

“Somewhere our belonging particles / Believe in us.” A Study of Absentist Language in the Poetry of W.S. Graham

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ABSTRACT

The Heideggerian concept of “authentic language” and “inauthentic language” along with ‘inadequacy’, ‘indeterminacy’, ‘fragmentation’ and ‘silence’ in the language of modern poetry, leads us to the crises of language. Martin Heidegger, the Existentialist philosopher, claims that poetry is the essence of language and language is the essence of being. While truth is the essence of the work of art, poetry as a creative work of art must deal with truth. The truth, which modern poetry deals with, is the isolation of man and the crises of identity that shows itself in the language. Thus “Absentist Poetry” claims that poetry, language and being, the three pillars of our existence are in crisis. Absentist language in the poetry of W.S. Graham is an answer to one of the most important struggles of poetry, the question of marginalization of modern poetry by the domination of fiction in the twentieth century. It also sheds light on the inadequacies of language and consequently, deals with the problem of identity in modern life. This paper attempts to introduce Absentist language, as a reason for the crises of identity of the modern man on one side and the marginalization of modern poetry on the other side.

Key Words: absentist poetry; absentist language; being; fragment; communication.

INTRODUCTION

W.S. Graham (1918-1986) in a majority of his poems is pre-occupied with the idea of language as an active force. He does not consider language solely a medium of expression, but as the very essence of existence. In his poems, he explores language and Being through the difficulty of intercourse, and lack of it. He fights against the limitations of language, and the removal of the barriers of communication. He also tries to extend the range of the ability of the poet’s language. Thus, he constructs language-space, out of flux and fragmentation of language.

Implements in their Places is a long poem of simple construction but complicated content. The poem *Implements* is a welter of metaphors about language and is modeled on *The Fragments of Heraclitus*. As in *The Fragments of Heraclitus*, the poem *Implements* at first glance appears fragmented and scattered. However the thematic classification of *Implements* points to a balance between the ancient and modern, Greece and Scotland, the wood and the sea. Both Graham and Heraclitus voice their opinion in similar tones though both belong to two different ages.

“Graham’s purpose, in this essentially metaphysical poem, is to create a sense of language as inhabited space. The material he uses is that which is most private and personal in his life, and it is assembled to at once realise and prove the formula which Heidegger developed in his writings on Holderlin, that ‘poetically man dwells on this earth’”. (Lopez 1989, p. 101)

The poem is a collection of seventy-four separate verse fragments, with asymmetrical lines. Only numbers one and number seventy-four are the same, indicating the circular progress in the poem. To understand the poem, it is very important to tabulate the fragments based on their themes. It deals with different themes such as love, friendship, language, words and communication, ships, sea and

Scottish and Greek location. Among these different themes, only those related to language are selected for analysis bearing in mind Absentist Language.

Arguably language, either in the simplest definition, as a medium of communication or at a higher level as a system of thought, is the essence of our understanding of the universe. Whatever is known about the world comes only through language, poetry, literature, philosophy, religion, and whatever imagined in humanity, are kinds of play of language. W.S. Graham subscribes to Heidegger's ideas about language, and in his poetry "he theorized about a world governed by language, in which language becomes the decisive metaphor through which we conceive of the self" (Pite & Jones 2004, p. 19). This is very similar to Heidegger's idea that language is the "House of being". However, Graham has his own aesthetics regarding Absentist language and in his versification one observes pessimistic and negative thoughts concerning language. W.S. Graham is best described as an "Absentist language centered poet" with unconditional skepticism who talks about language in a complex and paradoxical way.

Absentist language is only one of the multi-dimensions of "Absentist Poetry" which is concerned with the crises of identity, history and mythology. Absentist poets, the fourth generation after Modernism, are the followers of T.S. Eliot (Bedient 1977, p. 19). In fact, Bedient claims that even T.S. Eliot is a "quasi-Absentist" poet, and the idea of Absentism had grown very gradually and implicitly in Modern poetry, especially in the poetry of T.S. Eliot. Almost fifty years later Bedient recognizes this as "a late child of history" (Bedient, 1977, p. 19) in British poetry of 1960s in the poetry of Kinsella, Hill, Graham, and Hughes. He observes that:

Like the Classical vision of original sin and the Romantic vision of original ecstasy, the vision of original emptiness has its own use for consonance, symmetry, and measure. The first seeks in form a virtuous restraint, the second a plenitude folded over and over on itself, the last a shelter from nothingness. (Bedient 1977, p. 19)

HEIDEGGER, EXISTENTIALISM AND ABSENTISM

As Calvin Bedient observes, nothingness and absurdity flourish in the language of Absentist poetry. But how could language which is the essence of our existence, be nothingness? What is the source of this absence? The answer to these questions is the core of the philosophy of Existentialism. Heidegger's philosophy with regard to existence and language guides us to delve into language to find the nothingness and Absence of language. Heidegger's philosophy regarding the human existence reveals that man needs to find his true position in the world before acting on it. In his book *Being and Time* (1962), Heidegger divides the existence of man into; "authenticity or own" and "in-authenticity or disowned" existence. He believes that every individual has two possibilities of Being: the possibility of "being one's own self" or "authentic existence" and the possibility of "being a disowned self" or "inauthentic existence". Authentic existence of Man recognizes "care", the wholeness of Da-sein and "anxiety" as a condition of man, because he is "subject to being-towards-death" (Cruickshank 1969, p. 113). This condition results in more anxiety but an authentic existence needs to accept this anxiety, instead of running away from it. After accepting "anxiety" and "care" the authentic existent Man, according to Heidegger may be realized for who he is. One recognizes who he is, when he accepts the fact that each human being is uniquely himself and no one else.

In opposition to this, we have an inauthentic existent Man who, can neither recognize his "care" and "anxiety" nor accept it, thus, running away from them. This inauthentic existence of Man

is in a state of decline and so entangled with every- thing and his involvement with day-to-day life and routine that he ignores himself and his own relation with the world.

An authentic existence and owned being produces an ‘authentic language’ while inauthentic existence produces ‘inauthentic language’. In his book *Poetry, Language, Thought*, (2001) Heidegger reveals the main difference between authentic language and inauthentic language. Authentic language is the language of poetry which is “spoken purely” (192). In his essay; “Holderlin and the Essence of Poetry” he points out:

... the field of action of poetry is language. Hence the essence of poetry must be understood through the essence of language. ...Poetry is the inaugural naming of being and of the essence of all things-not just any speech, but that particular kind which for the first time brings into the open all that which we then discuss and deal with in everyday language. Hence poetry never takes language as a raw material ready to hand; rather it is poetry which first makes language possible. Poetry is the primitive language of a historical people. Therefore, in just the reverse manner, the essence of language must be understood through the essence of poetry.

The foundation of human existence is conversation, in which language does truly become actual. But primitive language is poetry, in which being is established. (Heidegger 1968, p. 307)

Wanda Torres Gregory (1998) in his article on “Heidegger on Traditional Language and Technological Language” reveals that inauthentic language is the technological language in our modern technological age. He says “the technological language” is “a language that is technologically determined by what is most peculiar to technology” (Gregory 1998, p. 2). In the modern age technology controls everything for its own benefit. So it turns language to “language machine”. He quotes from Heidegger that “modern technology controls the mode and the world of language as such” (Gregory 1998, p. 5). Thus, language is under the control of “scientific-technological manner of thinking” and language is “deformed into an instrument of reportage and calculable information” (Gregory 1998, p. 4). Language takes form like an “instrument” and “manipulatable object”. Gregory further writes that “the fact that language is interpreted and used as an instrument has lead us into believing that we are the masters of the language machine” (Gregory 1998, p. 6). He quotes from Heidegger that “the truth of the matter might well be that the language machine takes language into its management and masters the essence of the human being” (Gregory 1998, p. 6). According to Heidegger language is “the founder of the human being and the master of human”. When this foundation is shaken, it means the human being is in trouble. “Technological language” is “the language of inauthenticity” (Gregory 1998, p. 9). He continues:

In fact, with the inauthentic form of thinking in our age, language itself flounders in inauthenticity as it thereby falls into the service of expediting communication along routes where objectification -the uniform accessibility of everything to everyone-branches out and disregards all limits. In this way language comes under the dictatorship of the public realm which decides in advance what is intelligible and what must be rejected as unintelligible. (Gregory 1998, p. 8-9)

Thus Absentist language is the language of an inauthentic existence, the language of modern man and technology. Absentist language puts aside all the flourishing definitions of language and explores the lack in language. As T.S. Eliot said, in modern life, language is the mirror of society and the “fallen state of nature” as a consequence of our distancing from God and spirituality comes through language in the form of “ambiguity and loss of currency” (Lopez 1989, p. 83).

ELEMENTS OF ABSENTIST LANGUAGE

Implements which is a lament for the absence of authenticity of language, by itself is a piece of art, which deals with truth; the truth which this poem reveals for us is that lack, absence, indeterminacy and inadequacy dominate our language. It is very significant for the reader of *Implements* to understand that this poem is authentic but talks about inauthenticity of language and how the elements of absence penetrate into language. For example in “we fall down darkness in a line of words” (Graham 2004, p. 27), “fall”, the fundamental nature of absence in the form of verb, and “darkness”, the colour of absence in the form of adjective are the basic elements for Absentist vocabulary in Graham’s poetry. ‘Fall’ in its religious meaning is the ‘Fall of Man’, and the loss of grace because of the original sin. With regard to Absentist language and in its implication in Graham’s poetry ‘fall’ is into the darkness and the abyss of language. It means “to write words” and “to cause them to fall from the air to the page, from the live world of speech to the dead world of writing” (Francis 2004, p. 45). The concealed realm of words is related to the unknown nature of language. It also leads us to the unconscious mind. In Existentialism ‘Fall’ is man thrown into existence in this world. The world of the text is full of absences, the absence of author, the reader, and interlocutor. The world of a text, inside a book is always dark, because it has to be opened and read by a reader. The other aspect of Absentist language in modern poetry is the lack of communication. It is considered as a hostility of language in the poetry of Graham. Graham distinguishes language as a barrier, and tries to show the negative aspects in the origin of language. Absentist language analyzes language in every dimension, thematically and structurally to find the lack in language.

IMPLEMENTS AS AN ABSENTIST POEM

Implements in their Places portrays language as implements and furthermore, it claims that the implements are “in their places” but, actually they are not. Graham in *Implements* puts seventy four anonymous fragmented verses in a collection. Each fragment has up to nineteen lines. As fragmented pieces of verse, they are “intermittent and tend to detach themselves from the structure” (Riley 2004, p. 6). The title of this paper is taken from the first two lines of the poem: “Somewhere our belonging particles / Believe in us. If we could only find them” (Graham 2004, p. 240). However the poem is not the *Implements* that is “in their places”, but fragments of our “belonging particles” which are shattered. It emphasizes that “our belonging” which are our love, friends and the most important one, language are only “particles”, invisible and absent. What remains from a man with a particle belonging? A man who does not believe in his belonging but his belonging believes in him. The broken self and fragmented identity suffers from the broken language.

The circular progress of events in the poem, where the fragments 1 and 74 are the same reminds us of James Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake*’s circular narration. The other element in the poem that is similar to the language of Joyce is the dream-language. In this poem fragment number two is a dream like verse.

*Who calls? Don't fool me. Is it you
Or me or us in a faulty duet
Singing out of a glade in a wood
Which we would never really enter? (No.2)*

In this fragment, Graham connotes Heidegger’s term of Man is ‘thrown’ into existence. Graham portrays the world as “a wood / which we would never really enter” but we are thrown there. The domain of the poem in this part is ‘wood’ as he says in another poem: “Here I am hiding in / The jungle of mistakes of communication” (Graham 2004, p. 207). In these dreamy-scary domains, Graham puts

his reader in a jungle-language of darkness which is full of beasts and monsters. Fragment number three which has a dream type narration portrays the muse as “jailbait” and “old tin opener”.

*This time the muse in the guise
Of jailbait pressed against
That cheeky part of me which thinks
It likes to have its own way. (No.3)*

The muse does not inspire the poet to write poetry but acts like an evil force that awakens his ego “that cheeky” part of him that wants his “own way”. To protect himself from the evil-muse the poet usually sits “Behind [his] barrier of propped words”, but of no avail as she “entered and breathed beside [him] / her rank breath of poet’s bones”. The poet in the meta-poetry of *Absentist in Implements* is not inspired by muse but by the force of language. Implements numbers 26 and 29 show his pessimism about the power of language over man. He says words are “the very devil” because word builds language and language is capable of everything, “The king noun took the huff and changed / to represent another object”. The “wordy ghost” is the same word “devil” in number 26 that continue in number 29 and 30.

*These words as I uttered them
Spoke back at me out of spite,
Pretended to not know me
From Adam. Sad to have to infer
Such graft and treachery in the name
Of communication. (No.29)*

*Language, Constrictor of my soul,
What are you snivelling at? Behave
Better. Take care. It’s only through me
You live. Take care. Don’t make me mad. (No.30)*

In number 29, language is personified; he says language “spoke back at me”. He complains about his connection with language that makes him “sad”. He concludes it is the “graft and treachery in the name / of communication”. Graham believes that inauthentic language in modern life leads the human being to his falling state of its progress. He considers language: “Become[s] / A circus of mountebanks, promiscuous / Highfliers, tantamount to wanting” (Graham 2004, p. 243). Number 30 shows language and human beings have power over each other; their existences depend on the presence of the other. In *Absentist* language the balance between language and existence fluctuates. Thus, while sometimes the poet laments under the intolerable weight of language which is complex and fragmented sometimes he admires it. In fragment number five, which is a memory of his childhood, the poet’s eagerness for writing alongside the elements of the sea, make a complicated fragment that confuses the reader.

*When I was a buoy it seemed
Craft of rare tonnage
Moored to me. Now
Occasionally a skiff
Is tied to me and tugs
At the end of its tether. (No.5)*

In these six lines Graham uses three puns in the words “buoy”, “craft” and “tug”. The multiplicity of meaning is evident. For example: “when I was a buoy” the poet dislocates the word “buoy” from its normal place. “Buoy” does not give meaning in this structure, thus the reader needs to find the

ambiguity in the word ‘buoy’. The homophone for the word ‘buoy’ is ‘boy’ which confuses the reader. There are other reciprocal words such as “craft” for writing and “tug” for boat in their second meaning. Fragment number 32 has some hidden layers of meaning as well; “Member of Topside Jack’s trades, / I tie my verse in a true reef / Fast for the purpose of joining” (Graham 2004, p. 247). These hidden meanings of “line” or “rope” for verse and the suppressed metaphors conceal the meaning of writing from the sight of the reader. But the poet tries to rescue his writing from fragmentation, so he says “I tie my verses ... for joining”. He tries to connect his fragments but the comprehension of the fragments becomes tough as also the reading of the broken parts.

IMPLEMENTS AND THE FRAGMENTED SELF

The poet opens up different issues at the same time without being able to finish them in the same fragment. He shifts from one idea to another; from personal memories to social and historical issues, from literature to philosophy and psychology. The varieties of themes in the scattering narration convey the lack of certitude and confidence in the speaker. This poem is an image of Man in crisis while the self is in trouble. In this regard the language of a troubled man does not follow logic; so whatever comes to his mind is what he utters.

Tony Lopez argues that the place and setting of the poem is another source of confusion that makes the fragments more misplaced and wandering. One understands this displacement when comparing this poem with *The Nightfishing* that happens in the sea and the harbour of Scotland and *Malcolm Mooney’s Land* that is a diary exploring the imaginary land of Malcolm Mooney. In number ten he says,

*Out into across
The morning loch burnished
Between us goes the flat
Thrown poem and lands
Takes off and skips one
2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9,
And ends and sinks under. (No. 10)*

*There is no fifty-seven.
It is not here. Only
Freshwater Loch Thom
To paddle your feet in,
And the long cry of the curlew. (No.57)*

These two sections confuse as well as amuse the reader. By amusing the reader, the poet takes the attention of the reader away from the setting and the place of the poem. He invites the reader to ignore the poem, the lands and skips all the ten verses he wrote till here. Between number one and the rest of the numbers from 2 to 9 there is a break and also number ten is the number of this fragment. Actually one can classify these ten fragments as: fragment number one is like an epigraph, fragments number 2 to 9 are in one group while number ten is completely separate from them. In number fifty-seven, he denies implement 57 but emphasizes on the present, of the lake Loch Thom and “Freshwater [...] to paddle your feet in” and even he says we hear the “cry of the curlew”. These are absent except in the Implement 57. The only place we know about this poem is the pages of the poem in front of us. The poem is full of absences. Lopez believes that:

We cannot forget an instant that these pieces are made, that there is an author managing the words about. The writing seems unusually direct about its processes, but the author is acutely absent from the print. He takes the idea of reader participation and shows it up for what it is.

Our notions of re-constructing a fragmented self from the dislocated narrative bits ... is given an old-fashioned look. (Lopez 1989, p. 103)

ABSENTIST POETRY AND THE ABSENCE OF COMMUNICATION

There is a tight connection between the writer and the reader from the beginning of the fragments in this poem. In fragment two he asks his reader “Is it you / Or me or us in a faulty duet / Singing out of a glade in a wood” (Graham 2004 p. 240). Though the writer and the reader form a duet, the former writing the poem and the latter reading it, yet it is a “faulty duet”. When the poet writes the poem, the reader is absent, when the reader is reading the poem, the poet is not there. This is the inadequacy and indeterminacy of language. Graham wants to save language by re-uniting the writer and the reader in the text at the same time. He tries to bring back communication to the world of poetry by making both the writer and the reader present. He gives an opportunity to the reader to be involved in completing the blank spaces of the poem, in a way to create his own meaning. Fragment number 40 is very similar to a communication between two persons. It is precisely for this purpose he leaves some spaces between the lines to be filled up by the reader,

*I leave this space
To use as your own.
I think you will find
That using it is more
Impossible than making it.
Here is the space now.
Write an Implement in it.
You.....
You.....
You.....
You.....
Do it with your pen.
I will return in a moment
To see what you have done.
Try. Try. No offence meant. (No.40)*

By inviting the reader into the process of creating and completing the blank spaces of the poem, Graham wants to communicate to the reader by engaging him directly in the process of writing but these lacunae indicate the ‘absence’, ‘emptiness’, ‘silence’ and ‘barrier’ in the poem. They also signify the absence of the author in the poem. *Implements* tries to communicate directly with the reader. The pronoun you in most of the cases addresses the reader. In number 22 this communication is very explicit,

*I see it has fluttered to your hand
Drowned and singed. Can you read it?
It kills me. Why do you persist
In holding my message upsidedown?*

The poet talks about his poem which could be mired in ignorance and lack of understanding, and it might be “singed” which means to be read according to a certain theory and forever be moulded into that special theory. This question is very important for the poet to see whether readers can read the poem? Whether they can understand it? Obviously a poem has to be read. He asks his reader: “why do you persist / In holding my messages upside-down?” the poet does not want the reader to misread the poem or determine a certain analysis for the poem and thereby close it forever. Misreading of the poem is like holding a book upside down. One will not be able to read it unless one holds it in a proper

way. Misinterpreting the poem, not reading the poem and even fixing a certain meaning for the poem, are feelings the poet can “hardly bear”. He says “It kills me”.

In implement number 31 he believes that the “real message gets lost” in the lack of effective communication. The ‘real message’ asks us to look for the hidden meaning of this implement. It could be dealt with “the collective pain of Alive?” because now “how are we doing” is “not very well”. This implement seems to promise us a new realm of language free from absence.

ABSENTIST POETRY AS A SCATTERED COSMOS

Language for Graham is ‘words’, ‘things’ and ‘implements’. Through the theme he wants to ‘construct a space’; a place beyond the fragment and flux; “A place I can think in / And think anything in, / An aside from the monstrous” (Graham 2004, p.168). This is a paradox, because he knows that language is fragmented. All he wants to do is to rebuild this fragmented language, and then he will be able to shelter there; “He writes poetry simply to shelter in its ‘constructed space’ from the unconstructed space of both language and the world” (Bedient 1977, p. 23). To get shelter through writing poetry means to establish being by means of the words which is a necessity for the Absentist poet. Absentist language is the ‘ordinary language’ of everyday life of people, the language of fragment, ambiguity and banality. Bedient quotes from Graham: “I want to feel my consciousness tossing in a freedom from ordinary language, which is everyone’s language, the language of death” (Bedient 1974, p. 162). In *Implements* are particles which are fragmented, as Graham follows Heidegger’s notion of cosmos. Barrett in an interview by Bryan Magee points out that Heidegger’s idea of the world as a cosmos comes from Parmenides, the Greek sage, who believes that “the all is one”. Likewise Graham’s *Implements* is a manifesto of the scattered cosmos into implements, fragments and absence of the whole. Barrett points out that “Heidegger feels that what has happened with the modern culture is precisely that we’ve lost these cosmic roots, become detached from our sense of connection with the whole” (Magee 1979, p. 66). Lopez explains that the *Implements* are our only way to understand the world;

Heidegger’s examination of ‘Being-in-the-world’ relies entirely on ‘Implements’, because it is through their use that we know the world: through hammering, for example, we know the specific ‘manipulability’ (Handlichkeit) of the hammer. We thus also know things from nature: wood and metal”. (Lopez 1989, p. 106)

Lopez continues that, the materials Heidegger works with are the same that Graham uses. Graham also adapts the use of materials and implements from Greek philosophy. He brings language into an active participation to create his own domain of words with the help of instruments and implements. Each number of fragments is a separate implement, so the poem is a collection of seventy four materials and equipments. They try to tell us something in their exact order, which is in the territory of the poem. But the order which they show us is at the highest level of disorder and chaos.

WRITING POETRY AS A CREATIVE ART

The poet explains what is going on in the mind of the poet while writing a poem - his anxieties, his endeavour, and his consciousness of the invisibility of his poems. Writing is a lonely act, the poet, the lover of words and language, late at night writes poetry. His fragments are like “little language” of “the tales of love”. He compares these fragments to “worms” on the page but with an aim to reach their goal, “where the mint sprouts”. In number forty five Graham repeats the same theme,

*Tonight late alone, the only
Human awake in the house I go
Out in a foray into my mind*

*Armed with the language as I know it
To sword–dance in the halls of Angst.*

In number twenty four he explains to the reader how he writes a poem,

*It is how one two three each word
Chose itself in its position
Pretending at the same time
They are working for me. Here
They are. (No.24)*

He indicates that there is power within the words which puts them in their position but words pretend that they are following the poet's order. He shows us "Here / they are" with their power to choose whatever they want. "Here" in this poem and "they are" are fragmented. What Graham talks here is about "the pure poetry", the poetry of pure creativity. In such authentic poetry the first line of the poem is written by the poet but it continues by the inspiration of divinity. "The poet is exposed to divine lightning. This is...the purest poetry" (Heidegger 1949, p. 308). In continuation he says "the writing of poetry is the fundamental naming of the gods". Thus, Graham's poem deals with truth as pure poetry. He tries to show the 'truth' of our present life, which is a life of chaos and disorder.

In implement 34 languages is preferred to thinking; "As I hear so I speak so I am so I think", the ability to hear and to speak, both creating language. The ability to use language indicates our existence in the universe. Thinking skill follows language skill. This is against Descartes' idea; "I think therefore I am".

Language as the essence of being dominates everything. In number 35 the terrible surrounding of inauthentic language over man, causes the poet to cry out:

*Language, you terrible surrounder
Of everything, what is the good
Of me isolating my few words
In a certain order to send them
Out in a suicide torpedo to hit?
I ride it. I will never know.*

The poet feels that writing is futile, especially poetry in a "certain order" that the words of a poem requires. He believes that writing poetry is like "a suicide torpedo". The poem dies even before reaching the reader; it also dies in the absence of a serious reader. The poet will continue to ride his "poetry-torpedo" and hope to reach the audience. There are "sly irreconcilabilities" between the poet and language. He asks language not to forget this but still tries to move towards language which is moving away from him.

*I movingly to you moving
Move on stillness I pretend
Is common ground forgetting not
Our sly irreconcilabilities. (No.36)*

In his struggle the poet uses language to explain himself; he faces many shortcoming of language. In number 37 the words are 'impudent children' who make faces at the poet; "Dammit these words are making faces / At me again. I hope the faces / They make at you have more love" (Graham 2004, 248). The inadequacy of language in implement 38 comes in the form of a scary creature is a poem with a "horned head", a creature in the zoo. Despite the struggle, there is a hope that "There must be a way to begin to try / Even to having to make up verse". In this metapoem at the same time

he struggles with words and language of his writing, he invites them into the organized world of the poem. He says,

*Come, my beast, there must be a way
To employ you as the whiskered Art
Object, or great Art-Eater
Licking your tongue into the hill. (No.38)*

In this ‘language-wood’ he warns the language that “the hunter” is “only after your skin”.

*Your food has stretched your neck too
Visible over the municipal hedge.
If I were you (which only I am)
I would not turn my high head
Even to me as your safe keeper. (No.38)*

The poet recognizes himself as a zoo-keeper of the animal-language; when he says I am “your safe keeper”. He substitutes himself with the animal-language “If I were you” and immediately says “(which only I am)”, this is the moment that the inauthentic existence (mortal) accepts his ‘anxiety’ and begins to recognize who he is. Man needs to gain control over the inadequacy both in his language and in his existence.

Graham talks to language again and wonders about his greediness to communicate:

*Am I greedier than you?
I linger on to hope to hear
The whale unsounding with a deep
Message about how I have behaved. (No.39)*

In number 41 Lopez finds out the connection between the idea of deceit in number 15 and ‘graft and treachery’ in number 29 with ‘Flora’ in this fragment. He connects “Flora” with “Fauna” and “Fauns” that are images of Pan as “the guises of the devil” in Christianity. They have “the shaggy legs and cloven hoof”. Number 41 is a repetition of the same theme as in 38. The “poem’s horned head” is another face of Fauna. On the other side “Fauna” stands for our inauthentic identity and devilish hidden nature which is “pelted with anarchy”.

*I found her listed under Flora
Smudged on a coloured, shining plate
Dogearied and dirty. As for Fauna
We all are that, pelted with anarchy. (no.41)*

In this implement he once more emphasizes the human’s banishment to alienation and corruption. The “Dogearied and dirty” is characteristic of man and language and the source of all anarchy in the world.

CONCLUSION

Graham’s exploration of the nature of language in his poetry of meta-language is in the course of his desire to awaken the modern man to exist and to awaken the reader to communicate and to make him ‘listen’. He writes to reshape himself through language as Bedient said and shapes a new pleasure for his reader. The definite feature of Absentist poetry is the absurd notion which Absentist language

conveys. Absentist language is a concentration on the negative dimensions of language through the dissection and analysis of language in modern poetry. It shows a direct causative connection between ‘broken or distorted language’ and a broken and fragmented human’s mind. It also extends the range of ability of language in poetry. This is the genuineness of Graham’s poetry that enables him to translate his ‘pure poetry’ to inauthentic language, with the sole intention to communicate, and of course, he communicates something new in his poetry.

Both Heidegger and Graham lead us to this conclusion that if modern poetry is in the shadow and marginalized, it is because one cannot understand it easily. The misunderstanding is due to the inadequate medium of language and the ambiguity of poetic language. One needs ‘to take poetry seriously’ because it is the establishment of our being by the means of words and in the world of words.

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