thinkers, often in themselves symptomatic of an analogous mind, into the poetry itself, as she does in "Essay On What I think about Most" (*Men* 30-37).

This kind of analogous mind might be said to be one adept at "stereoscopic vision" and this ability, to both note difference and to synthesise it, facilitates the overlay of dualities as discussed above, but also gives rise to a further step in the "adventure of thinking" (*Albertine* 34), so that those dualities which are explored consistently in Carson's writing, such as those of proximity and distance, and of truth and lies, for example, may themselves become hybrid. Porete's idea of "the farnear" , which Carson frames as: "the writer's dream of distance becomes an epithet for God" (*Decreatio*n 176), seems to have added force, capable of taking over Porete's entire body in moments of *ekstasis.* Similarly, the "true lies of poetry" may provide a different truth, one which cannot be fully explained by a melding of the dualities of truth and lies. Considerations of these dualities may move in the space Carson's allusive triangulations create, but they are also capable of being components in a triangulation, pushing space outwards, away from the binary. This shift may happen through individual triangulations, but is strengthened by the process of triangulation, interconnecting throughout Carson's poetry and scholarly writings, which is capable of instilling a new kind of vision, and a different kind of reality.

Hybridity and Fluidity

In the D'Agata interview, Carson repeatedly opposes his assertion that her writing after *Eros the Bittersweet* combines academic and "other" writing. While distinguishing the type of rigour required for her dissertation, from which *Eros the Bittersweet* grew, and the book it engendered, she observes:" I know what went into *Eros the Bittersweet*−all the footnotes and bibliographies and research−even if it was only in the dissertation and never made it into the book" (11). She states that *Eros the Bittersweet* was likely to be the last book which places academic and other writing in "the same stream" (9), and compares it with "the Economy essay" (an earlier short version of *Economy of the Unlost*) asserting that the same fusion of academic and other writing was not present in that essay.

In the interview she makes a distinction between academic processes, and the effort of thinking required: "Probably the same mental effort went into it but not through those same channels" (11). She states that she could not write the same kind of book as *Eros the Bittersweet* again, and gives her reason as "Because I had developed a more mature method" (9). D'Agata continues to press for the involvement of academic processes in her work, and appears to consider Carson's denial regarding this as suggesting that she does not view the post *Eros the Bittersweet* writings as "legitimate" (11). While D'Agata fails to probe what this "more mature method" entails, it is possible that the "Method" section in the lengthier *Economy of the Unlost*, published two years after this interview, may, in part, be an answer this.

In discussing Carson's "The Gender of Sound", Konchan gives a description of Carson's writing in general: "Throughout her creative and critical writing, and many works of lyrical investigations on gender, desire, anger, self, and language foreground Greco-Roman logos, while invoking classical topoi and epistemes"(37). Konchan suggests that Carson does not only bring classical logos to her writing but also: "Romantic tropes (eros,

truth, beauty)" and "high aesthetics (opera, Greek drama)", bringing them to bear on: "modernity's ghostly tropes", among which Konchan includes: "impersonality, collectivist identity, self-consciousness …"(37). She further demonstrates her considerable insight into Carson's work by noting that it seeks: "to incorporate rather than excise the layered epistemologies of metaphysics, phenomenology, philology, and theology…" (37). This reading of Carson's work allows for the holding of both traditional ideas and postmodern narratives which stereoscopy facilitates. It is also possible to consider Konchan's observations in light of Carson's method, outlined in *Economy of the Unlost*, of juxtaposing writers, and of looking through each writer to view the other, and triangulation and triangulation-as-process bring exactitude to the broad sweep of these "lyrical investigations" which Konchan identifies.

Carson's writing, in both poetry and prose, is something other to any kind of fusion between academic and creative writing, it is the product of "a more mature method" spreading through the body of her work. It is hybrid writing, which demonstrates erudition, particularly through the allusions and accompanying mediations within the work. It cannot be placed in any one category, but pushes the boundaries of what poetry or scholarly writing can be. In Carson's work, hybridity is not confined to genre, and some of the most memorable characters in Carson's writing are hybrids. The first name that may come to mind is Geryon. This section considers Geryon and triangulation, and also Herakles, who is half human, half immortal, but also frames ghosts, a common trope in Carson's writing, as a kind of hybrid. Placing these hybrids in triangulations allows: "power lines to shift", as happens in the familial triangulation of Penelope, Odysseus, Telemachos in the context of sleep, and out of which Penelope emerges as "master of Sleep" (*Decreation* 28).

Fluidity and force may be elements of a volcano but they also circulate in a tango, along with desire, movement towards and away, attraction and repulsion, embodied in the

erotic triangle of husband, wife and other woman in *The Beauty of the Husband*. An earlier description of a tango, connecting it to a three-person triangulation, can be found in *Autobiography of Red.* Geryon is in Argentina, in: "the only authentic/ tango bar left in Buenos Aires". The tango arrives as music and song, although the musicians themselves are almost dancing as they play: "…Hardly glancing/ at one another the three of them played/ as one person, in a state of pure discovery. They tore clear and locked/ and unlocked, they shot/ their eyebrows up and down/ they leaned together and wove apart, they rose/ and cut away and stalked/ one another and flew up in a cloud and sank back down on waves…" (*Autobiography of Red* 99−100). The triangle here is a humorous one, and is followed by the entrance of a singer, whose gender immediately shifts and who disturbs Geryon's enjoyment: "…a man, no it was a woman, parted a curtain/ and came on stage" (100). The comic, yet filmic, description of a tango plays with closeness and distance, gender fluidity, and the exciting instability of flying up in a cloud or sinking into waves. This latter picks up on the interplay of liquid and solid which runs through the book.

So many things float or flow in *Autobiography of Red*, even the world: "The world poured back and forth between their eyes once or twice" (39) The erotic charge between Herakles and Geryon is capable of changing the world's solidity, and the volcanoes within the book turn the world to varying degrees of hardness and fluidity: to lava, ash, gold and obsidian. Lava moves. In *Autobiography of Red* Carson outlines the speeds of that movement, and explores the interior/ exterior power of volcanoes. Within Geryon's mind lava moves inside the house: "What is it like to be a woman/ listening in the dark?… Ascent of the rapist up the stairs seems as slow as lava" (48). Readers may also be thinking about what it is like to be Geryon, and the answer is constantly slipping out of reach, and Battis asserts: "To see through Geryon's eyes is to 'dangle' between categories,

between binaries—male/female, monster/mortal, inside/outside—until the between-space itself becomes the only specifiable location" (198). Battis warns against attempts to define this space: "To root out the precise nature of this space, to stigmatize it as a perceptible category, gives the same result as Geryon's fifteen-minute exposures: black, or lack—certainly not red, which is the object of this inquiry" (199).

Battis points to the blurring of interior and exterior, and the inability of Geryon to distinguish between what is in the outside world and what lies in imagination. She also identifies a blurring between reader and what is read: "It is impossible to tell whether Geryon is changing before the eyes of an audience, or vice versa" (200). This blurring returns to ideas expressed by Foust and others on the changes to the reader that may occur on reading Carson, and suggests that Battis, too, finds a performative effect in Carson's writing. Considerations of hybridity, fluidity and imaginative spaces run throughout Carson's work, pouring through the spaces between any dualities or disparate terms which Carson chooses to introduce, from her theoretical writings in *Eros the Bittersweet* to her most recent poetry, such as the performance piece, *Lecture on the History of Skywriting*.

Carson also folds considerations of fluidity into her explorations on God. In "The Truth about God", Carson's "truth" swings between human and divine, mortal and immortal. Recalling earlier ideas on stereoscopy in *Eros the Bittersweet* , God looks at humans through a lens: "a partition/ that looks / from the other side/ (God's side)/ transparent/ but we are blind" (*Glass and God* 51). God is a "he",and is able to observe the whole of humanity and has the divine ability to "drop a fit on you" (52). The first line of the list is in in biblical language "*For I made their flesh as a sieve*" (62). Then, as the poem is called "God's List of Liquids" he itemises, in a mixture of the abstract and the physical :

Alcohol
Blood
Gratitude
Memory

Semen
Song
Tears
Time (63)

All these things run through the sieve of flesh. The inclusion of blood, semen and tears in the list, along with the framing of "flesh as a sieve", recalls Kristeva's theory on abjection. In interview, when asked about her being grouped with Foucault, Lacan, Derrida and others, Kristeva compares their ideas with structuralist theories: "We believed instead that meaning was a process of heterogenous logics, a polyphony of representations, a 'trial' a 'dissemination', a 'revolt' , a 'jouissance' , and a 'pleasure'− but also a 'violence' , an 'abjection', and a 'horror'" (*Interviews* 259).

The description of the association of ideas in *The Beauty of the Husband* , which she attributes to Aristotle, begins with milk and moves to masturbation, and may also recall Kristeva's theories on abjection. In *Powers of Horror*, Kristeva argues: "food loathing is perhaps the most elementary and most archaic form of abjection" and gives the example of looking at skin on milk: "I experience a gagging sensation…" (2−3). She continues by itemising other effects on the body of seeing or touching this milk, including "tears and bile", but asserts that food is not other, so that in rejecting the milk: "I expel myself. I spit myself out, I abject myself within the same motion through which I claim to establish myself" (3). Bodily fluids are described as something which drops through the border of the body: "Such wastes drop so that I might live, until, from loss to loss, nothing remains in me and my entire body falls beyond the limit− cadere, cadaver" (3). Carson's discussions of Simone Weil in *Decreation* which explore hunger, and Weil's rejection of food as well as the "decreation" of the self, appear to draw on Kristeva's ideas regarding abjection. References to falling in *Float*, such as "Uncle Falling" which tells of dementia and hospitalisation suggest a "fall beyond the limit". and the Vietnam veteran "addicted to falling" in "On Davey" (*LRB 41.1*) may echo the link between *cadere* and cadaver.

Time is present in "God's list" and, although a list is linear, suggests a non-linear time, capable of passing through borders, and the juxtapositions Carson makes in her work, are a means of providing a space for this fluidity. Time or war might be worked through with Carson acting as mediator, drawing on Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War* and Woolf's "The Mark on the Wall" to arrive at the contemporary observation: "Time embraces youth, youth embraces war. See the circle fit one upon the other. See them move and slip, turning around a center which gradually becomes emptier, gradually darker, until it is as black as a mark on the wall" (*Men* 7).

The triangulation of Homer, Alberto Moravia and Jean-Luc Godard in *Float* reveals the collision points between "profit and non-profit". These are worked through in amusing comparisons between Odysseus, the "hero of acquisition", Moravia and Godard, partly through considerations of "selling", being "a sellout" and "selling out". The triangulation of wives in the pamphlet reveal something about absence and presence. Penelope, who: "dangles herself, dangles the prospect of homecoming" before Odysseus, the Emilia of Moravia's text who is a "moving locus of ambiguity", and Brigitte Bardot who plays Emilia in the film, who disappears: "from this pure center of total and totally imposed exposure of herself" ("Contempts" *Float* n.p.).

These descriptions resonate with Carson's poetics: movement, visibility, invisibility and gender. This triangulation of wives prompts Carson to reprise connections in Ancient Greece between women and fluidity, also explored in theoretical writings in *Eros the Bittersweet* and *Men In the Off Hours*. "Woman was regarded as a creature whose boundaries are unstable, whose power to control them is inadequate. Deformation attends her. She swells, she shrinks, she leaks, she perforates, she disintegrates" ("Contempts"). She goes on to give a list of aspects of the female, including menstruation which, in the section immediately following "Between Two Powers", Kristeva identifies as being

particularly threatening in certain societies: “Menstrual blood… stands for the danger issuing from within the identity (social or sexual” (*Powers of Horror* 71). Carson continues by listing “monsters” such as “Skylla, Medusa, the Sirens, Harpies” and others. In doing so she seems to link fluidity, not only with the female, but also with hybridity, giving insight, perhaps, into the shifting landscapes within *Autobiography of Red* , where Battis describes “Varying shades of red—from the smoldering red of the volcano Icchantikas to the cherry-red of ever-present cigarettes—become signs for blending and hybridity. But who, or what, is the hybrid? The simple answer is: Geryon” (198).

For Carson, fluidity and changing states link to gender and to hybridity, and also link to the trope of the volcano: for it is after flying up to photograph the “earth heart of Icchantikas dumping all its photons out her ancient eye” (*Autobiography of Red* 145)[8] that the Geryon narrative concludes with some sense of closure. Through this description of an airborne Geryon − between the transformative power of volcanoes and non-belief − the Geryon narrative concludes with a return to the mundane and a shared meal and a pizza oven, a “volcano in a wall”, where Geryon can stand with Ancash and Herakles, in lines which emit some sense of belonging: “arms touching, immortality on their faces” (146).

The Geryon narrative is embedded within explorations of Stesichoros’ work, which both open and close the book, commencing with a prose piece , followed by a series of poems which are reiterations of his fragments on Geryon. In the prose piece Geryon’s hybridity appears to reflect the hybridity of genres that Carson favours in her writing. She describes looking at the fragments as similar to looking at the contents of a long-buried

[8] Sophie Mayer points out that Icchantikas is not the name of a volcano but is the name , in Buddhism, for those who do not believe in the Sutras. (97-117*)*

artefact, containing “some song lyrics and lecture notes and scraps of meat”(*Autobiography of Red* 6−7).

Earlier in this first section of *Autobiography of Red*, Carson asserts: “If Stesichoros had been a more conventional poet he might have taken the point of view of Herakles and framed a thrilling account of victory over monstrosity. But instead the extant fragments of Stesichoros’ poem offer a tantalizing cross section of scenes, both proud and pitiful, from Geryon’s own experience” (6). Bruce Beasley, referencing Stesichoros’ version of Geryon, argues: “Carson’s version de-monsterizes Geryon, eliminating his three conjoined bodies, his gigantism, with even his wings and redness − markers of his monstrosity − downplayed through most of the narrative” (79). However, Jess Battis views this as a means of rejecting classification, observing: “Geryon himself provides a list of the “total things known about Geryon”. This list, Battis continues, only further disrupts any attempt to classify him: “Geryon was a monster. Everything about him was red” (40). But ‘red’ and ‘monster’ are never defined” (198).

It might also be argued that the feeling of alienation that Geryon transmits throughout the book, together with his wings and redness, are sufficient to convey hybridity, and that for much of the book Geryon attempts to conceal his wings, in a way that would not be possible with three bodies or “gigantism”. While noting that “Carson’s queer love story does not present itself as interested in historically queer”, Hanna Geordis identifies this concealment as symptomatic of “Geryon’s estrangement from his unusual body.” and argues:

> Metonymically, his wings are the adjectives of his queer difference. Hence, a story about the powerful killing and stealing from the less powerful is revised as a predictable failed romance but this time with a peculiar boy who is tormented by his queer affects. Stuck in melancholy, Geryon eventually learns about a buried loss or a forgotten memory that gives him insights into his marked body (155).

Geordis appears to refer to Kristeva's ideas on the "abject", in warning against reading Geryon's wings as "what the social world marks as abject or queer.", but shapes the wings as marking an unconscious refusal to conform: "They are the parts of himself that unconsciously refuse to be colonized into affable, upright subjects" (159).

Readers of Carson, who become adept at viewing from many angles, see power lines shift when looking at the triangulation of Geryon, Herakles and Ancash because, in the context of volcanoes, Geryon becomes master, despite Herakles and Ancash travelling the world in pursuit of knowledge of them, and it is by virtue of his half monster, half human nature that he is able to fly close to the crater: "the bitter red drumming of wing muscle on air" (*Autobiography of Red* 145).

Carson avoids boundaries and defies categorization in her work and any depiction of a "monster" in her writing shows a marked preference for the hybrid, and this also points to her interest in the hybridity of text. The box full of scraps to which Carson likens the fragments from Stesichoros which she is viewing, might also reference the crossing of boundaries which Carson sees in these fragments, and this seems to mirror the crossing of boundaries, genres and disciplines in her own work. It also serves as a reminder of the cross pollination between genres and between her "lyrical investigations" (Konchan 37), and other creative writing which has been identified in her work.

In "Who *Can* a Monster Blame for Being Red?", Beasley also argues that monstrosity is a reflection of the text :"Geryon's multiplicity and strangeness undergo translation into the monstrous excess of Carson's text itself: its proliferation of bewildering and contradictory documents and genres, its pretences of authority that self-destruct as we read" (79). There is hyperbole in this assertion, but the idea that this hybrid character reflects the hybridity between genres contained within the text holds true, and the reference

to “contradictory documents” and “pretences of authority which self-destruct” may be prompted by the feeling of instability which pervades the book.

Herakles is also hybrid: semi-mortal, the son of Alkmene and Zeus. His fascination with volcanoes in *Autobiography of Red* contains his mythic fate within it, for to become immortal he must be consumed by fire. Herakles also appears in Carson’s performance piece, *Lecture on the History of Skywriting*, where he is a means to explore time, but also to reinforce the horror of the destruction wreaked by drone strikes. The speaker of the poem, the Sky, describes having sex with Herakles’ mother, Alkmene, as a “three-angled sex act” because she returns to her husband immediately after it. The Sky explains the nature of Herakles’ hybridity, which might suggest that gods do not necessarily think things through: “Born with a two-fold nature: half mortal/ half immortal, not a single being of incandescent clarity existing everywhere like me…A thing of ordinary substance , a thing with specific life and limits in space and time. He had to die” (*Skywriting* 5.24−6.00). The Sky, being outside time, has to witness his son burning to death at all times, and this suggests an instance of *dēute* of the worst kind, “a stereoscopic moment” where personal trauma is endlessly repeated, suggestive of the manner in which a witness to terrible destruction, such as a drone strike, may relive it repeatedly.

Carson’s essay “Every Exit is an Entrance” and the poem “Ode to Sleep” which follows it, demonstrate a fascination with Elizabeth Bishop’s “Man-moth”. Carson sees the Man-moth as “sleep itself”, and uses it as a bridge to a discussion on Asklepios and Lacan. In the sentence “To drink the tear of sleep, to detach the prefix “un-” from its canniness and from its underground purposes, has been the project of many technologies and therapies” (*Decreation* 21) she also seems to refer to Freud. Bishop’s prosaic explanation for derivation of the word prompts a wry last line to the poem: “’As a matter of fact’ she

confides in a footnote,/ ‘it was a misprint for *mammoth*’. / It hurts me to know this./ Exit wound, as they say” (*Decreation* 41).

Ghosts are also hybrid, occupying a space between living and dead, mortal and immortal, and in the pamphlet *Ghost Q&A*, a ghost (or ghosts) speaks to an unknown interrogator on matters such as sleep, language and “ethical qualms” (n.p.). To a question about age: “do you feel young or old”, the ghost answers: “ a ghost has no right angles, this is a childish feeling,/ we turn and turn and turn”, and as well as being able to articulate the condition of being a ghost, the ghost informs about the Gods’ perception of time, as discussed in the preceding chapter of this thesis.

The Man-moth of Bishop’s poem has a power to imbue sleep on anyone who asks for it before he performs the both uncanny and canny action of swallowing his own tear, and Geryon, through the wings, which are also a sign of otherness, is able to view the volcano in a manner impossible for Herakles and Ancash. A ghost is able to give insight into the Gods. These actions are indicative of a level of empowerment and disrupt conceptions of otherness. The next section considers how Carson’s triangulations work with her explorations on gender to provide a shift in perspective for readers.

Gender

> “ Why! A pronoun/ that dances/ is tangible for miles”. (“Possessive Used as Drink (Me)”, *Float* (n.p.)

The speaker in the introduction to “The Anthropology of Water” says: “I was a young, strong, stingy person of no particular gender−all traits advantageous to the pilgrim” (123), and considerations regarding water, such as swimming, thirst and “a drowned dog” (*Plainwater* 125) mix with Carson’s abiding concerns such as truth and lies, dementia, God and love, in reflections on a pilgrimage to Santiago di Compostela. Many of the writers

and thinkers that Carson returns to are brought into these short prose pieces, but most of the pieces begin with an epigraph from Japanese writers such as Basho, Sodo or Zeami who are not usually referenced.

However, one epigraph stays in familiar territory by linking Pindar, Aristotle and "my father" (188) She connects considerations of gender to her relationship with her father: "The truth is I lived out my adolescence mainly in default of my father's favor. But I perceived I could trouble him less if I had no gender" (189). Further insight into considerations of gender in Carson's formative years is given in "Pronoun Envy" in *Float*, where Carson brings poetry to the 1971 strike at Harvard Divinity School: "'Pronoun Envy'/ is a phrase/ coined by Cal Watkins/ of the Harvard Linguistics Department/ in November 1971" (*Float* n.p.).

She relates that Watkins created this phrase in order to disparage female students' concerns, which are, as Carson summarises: *"In a world/ where God is 'He'/ and everyone else/ 'mankind,' what chance/ do we have for/ a bit of attention?"* She describes the students' struggles and disruptive tactics, before moving to discussion of an archaeopteryx, a hybrid creature, in transition between a dinosaur and a bird, about which she creates her own myth:

> One night
> the archaeopteryx
> exapted its feathers – as wings− and
> over
> the yards of Harvard
> rose divinity students
> in violent flight,
> changing everything,
> changing nothing … (n.p.)

In the section "Pronouns and the politics of ecological reverie" in their article on *Vatnasafn/ Library of Water*, Harvey and Cheetham comment on these lines: "Carson imagines the freedom that might result from 'exaption', and adaptation 'in an outward

direction' that might even allow the 'archeopteryx', that flightless creature transitionally poised in evolution between feathered dinosaurs and birds, to soar" (25). They cite several texts by Carson, including *Red Doc> and "*The Anthropology of Water*"* in *Plainwater* where they identify "the fractured language of dementia and gender identity" (25), to arrive at the observation that: "Disruptive, playful eccentric gender is as unstable as the natural forms that recur in Carson's work: glaciers and volcanoes."

To underscore her desire to move away from the binary the last few stanzas of "Pronoun Envy" comment on the damage that sentiments such as those expressed by Watkins might cause:

> But because a binary system
> uses numbers in base 2,
> requiring
>
> only 1 and 0
> to express its differential
> we had to score our games
> in scandal and sadness (n.p.).

Those reading Carson's work, feel the constraints of this "binary system" give way to another reality, one in which readers come to anticipate "disruptive, playful, eccentric gender"(Harvey and Cheetham 25). The atmosphere of Carson's writing which gives rise to this anticipation, is partly due to the instability of the natural phenomena that provide the landscape in Carson's writing, as Harvey and Cheetham suggest, but it is also fostered by the dynamics of triangulation within her work.

The description of a triangulation which Carson identifies in Woolf's *The Waves* in the relationship of Neville and his lover, Bernard, is suggestive of the stereoscopic vision, and the overlaying of dualities to create a triangulation, discussed earlier in this chapter. Carson's commentary on the passage where Neville watches Bernard coming towards him, gives insight into how this idea of: "Neville mixed with somebody" allows for a movement away from the binary. It might also be noted that the catalyst for this triangulation is desire.

According to Carson, Neville: “simply watches it happen and measures of its three angles: desire moves out from Neville himself, ricochets off Bernard and bends back to Neville−but not the same Neville” (*Eros* 36). Although Carson goes on from this to considerations regarding self and other, it is also possible to see this “new Neville” as the individual who “comes between”, making the third angle in this triangulation. This gives important insight into the manner in which two may become three in Carson’s poetics.

It is possible to go further, and to argue that considerations of gender hold a key position in Carson’s work, because the two triangulations from “Sappho 31” and the *Phaedrus,* which are fundamental to Carson’s erotic poetics, are homeoerotic ones: all those desiring are in love with a person of their own gender, (we do not know the motivations of the man who listens in “Sappho 31”), or the text/ *paidika* embodiment of someone of their own gender. These homoerotic triangulations are paradigms for the desire for the beloved and the desire to know which runs through Carson’s writing, and it is possible to view them as the foundation for Carson’s poetics−a foundation where the heterosexual interaction between the beloved woman and “that man/ whoever he is…” (*If not* 64*)* is the exception. Harvey and Cheetham observe that Carson’s work in general can be viewed as: “as disturbing the marginalized nature of conventionally defined homosexuality” (Harvey and Cheetham 25), but in affording a central role to these triangulations, she brings homoerotic relationships to the centre.

Each individual triangulation provides a movement from the binary, but to engage in a process of triangulation which takes its baseline in the homoerotic triangulations of “Sappho 31” and the *Phaedrus*, creates a shift in perception in readers, which may colour the way they look at the world, and which may adjust readers perception of gender, and of self and other.

The Contemporary and "history or History"

> The dialectic between two states, the specular ego and the body in pieces, might serve as a model for the relation between the postmodern historicity of a self in process, and a historicist sense of duration. Such a view would first of all recognize the broken, fragmented quality of the past. And it would also recognize the necessarily fictional, yet necessary fiction of an "I" (*Sappho is Burning* 20).

The "specular ego" and "the body in pieces" in the above quotation refer to the theories of Lacan, and Dubois uses ideas regarding the split subject to be a model for the holding of postmodern ideas regarding historicity and a historicist sense of continuity simultaneously. Just as in *Sappho is Burning* from which the above quotation has been taken, where considerations of Sappho's poetry allow for an overlaying of postmodern narratives and those narratives which admit of a history, so the key triangulation illustrated in "Sappho 31" provides the baseline for similar overlayings in Carson's writing.

While Carson's theoretical writings explore many of these postmodern and traditional narratives, the proper place for the overlaying of these seemingly disparate ideas is poetry, where metaphor is apprehended by the same kind of stereoscopy which sees the energy inherent in "Sappho 31". In *Economy of the Unlost,* Carson considers poetry as a space for "two worlds" to be viewed alongside:

> The poet's metaphorical activity puts him in contrafactual relation to the world, to other people and to ordinary speech. He does not seek to refute or replace that world but merely to indicate its lacunae, by positioning alongside the world of things that we see, an uncanny protasis of things invisible although no less real. Without poetry these two worlds would remain unconscious of each other (58−59).

These "worlds" may be as minor as "my pear, your winter" which "the poets metaphorical activity" links in many ways, or may be major and seemingly disparate narratives, such as the "contemporary" narrative as Bartlett and Clemens suggest it: "To be contemporary is to partake of the trans-temporal, or really, trans-mundane, and not to be finally subject to time but to inscribe eternity in one's own time/world under the general name of Idea" (10), and traditional narratives of "history or History" and continuity (*Sappho is Burning* 2).

Conclusion

The "stereoscopic vision" Carson identifies as required to perceive metaphor and triangulation also promotes the synthesis of certain traditional theories and postmodern ideas. Triangulation and the sense of *dēute* it fosters in Carson's writing transmits a feeling of exactitude, while her descriptions of history as waves "driving…." indicate a belief in history as a largely unknowable flux which, Carson suggests in interview and in poems like "On Davey", can only be viewed in a restricted way. The landscapes depicted in Carson's poetry, such as volcanoes or snow and ice reflect the instability which she promotes, and the trope of the volcano is suggestive of the transformative power of triangulation for Carson.

The allusive triangulations of writers and thinkers in Carson's work open up an interior space where dualities such as truth and lies, absence and presence, distance and proximity may converge and collide. Furthermore, in the context of exploring dualities such as these, a third component may arise, such as Porete's "farnear", which is no longer a paradox but which meld these traditional opposites, and which may come between these ideas, creating a space for wider exploration, so that, through triangulation, the hybrid may open up a wider space for thought. In this manner, an essay which is a poem can eschew the kind of criticism that "it has nothing to do with anything Cicero or Plutarch pioneered" which Scroggins offers (10) and Carson's "lyrical investigations" (Konchan, 37) may occupy an equal position with imaginative writing and academic writing.

Triangulation allows power lines to shift, as Carson suggests happens in the triangulation of Penelope, Odysseus and Telemachos, viewed: "from the sleep side", where Penelope becomes "master of sleep" (*Decreation* 28). Triangulation can shift power towards the hybrid, so that, in the matter of volcanoes, for example, Geryon becomes master. Carson's work is hybrid, and it is the product of "a more mature method" (*A* _ 9),

which cannot be explained as a fusion of the academic and "other" as D'Agata wishes to suggest (9), but has its own power. It is a power which triangulation fosters.

The process of triangulation assists the overturning of normative heterosexuality in Carson's writing through the pivotal position of the homoerotic triangulation of "Sappho 31" and that of the *Phaedrus* which mirrors it in that process. This does not so much "conventionally defined homosexuality in from the margins" (25), as Humphrey and Cheetham note happens in the collaboration *Vatnasafn/ Library of Water*, as place it as centre. This holds true not only in explorations of desire for the beloved, but also in the process of allusive triangulations which manifest the desire to know.

All of the above considerations: the erasure of paradox evident in Carson's explorations on dualities; the empowerment of the hybrid; the fostering of a sense of history along with a sense of flux; the pushing outward away from the binary to a space for wider thinking and the placing of homoerotic triangulations at the centre of the process of triangulation which promotes all of these, work together to effect this change in readers. The process of allusive triangulation that Carson engages in with readers may colour their vision and change their future view of the world.

Conclusion

Desire for the Beloved and Desire for "Coming to Know"

I have considered examples of various types of allusion and intertext in Carson's poetry, ranging from the most noticeable instances of naming, quotation and citation in her work, to the echoes and convergences suggestive of "the smell in your head" or "fragrance" which Carson comments that she "comes away with" from reading Woolf or Eliot. All such allusions should be considered as manifestations of desire: desire for "coming to know" which is also usually the desire for text/ *paidika* first discussed in *Eros the Bittersweet*, and as such are in dialogue with the desire for the beloved which is often the subject of her narratives. There is an overlap: the erotics of this latter desire may involve various experiences and realisations which are also a type of knowing, but the desire for coming to know usually occupies the same space, for Carson, as the erotics of the page, and is manifest in the erudition evident in Carson's work, usually acquired by reading.

How these two desires interact in Carson's writing may be illustrated by Carson's comment regarding her method in juxtaposing Simonides and Celan in *Economy of the Unlost*: "With and against, aligned and adverse, each is placed like a surface on which the other may come into focus" (7−8). These desires allow for convergence, collision, glancing off, but one also allows heightened perception of the other. Reading Carson's narratives and mediations gives a better understanding of the references to other cultures and genres in her work, and considering the allusions she makes provides insight into her narratives.

Carson's intention to keep both desires before readers is evident in her allusive writing but also in her placing of lyrical investigations and poetry side by side, and in dialogue with each other, in many of her books throughout much of her writing career, so that *Plainwater*, *Glass Irony and God*, *Men in the Off Hours*, *Decreation* and *Float* all

have scholarly investigations interacting with the poetry contained in the same book. The crossing of genre, particularly evident in the titles she uses, may also be viewed as manifesting the overlaying of desire for the beloved and desire to know, so that for a poem to be an "essay", while carrying ideas of a hunt or trial, is also suggestive of the overlaying of the poetic and the scholarly, and this is also suggested by the title of a poetic performance such as *Lecture on the History of Skywriting*.

I have held these two desires apart, as a means to shift focus from the erotics of the beloved in Carson's writing, which has been the subject of a reasonable amount of scholarship, to the erotics of coming to know, as evidenced in the allusion and intertext in Carson's work. However, the two desires are constantly in dialogue and overlaying, and looking through one desire to view the other yields new insights. It is a common observation by reviewers and critics of Carson's writing that her work crosses boundaries, or builds "a bridge between worlds" (935), as Jennings suggests, and these commentaries have a welcome suggestion of the permeability of boundaries and of movement. Such observations imply a heightened perception, as indicated in Jennings' observations regarding Carson's "oracular vision" (935). However, thinking of poetry and lyrical explorations, or allusion and narrative, as lenses through which heightened perception of the other might be achieved is to afford an integral place to each type of desire, and to acknowledge the lack, the struggle, the excitement and the thrill that may arise through both.

Jakobsen advocated the combining of poetics and linguistics, Derrida[9] and Kristeva brought together the lyrical and the philosophical in some of their writings, and post-

[9]Each page of Derrida's chapter "Tympan" in the *Margins of Philosophy* , has a lyrical riff on the word Tympan on the right hand side, written by Michel Leris "the curl of childish/ hair encased in/ a medallion" (x) or "the marblings that/ bloom on the edges/ of certain/ books" (xi).

structuralist theories swell through a good deal of Carson's work, from *Eros the Bittersweet* onwards, also suggestive of the desire of coming to know.

There are references to phenomenology, and the writing of Hegel and Heidegger, and allusions to Austin's theories on the performative, and the allusions that Carson makes are often in the form of speech act. As a classicist, many of Carson's allusions are drawn from antiquity, and the intertext moving through her writing also spreads over thousands of years, but the investigations and mediations Carson makes, and her abiding concerns, are completely contemporary. The explorations on speech and writing in *Eros the Bittersweet* combine modernist and post-modern theories regarding the performative, and Sokratic ideas of "the living breathing word". This allows for a kind of dialectic between them, in the same manner as desire for the beloved and desire for knowledge interplay in her work, identifying points of connection and collision and where: "each is placed like a surface on which the other may come into focus" (*Economy* 7−8). The "each" in this quotation refers to another meeting across thousands of year, that of Simonides and Celan, and the surface is suggestive of both writer and the texts they produce, but a certain dual perspective is implied. This perspective facilitates the holding of seemingly disparate ideas in Carson's writing, and her considerations of paradoxes.

In an exploration of speech act, juxtaposing Sokrates and Austin, both patriarchal figures in the history of philosophy, is more conventional, perhaps, than the cross-discipline, cross-genre, relatively contemporaneous, laying alongside of Plato with Sappho. In his *History of Western Philosophy*, Bertrand Russell considers Plato, along with Aristotle, as: "the most influential of all philosophers, ancient, medieval or modern…" (122). Page Dubois observes that Sappho: "disrupts the origins of Western Civilisation by her eccentric stance at the farthest edge of the west" (*Sappho is Burning* 193). The

dialogue between these two is made effective through the contemporary mediations of Carson. The result electrifies them both, opening a space for further possibilities.

Allusion as Speech Act

The *Phaedrus* is a dialogue written by Plato, an enactment in writing of the Sokratic method of dialectic: "what happens between people when they talk" (*Eros* 132), as Carson explains it, and it is a method which privileges speech. The many instances of allusion in Carson's writing may be partly motivated by a wish to promote "the living breathing word" (131). The inclusion of the words of writers and thinkers from the past in Carson's poetry suggests that they are performative for Carson. The quotations are often couched in the contemporary observations and interpretations she makes, which this thesis, following Jennings (923−236), frames as mediation. Quotation marks preserve, to some extent, the utterances of writers and thinkers from the past, while Carson's embedding of them in her own contemporary mediations allows for the edges, where contemporary ideas and the thoughts of those cited meet, to remain visible. This meeting of past and contemporary thought gives rise to a reiteration, and allows words from, perhaps, thousands of years ago to say something differently, and provides the possibility of a "break with every given context" as Derrida observes is made possible by citation (*Margins* 320). Carson relates each utterance to others from different times, and often different cultures, to lend insight to the explorations she makes or the scenarios she creates.

There is a fusion of text and writer in Carson's allusive writing, so that readers of Gertrude Stein may encounter: "herself, her page, her mirror" (*Float* n.p.). Carson usually refers to any text by author rather than title, so the speaker is reading "Emily" in "The Glass Essay" and Proust in "Wildly Constant". The prevalence of nomenclature in Carson's poetry is suggestive of a kind of invocation, and Carson describes how, through

the power of Simonides words, “sad Kallias” becomes present and breathing alongside the reader (*Arion* 8–9). This overlaying of human and text is present in the triangulation Carson identifies in the *Phaedrus,* the *paidika* or “beautiful boy” of text who evokes such feelings of desire in Phaedrus and who is capable of tempting Sokrates to: “an orgy of reading in the countryside” (*Eros* 123). This text/writer hybrid throws light onto Parmenides entering the hotel room, and the speaker’s mind in *the Beauty of the Husband*, indicating the absenting of self, which might also be framed as a kind of betrayal enacted by the wife, involving desire for “coming to know”, which is in dialectic throughout the book.

Perception

The dual perception which is capable of viewing the erotic triangulations in “Sappho 31” and the *Phaedrus,* also facilitates the holding of narratives that might be considered distant from each other. Through this dual perception, for example, Romantic tropes of truth and beauty are woven into a poem which explores the postmodern concerns of a narrative with “a secondary structuring in abasement” (Upton 24) in the *Beauty of the Husband,* and postmodern ideas on the untimely interact with allusions to past writers and thinkers. Such dual perception facilitates a recurring mediation in Carson’s writing: the overlaying of Ancient Greek thought, or that of the Romantics and others , and postmodern narratives. Virginia Konchan, writing about Carson’s “The Gender of Sound” itemises what such an overlaying might entail:

> Bringing Romantic tropes (eros, truth, beauty) and high aesthetics (opera, Greek drama) to bear on modernity’s ghostly tropes (impersonality, collectivist identity, self-consciousness, the loss of tradition and grand narratives, and the death of authority) and forms (metonymy, parataxis), Carson’s neoformalist texts seek to incorporate rather than excise the layered epistemologies of metaphysics, phenomenology, philology, and theology…(37).

The incorporation of the tropes, forms and schools of thought itemised by Konchan, may be found in Carson's scholarly writings or in her poetry and may be met with initial, or indeed lasting, resistance, or may thrill and excite, because a kind of dual perception is required to gain the most out of reading Carson's poetry. The same kind of analogous mind which can readily accept the "true lies of poetry" (*Eros* 33) evident in the "metaphors and subterfuges" (*Eros* 109) poets and writers use, may also be led to apprehend the connections between different, and sometimes opposing, terms, ideas, genres, cultures and theories. With this dual perception, the allusions Carson makes become proper to the poetry, and not merely adjuncts to it.

Carson's outline of what happens in stereoscopic vision may be one which readers of her lyrical investigations, and her allusions and mediations, may recognise as happening when they read: "A virtuoso act of the imagination brings these two things together, sees their incongruence, then also sees a new congruence, meanwhile continuing to recognize the previous incongruence through the new congruence" (72). There is a "looking through" evident in this account regarding the apprehension of metaphor, where there is a recognition of "the previous incongruence through the new congruence", which the mechanism of a stereoscope fully encapsulates, in that there are two photographs, two similar instances on the table, and both are easily seen by the viewer as separate but looking through the lens of the stereoscope allows these two images to converge into a three dimensional image, a more intense representation. Through this mechanism two images becomes three.

Readers of Carson become open to this "unity of differents" (Stanford 120): the overlaying of allusion and narratives of betrayal, the interplay of the contemporary and the ancient, the seeming paradoxes, the dialogue between "the two kinds of love being made" (*Eros* 97) which allows the allusions in her writing and the narratives to become lenses for

each other, and it is perhaps this which prompts Graham Foust to assert that reading and rereading *Economy of the Unlost* has "leant certain contours to my mind , rather than having simply filled it with content" (82).

Triangulation

It is possible that those reading Carson's work, or, indeed, this thesis, may feel that there is too much emphasis on triangulation, and that there is an overuse of "three-angled", "three-part", "triangular" and other similar terms. At the same time, those who hold this view may not feel the same impatience with the comparing of pairs of texts which is often found in examination papers, or the comparison of two writers in a book such as Jonathan Bates' *Shakespeare and Ovid*, which still feature in literary criticism, or the often arbitrary pairings and couplings which may be found in the academy as a whole and the world in general. Perhaps an "exaption" is needed: "…to exapt /is to adapt in an outward direction" ("Pronoun Envy" *Float* n.p.). Such an "exaption" reflects the postmodern shift from linear thinking, such as that which frames time as a continuum, to one which considers spaces and spatiality. In "Writing On the World, Simonides, Exactitude and Paul Celan", Carson describes the mental operations of Simonides who "must have spent a good deal of time drawing mental lines and positioning data, measuring shapes in his mind's eye" (*Arion* 7). It might be noted that any unit of measure in Simonides' time would be likely to reference the body, just as Basil Bunting's mason in *Briggflatts* would be measuring in feet and inches, but that measurement in the twenty-first century has shifted, in Europe at least, away from the body towards the world, a metre being a fraction of the world's circumference. Triangulation also allows thinking to move away from the kind which weighs only what may be balanced in our two separate hands− a movement beyond the boundaries of our bodies− towards the myriad interconnections which give an approximation of what the world is like, or might be like in Carson's imagining.

Although this thesis views stereoscopy as a useful device to consider many of the juxtapositions Carson places before readers, be they writers, theories or worlds, Carson used the term in *Eros the Bittersweet* for the kind of vision required what would otherwise remain invisible in "Sappho 31": a triangulation with lines of energy running between the speaker, the beloved and the one who comes between them. She asserts that it is not a poem about three individuals, but about the geometrical figure formed by their perception of one another, and the gaps in that perception" (*Eros* 13). She suggests that the apprehension of this triangulation allows the invisible to become visible and, also: "The difference between what is and what could be is visible" (*Eros* 16). I argue that this perception also allows the triangulation of Sokrates, Phaedrus and the *paidika* of text to become visible, and that the same energy runs through this triangulation, as manifestation of the desire for "coming to know" (*Eros* 70).

There are many kinds of triangulations in Carson's writing, some involving Carson as mediator or lens, when interpreting Alkman's poem in "Essay on What I Think about Most", for example, and she frames Gertrude Stein as such a lens in *Float*. There are triangulations where she places herself with another writer in a "reading with" to find contiguity with a third, as in *Economy of the Unlost,* and there are individual triangles such as Carson as speaker, her mother, and Emily Brontë in "The Glass Essay". In other triangulations, Carson may step back to take a liminal position to show readers connections between, for example, Weil, Porete and Sappho. Triangulations between texts, such as that of the Vietnam Vet who appears as Sad but Great in *Red Doc>,* Ray in *The Beauty of the Husband* and Davey, in "On Davey" (*LRB 41*), who came back from Vietnam: "addicted to falling", have also been identified, In almost every case what every triangulation makes visible, in addition to the "ideal projected on a screen of the actual" *(Eros* 17) is a sense of reaching across time and culture and genre. The distance required to reach across time is

also evident in the viewpoint of Ida at the end of *Red Doc>*, for example, as "this one sails out and out/ and out" (164), and might be suggested in the description of the out of body experience of the speaker of "The Glass Essay" during orgasm: "until at last I was floating/ high up near the ceiling looking down/ on the two souls on the bed/ with their mortal boundaries/ visible around them like a map. I saw the lines harden" (16).

Utterance almost always lies at the nexus of each allusive triangle, although Velazquez or the artist Frances Bacon might also be placed there, and just as utterance, when considering past writers, is a fusion of speech and writing, the "individual" which is one of the three components is a hybrid of writer and text. In *Eros the Bittersweet* Carson describes the triangulation in "Sappho 31" as not being about individuals but about the relationships between them, and the electrification which runs along those lines of connection. To place utterance at the nexus of each triangulation, as Carson does in her allusive writing, is to also charge each utterance with performative power, which drives home considerations of whatever subject Carson puts before readers, such as desire, hunger, sleep, death, god or betrayal.

Each triangulation interconnect with others, and this thesis has explored these interconnections in *the Beauty of the Husband,* where the triangulations of husband, wife and other woman, which provoke such jealousy in the wife that she has "seeing scars on her eyes" (73), are mirrored by the triangulations of husband, wife and *paidika,* who may be Parmenides or Kafka or Aristotle. The mesh of triangulations on the subject of sleep in "Every Exit is an Entrance , which connects intertextually with "Ode to Sleep" was also discussed. The cat's cradle of interconnection Carson creates on the subject of sleep in "Every Exit is an Entrance" and "Ode to Sleep" may activate further intertextual connections in readers' minds, which may travel in many unforeseen directions.

In considering the allusive triangulations in Carson's writing, the mind becomes adept at stereoscopy, which readily allows for the overlaying of the dualities she explores and can see, not only the lines of connection, but the overlaying, or synthesis, of disparate ideas juxtaposed, or the thoughts of individuals from widely different eras and cultures. Stereoscopy can also be brought to the dualities Carson considers in her writing, truth and lies, mortal and immortal, human and monster, far and near, life and death, self and other. The "true lies of poetry" should be a paradox, something against logic, and yet it is possible to comprehend, particularly after reading Carson, when the contours of the mind may shift. The "farnear", Geryon as monster and human, Herakles as mortal and immortal, ghosts existing in the "skin" shared by life and death, are all important tropes or recurring characters in Carson's writings, and this thesis argues that by bringing stereoscopic vision to these dualities a third component may come between , an overlaying of the two: a hybrid. Duality becomes triangulation, two becomes three. Carson's poetics can, on occasion, empower the hybrids she creates for readers: the farnear, the *paidika*, ghosts, Geryon and Herakles, so they become a component in a triangulation, and push space outwards in a movement away from the binary and linear thinking. A less trammelled space for thought.

Triangulation-as-process.

The dynamic of "triangulation-as-process" is planar, open-ended and which, like Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomatic map, "fosters multiplicities" (Gander 183). This process involves triangulations of writers and thinkers in considerations of ideas that might be considered part of the human condition. Triangulation-as-process charts a cultural space, which is the ever-widening space of Carson's erudition. It is an orthographic representation, allowing a privileged position, which explores the relational dynamics between writers and thinkers, in the context of the considerations that Carson explores. An

orthographic reading of a cultural space provides a view denied from within the space itself, so that an orthographic representation, viewed from above, indicates, for example, the breadth of terrain, the territory of literature which considers the abject or unsayable, for example, and the relational dynamics between writers and thinkers across genre and culture.

Triangulation-as-process readies the mind for the further interconnections within and between texts in Carson's work. After reading *Economy of the Unlost (Reading Simonides of Keos with Paul Celan)* which signals the intermeshing of allusions within that text by beginning with a discussion on the allusions and influences in Celan's "Matière de Bretagne", readers are primed to see the same interweaving throughout her writing. For Carson, the triangulation dynamic fosters an energy that those readers who have not identified triangulations in her work still feel. This process of triangulation runs alongside, not in opposition to, Carson's framing of history as a largely unknowable sea: "… driving and breaking, a roar apiece, /all but inexhaustible …" (*LRB 41*).

The most significant effect of turning the attention to the allusions she makes when reading Carson is the feeling of engaging in this process: each allusive triangulation connects with another, not just within a specific text but intertextually, building and widening the field of vision. Celan's "Language Mesh", or *Sprachgitter,* gives an indication of the level of interconnectedness which is possible, but in framing the allusive triangulations Carson makes as similar to the process of triangulation used in cartography, a certain pattern of interconnecting triangles spreads and overlays across the field of vision. This process of triangulation places readers at a vantage point to view the breadth of Carson's erudition, made manifest through the allusions she makes, and the area of triangulation grows wider, only limited by, as Carson observes in the context of the

juxtapositions she makes: “all the thoughts I’ve had in my life up to that point and who I am at that point” (“Art of Poetry 88”).

New allusive triangulations may be added as new thoughts hit the page. Just as Carson may juxtapose Celan and Simonides, so an individual writer or thinker is at the nexus of each triangle, and within any given triangle there may be lines of connection spanning thousands of years, all interconnecting spatially. Through the process of triangulation Carson finds a means to hold the present and the past simultaneously, and the idea carried by *dēute*, a crasis of “now” and “a history of thens” (*Eros* 118), is key in this regard. This phrase suggests a movement away from traditional ideas of history as a continuum, and towards a spatial postmodern view: “a shift from the conceptual routines that accord a primacy to time-as-sequence to a disposition of the organisation of space, spaces, spatiality” (13). However, while Bartlett and Clemens identify “the untimely” as an aspect of the contemporary, Carson’s allusive writing provides a sense of history, which can increase the impact of her contemporary observations and narratives.

“On Davey” is an example of Carson’s viewing of history as the sea under her feet, which she can only view through the boards of the pier, and this acknowledges the limited view which remains open to us. “Stereoscopic vision”, or a mind willing to synthesise differents, allows this process of triangulation to provide an orthographic reading of a cultural space, while also accepting that history is amorphous, ever moving and mainly unknowable, which can only be view by plotting connections between individuals, or objects, or texts, from the past, usually brought into the present in fragments. Triangulation-as-process provides a sense of *dēute* and allows for the holding of postmodern narratives, and a sense of history at the same time.

Visualisation of this spreading triangulation makes it possible to visualise further interconnections beyond the context of allusion , such as the triangulation of the Greek

preposition *pros* (προς), meaning towards or across, which Jennings identifies in Carson's writing, (927) or the triangulation of "details" that Rae describes: "spreading like a snowflake" in "The Glass Essay" (168). The clear and reasonably concrete allusive juxtapositions in Carson's writing may raise readers sensitivity to more subtle allusive interconnections, such as those present in Carson's use of the verb "fall" which creates a link to "Uncle Falling" in *Float*, or to Davey, who is "addicted to falling" in "On Davey" (*LRB 41*). A reader's mind thus stimulated may travel to the biblical "Fall" and an almost endless number of intertextual connections springing from that link, or to Autumn as "Fall" , and whatever that may stir. The allusions Carson creates may spur the mind to movement in any direction, and the reader may be creator or conduit.

Those who imagine this mesh of allusion may also note that it is often the utterance of a male writer or thinker at the nexus of each triangulation. Carson places Weil, Porete, Sappho and Emily Brontë, and Woolf and other women writers and thinkers at the nexus of her allusive triangulations, but many of the writers and thinkers she alludes to are male, perhaps because the canon is overwhelmingly male, and the philosophical ideas from antiquity which have survived have been posited by men. This system of triangulation in Carson's allusive writing is a means to electrify, and to heighten perception but it may also be, like Celan's " language mesh", a cloister grillework, a *fenestra locutaria:* simultaneously implying passage, blockage and salvage of speech (*Economy* 58-59). The orthographic representation of a cultural space created by triangulation-as-process may indicate a community of voices, but it also gives rise to an awareness of the expanse of the silences around those utterances. In the allusions she makes Carson speaks through this grillework, but her poetry and scholarly investigations often raise awareness of those cloistered and silent behind the grille, of whom little is known.

The placing of the homoerotic triangulations of "Sappho 31" and the *Phaedrus* as central to triangulation-as-process works with Carson's narrative to create a shift in perspective for readers away from heterosexuality as normative. These two triangulations intersect through considerations of desire, and the "electrification" which Carson identifies as coursing through the triangulation of "Sappho 31" is capable of passing through the rest of her allusive writing, reinforced by interconnection with Merce Cunningham and Oscar Wilde in *Float* ,for example, or Achilles and Patroklos in "Every Exit is an Entrance" in *Decreation,* with Proust in many of Carson's texts, with Herakles and Ancash, with Geryon, with Woolf's Neville and Bernard in *Eros the Bittersweet*, or with Woolf herself, who can provide "this smell in your head of having gone through something that you understood with people in the story" (Art of Poetry 88). Triangulation provides an orthography of a cultural space populated by many homoerotic characters, artists, writers and thinkers, and this is capable of disrupting any narrative of normative heterosexuality for readers.

Further Research

This thesis has focused on the dynamics of triangulation and triangulation-as-process in the context of allusion and intertext in Carson's poetry, and has explored how those dynamics impact the experience of reading Carson's work. The allusion and intertext which appears to arise from Carson's reading is considered but, while Carson has stated that "every sound we make is a bit of autobiography" (*Irony* 130), the thesis does not explore allusion and intertext which might stem from her life experience. The thesis has mentioned Ian Rae's argument regarding how growing up in bi-lingual Montreal may have influenced Carson's writing , and there is much more scope for further research into how Carson's life may affect the allusions and intertext in her work.

For the most part, the thesis has separated allusion (and intertext) in Carson's poetry from the narrative, while asserting that the two are in constant dialectic. The space where narrative and allusions interplay is one which requires further research. This thesis seeks to give allusion a central role in Carson's poetics and, in doing so, may open the space where narrative and allusion meet to possibilities beyond those already considered by scholarship. How Carson's narrative and allusion and intertext interact in the creation of this shift requires further consideration. Post-structuralist theories, particularly those of Kristeva, have been considered in the contexts of triangulation, and that of intertext. A psychoanalytic reading of the space where allusion and narrative meet would also be fruitful to gain further understanding of Carson's poetry.

The process of triangulation in Carson's allusive writing transmits a sense of history and connects with desire for change in Carson's writing: a connection which has full force in Carson's performance piece *Lecture on the History of Skywriting*, where the sky reads a diary which runs from the origins of the universe to present day drone strikes. The concept of "*dēute*", or now combined with "a history of thens" (Eros 118) might be further explored in considering historicity in the work of other writers. Dan Chiasson's throw away reference to *Memorial* at the start of his review of Alice Oswald's *Falling Awake*, referring to "Alice Oswald's "scavenged version of the Iliad, 'Memorial'" (*New Yorker 2016*), is a play on words which refers to the collection's subtitle *Excavating the Iliad* and seems to be in the same vein as Ward's title, "Addressing the Wound" in its use of the disparaging pun.

Through the lens of Carson's allusive poetics it is possible to see *Memorial* as a kind of invocation, allowing the young warriors she describes to crash into the present by naming, in much the same way that reading Simonides' epigram brings "sad Kallias" into the present to such an extent that "it's as if you were standing alone (you thought) in a

room and suddenly heard someone breathing" (*Arion* 8). They are fleshed out by Oswald's short descriptions of their appearance, mannerisms and personal history. This allows readers to apprehend the tragedy of war across time and, perhaps most of all, provides a terrifying "*dēute*", that crasis of *now* and "a history of thens" (*Eros* 118). These warriors crash into the present to die, and connect spatially with people across the world who are dying because of war at the moment of reading, and those who have been dying again and again across thousands of years. This "*dēute*" is reflected in the form of the text: the list of names, the repeated stanzas of metaphors to describe the moment of each individual's death:

> And us
> Said THOON
> ENNOMUS
> CHERSIDAMAS
>
> Like a fish in the wind
> Jumps right out of its knowledge
> And lands on the sand
>
> Like a fish in the wind
> Jumps right out of its knowledge
> And lands on the sand (42).

As they come to each new name, or list of names, and each reiteration of the stanza comprising the metaphor which shapes the warriors' deaths in *Memorial*, and, perhaps, connect with the many people dying through war at the time of reading, readers eyes may, in Carson's words: "open wide in sudden perception, then narrow in understanding. The adverb *aute* closes over that understanding like two hands joined in acquiescence, with a deep nod: again and again" (*Eros* 118−119).

Triangulation-as-process provides a means to plot the extent of Carson's erudition, and provides a skeletal figure for the intertext present in her writing. It provides an orthographic reading of a space which may prove useful in considering a body of work, or a broad literary landscape or theory. It underscores the virtue of certain book titles and

subject matter, such as Christopher Ricks book on allusion and intertext, *True Friendship: Geoffrey Hill, Anthony Hecht and Robert Lowell Under the sign of Eliot and Pound,* allowing this lengthy title to be a more accurate description of what lies within its pages, than Jonathan Bate's title *Shakespeare and Ovid* , which can only be viewed as a kind of shorthand for the kinds of allusive and intertextual connections present in the work of both poets.

The interplay of the desire for the beloved and the desire to know illuminates considerations of gender in Carson's writing. Scholarship has generally focused on individual texts, and characters, such as the speaker in *Plainwater* who states: "I was a young, strong, stingy person of no particular gender" (123), or the hybrid character Geryon in *Autobiography of Red*. However, in Carson's work, there is an intermeshing of figures who have significance in the context of gender, and homoerotic writers and thinkers are at the nexus of many of Carson's triangulations, instilling a perspective which shifts away from the binary and normative heterosexuality. Further research into gender across the body of Carson's work, and how her body of work facilitates a perspective which shifts away from the binary and normative heterosexuality could yield interesting results.

Watch This Spillage

> Watch this spillage, which moves from the man who hits, to the words of Demosthenes, to the judges hearing these words, to Longinus analyzing the whole process, to me recalling Longinus' discussion of it and finally to you reading my account. The passionate moment echoes from soul to soul. Each controls it temporarily. Each enjoys it quote by quote (46).

The spillage moves, not through time but spatially, as text and utterance, and spills not only through the reader, and those named and unnamed, but through each word of each sentence. It moves through boundaries, passing from violent action to violent rhetoric, and on to a first century Greek exploration of the Sublime, and to Carson's interpretation,

which here is a discussion in lyrical prose, but which elsewhere in *Decreation*, such as in "Mia Moglie: Longinus' Red Desert", is reiterated in poetry.

The question is often asked whether such an amount of allusion as Carson employs makes for good poetry. While considering the use of nomenclature, quotation and citation in Carson's poetry and framing these as the most noticeable instances of allusion, this thesis has posited a system of interconnectedness in the allusions she makes, and suggests that she also provokes awareness of intertextuality in her creation of dialogue between her poems and her investigations, and in her use of one word, such as "hare" in *Economy of the Unlost* (20), as a conduit to other texts.

However, Carson's poetic voice is clear and edgy, and the forms and structures she uses in her poetry are clean and devoid of clutter. Throughout the body of her work Carson occasionally mentions the word "triangulation", but the allusive triangulations themselves are usually invisible, even though the dynamic they create is often felt. They are only made visible by a shift in perception in the reader. The framework of triangulation-as-process spreads through the clear conversational style of the poetry to provide the kind of impact of which only the best poetry is capable.

I have focused on allusion and intertext in Carson's poetry, but argue that it is in dialogue with her narratives. In concluding this thesis it is useful to enact this by consider the quotation from which the thesis takes its title, through the lens, appropriately enough, of *The Glass Essay.* In doing so, the significance of Carson's exhortation to readers rises, and prompts consideration of what to "watch" entails. For Emily Brontë, to watch involves "whaching", and the following lines from "Whacher" outline the kind of attention that reading and writing might involve:

> She whached God and humans and moor wind and open night
> She whached eyes, stars, inside, outside, actual weather.
> She whached the bars of time, which broke.
> She whached the poor core of the world,

wide open (*Glass and God* 7).

Readers of Carson encounter everything Emily Brontë "whaches" here, including: "actual weather". Without moving further than the first line, there are lines of connection to "the Truth about God", or to *Nox* in the link between night and grief, or the god/human hybrids of Herakles and Davey. A study of allusion and intertext might be most concerned with "the bars of time which broke" and "the poor core of the world, /wide open".

The spillage readers watch, in this case, is a piece of the "poor core of the world" projected outside, through Carson's recalling of what she has read. In "The Glass Essay", the speaker is reading Emily, we are reading Carson, and the spillage ends with the reader. The attention that Emily Brontë gives to all the things she "whaches", has performative power, resulting in "total subjection/ to a creative project she could neither understand or control" (13), Carson's spillage ends with: "you reading my account" and this "you" is a conduit to many considerations, some of which have been discussed in this thesis. However, the spillage does not stop there. Carson invites readers to do more: to freefall; to play with the book as text object; to take part in the papyrological event; to look through the translucent pages; to feel a sense of history; to view the interplay of the erotics of the page and of desire for a lover, which may in turn prompt creativity. Pre-conceived ideas regarding gender fall away, so that readers may perceive a freer, more exciting cultural landscape. The shift in perception needed to read Carson, changes our ways of watching of the world, and lends new "contours" to the mind of any reader (Foust 82).

"Watch me fold this page now so you think it is you" (*Beauty* 145).

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Images

Clarke Principal Triangulation of Great Britain 1860.
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Clarke_principal_triangulation_of_Britain_1860.jpg Accessed 24 Apr. 2020

The Sun-Sculpture Stereoscope.
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https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/29/The_Sun-Sculpture_Stereoscope_%2823672056096%29.jpg Accessed 8 June 2020

Appendix A: Sappho Between the Lines: “mia moglie (Longinus’ red desert)”

A caught woman is something the movies want to believe in.

“For instance, Sappho,” as Longinus says.

greener

Caught from within, she has somehow got the Sublime inside her.

“As though these could combine and form one body.”

than

Her body vibrates, she is always cold, there is a certain

cold industrial noise, she is also hot, has stuck a thermometer

grass

under her arm and forgotten it and at the wall she turns glistening,

aghast: your prey. “Are you not amazed?”

and

In sex she clusters herself on the man’s body as if hit by a wind.

“For she is terrified.”

dead

On the street she pulls herself along, *to get there will be worse.*

“For she is all but dying.”

almost

The husband speaks of her *time in the clinic,* her *accident.*

“Not one passion in her but a synod of passions.”

I

In the clinic she met a girl whose problem was *she wanted everything.*

Bolts of everything hit the table.

seem

Now she is well she says of this girl who has turned out to be herself.

“Sublimity is the echo of a great soul.”

to me

What is that antenna for? she asks a man. *To listen to the noise*

of stars— “as I believe I said,” Longinus adds.

Appendix B: "Sappho 31"

He seems to me equal to the gods that man

whoever he is who opposite you

sits and listens close

to your sweet speaking

and lovely laughing −oh it

puts the heart in my chest on wings

for when I look at you, even a moment, no speaking

is left in me

no: tongue breaks and thin

fire is racing under skin

and in eyes no sight and drumming

fills ears

and cold sweat holds me and shaking

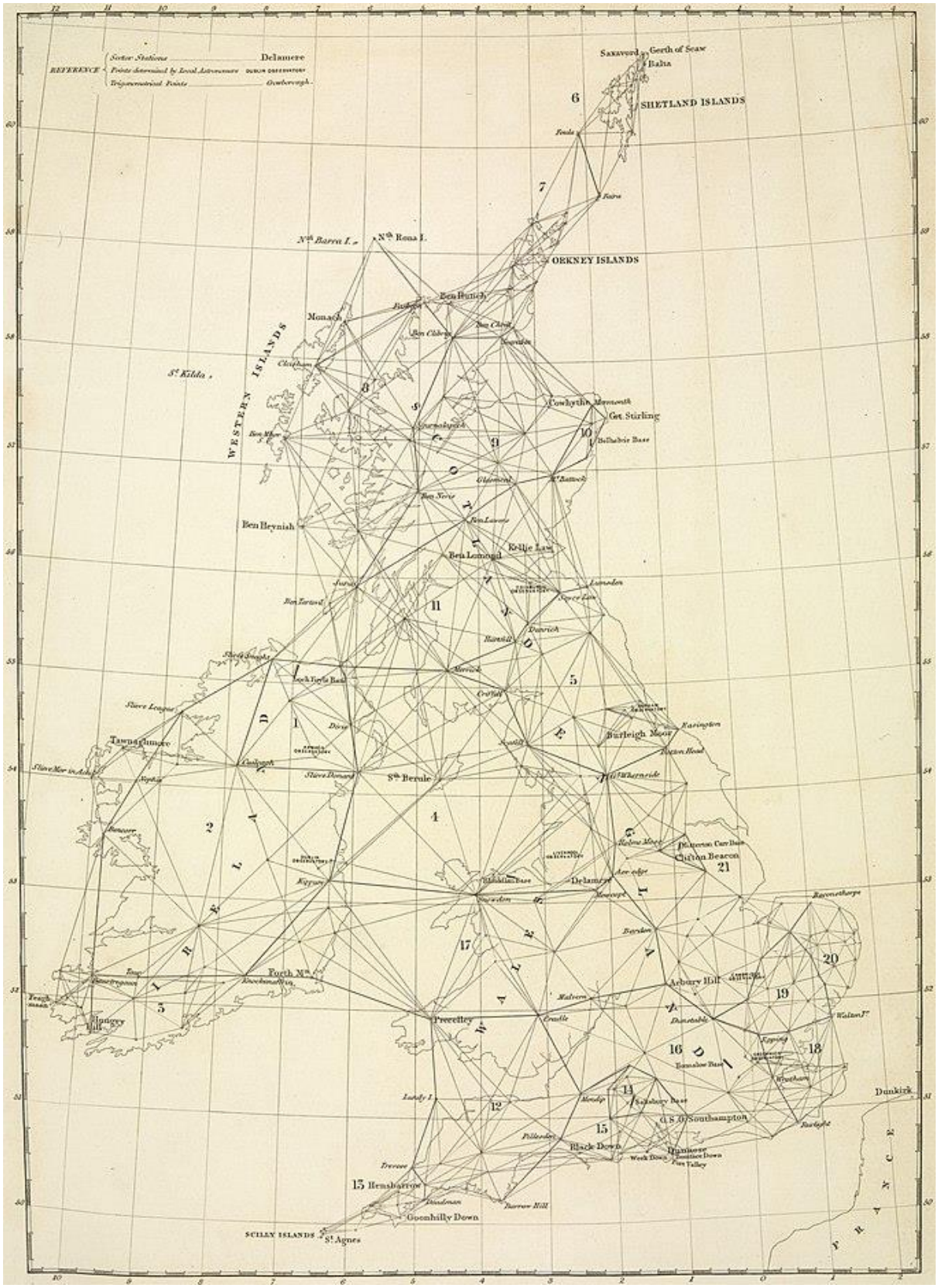
grips me all, greener than grass

I am and dead−or almost

I seem to me.

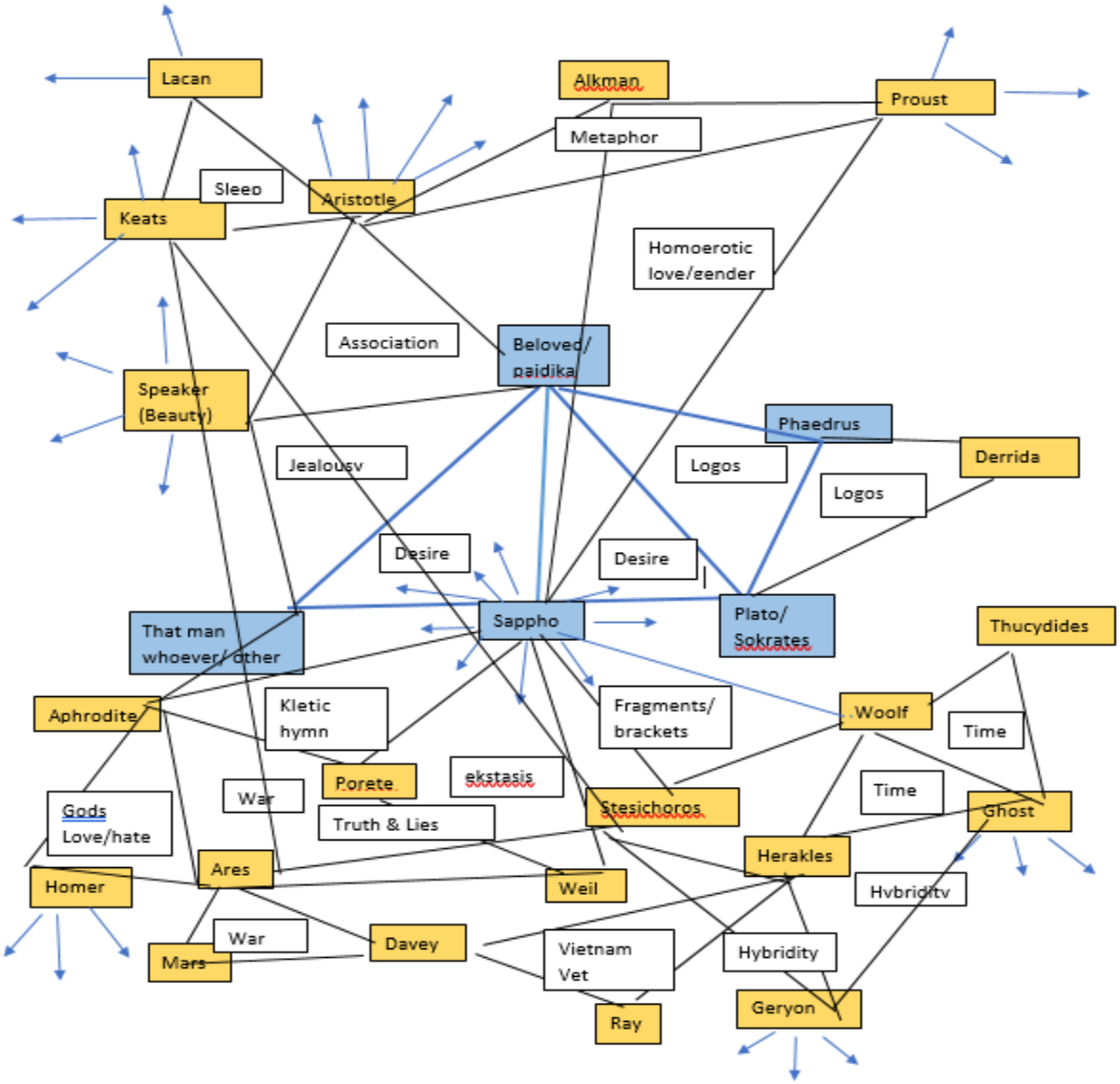
But all is to be dared, because even a person of poverty…(*If Not* 63)

Appendix C: Triangulation in Cartography: Clarke Principal Triangulation of Great Britain 1860



Appendix D: Vision - The Sun-Sculpture Stereoscope

Appendix E: Watching Triangulation-as-process (A Beginning)



Appendix Five Watching Triangulation as Process: A beginning.