

the strategy of youth
[rules governing conduct of tunnel travel]

section 3725.01 issuance of permit
there is a saying: I was young and now I am oldⁱ

section 3725.02 priority seating
enoch has interjected as if to punctuate how he was missed;
someone whispers sayings into a square mealⁱⁱ

I hear another venture in prayer for mercyⁱⁱⁱ
this time slipping on all fours^{iv}
the saying that there's something afoot this evening
as if a hunt readies itself^v

- (a) there, there a chariot lodges deep in the river;
- (b) we revisit plane mirrors, our desire winding garbled
- (c) where do gardens grow crackers like nuts?^{vi}

section 3725.03 vandalism and defacement
four sages and ten utterances wheel restless
overturned in minds ringing arms around such subjects^{vii}

section 3725.04 prescribed tolls
I should be so good.... offerings, tabled grace^{viii}

section 3725.05 compliance with posted signs
therein a saying:
where in the garden does god take a man for his walks?^{ix}

section 3725.06 passenger identification
there are sinners and there are heretics^x

- (a) or so they say;^{xi}
- (b) so do they work in groups or do they stand alone?
- (c) what repentance avails us all, our laving grindstone?

section 3725.07 official seal and control devices
what defines how we create, and thereby our creatureliness?^{xii}

section 3725.08 private crossings
but someone says sound the bugle now
someone needs to chart the rutting, power in counterblows

- (a) in the know, doubt or belief, full stops;
- (b) a year of lifetime passes
- (c) the suns bask, many moons to make time
- (d) turn tables, time after time to the letter^{xiii}

section 3725.09 abandoned vehicles

will I end up another vessel, accomplice to failed missions?^{xiv}

section 3725.10 systems and equipment prohibition

odeberg can't seat himself conjoined with his past
his whiplash no accident as scholem belts a song^{xv}

young and strong, a lick of letters chop chop^{xvi}

section 3725.11 enforcement

a nut cracks open, shells itself^{xvii}

section 3725.12 firearms and other weapons

the creatures are moving with the wheels;
are they dancing spaceships sparking up and down
round and round, how fire works sounding rockets?

then they fly, my ears flood with every sense of the word
and I see wings; then silence as sudden as science^{xviii}

- (a) is that a love agape, zephyr in the air?
- (b) is that what I feel?
- (c) or is this the smell of fresh kill?^{xix}

section 3725.13 unauthorised interference

it's dark, no windows in this room but it is night;
elijah sits by doors eavesdropping on mothers' petitions^{xx}

I shine my shoes penitent; I hum my hymn to him

maybe I'll hatch aeriform, myself some angel food
antimony caking, yoking; and make a meal

of another feeling, that impounding railed in?^{xxi}

- (a) what happens after the biting?
- (b) what happens with the hand that feeds?
- (c) what happens to the never?^{xxii}

section 3725.14 signal of approach

handle and open with care; avoid shock and friction
wear suitable protective gear, depth charges
recommended for interior use on large surface matters

just to be safe, tonight tears up^{xxiii}
perspex sayings^{xxiv}
always tier upon tier dead meat^{xxv}

horses running into hundreds, panettone thick^{xxvi}

ⁱ In Psalm 37:25, it is stated (NIV): “I am young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread.”

ⁱⁱ James Longenbach, *The Resistance to Poetry* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 1-2. In his first chapter, Longenbach sets the stage for how poetry resists itself even as the world resists it, even if, as Auden quite cryptically put it, “poetry makes nothing happen”:

Poets have been on the defensive at least since the time of Plato, and rightly so, since philosophers and literary critics have distrusted poetry. But poems do not necessarily ask to be trusted. Their language revels in duplicity and disjunction, making it difficult for us to assume that any particular poetic gesture is inevitably responsible or irresponsible to the culture that gives the language meaning: a poem’s obfuscation of the established terms of accountability might be the poem’s most accountable act – or it might not. Distrust of poetry (its potential for inconsequence, its pretension to consequence) is the stuff of poetry. And the problem with many defenses of poetry is the refusal to recognize that the enemy lies within.

ⁱⁱⁱ Nathaniel Deutsch, *Guardians of the Gate: Angelic Vice Regency in Late Antiquity* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 103-104. Deutsch argues that *The Bahir*’s “complex cosmological and mythological system of light, flowing water, letters of the alphabet, crowns, parts of the body, sexual symbols, and divine attributes” are elements also found in *The Scroll of Exalted Kingship*. While Deutsch cannot afford to provide a detailed semiotic analysis, he offers a quote from *The Scroll of Exalted Kingship* to underscore his point about the similarity between Mandaean and kabbalistic thought: “As to the novice [priest], you know that there is something female about him – the inner crown that comes to the outer one supports it. Behold, the crown of the bridegroom has something internal to it, (something) dwelling in the mystery of the female! (If) there is nothing external within it, its kingship is lost. Behold, the female without the male cannot be established!” Below is Deutsch’s exposition on the passage (103-104):

Typically, the crown or *taga* is a male, priestly symbol in Mandaeanism and yet this passage emphasizes its androgynous character, an androgyny in which the female supports and is literally comprised within the male. This model of androgyny and its use of crown and marital symbolism greatly resembles one of the most important symbolic structures of the Kabbalah, one which Elliot Wolfson has explicated as follows: “The image of the masculine king wearing the crown connotes perfect unity of male and female, which, as I have noted above, involves a reconstitution of the male androgyny.... The image of the crown or the process of crowning is used to denote the union of the masculine and feminine aspects of the pleroma.” Within the *Bahir*, the idea of androgyny is linked to the date palm which is described as “including both male and female. How is this? The *lulav* [the frond of the date palm] is male and the fruit is male on the outside and female on the inside.” Thus, the *Bahir*, like the Mandaean text, links the masculine with the external and the feminine with the internal.

^{iv} Michael D. Swartz, *Mystical Prayer in Ancient Judaism* (Tubingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1992), 6. Looking at how the *Ma’aseh Merkavah* evolved from the liturgical to theurgical in the evolving function of prayer, Swartz writes that “Merkavah prayer has been seen to be characterized by the use of repetition of synonyms, a hypnotic rhythm, and a numinous quality”. Swartz then quotes Scholem who viewed the litany of synonyms as a “polylogy” created to help the mystic in his ascension:

Almost all the hymns from the Hekhaloth tracts, particularly those whose text has been preserved intact, reveal a mechanism comparable to the motion of an enormous fly-wheel.

In cyclical rhythm, the hymns succeed each other, and within them the adjurations of God follow in a crescendo of glittering and majestic attributes, each stressing and reinforcing the sonorous power of the world. The monotony of their rhythm – almost all consist of verses of four words – and the progressively sonorous incantations induce in those who are praying a state of mind bordering on ecstasy.

^v Stuart Piggott, *Wagon, Chariot and Carriage: Symbol and Status in the History of Transport*, (Slovenia: Thames and Hudson, 1992), 67-68. In looking at the earliest Chinese texts of the divinatory Oracle Bones that date 11th century BC, Piggott states that “the chariot appears as a royal adjunct to ceremonial display, hunting and courtly warfare”. Throughout Chinese history, the chariot has been “a vehicle of delight and display, for pleasure and vanity, pomp and command”; in war, they were “a spectacular demonstration of power and magnificence and as mobile command platforms for military leaders”. Piggott describes the chariot’s primacy in ancient divination (67):

The texts, the first Chinese literature, record the brief aphoristic replies to oracular enquiry from the pattern of cracks on pieces of heated bone, usually animal shoulder-blades, a widespread form of ancient divination. One records the outcome of a dubious omen in the hunting field: ‘The king went out in chase of rhinoceros. The Minor Vassal harmed the chariot made horse, overturning the king’s chariot; Prince Yang also fell out.’ The chariot clearly held three; the king, the prince and the Minor Vassal as the unfortunately inept charioteer, a title used more than once.... Apart from half-a-dozen divinations referring to chariots used in hunting, and one in ritual, a couple refer to war against barbarians on the northern border who also seem to be using chariots. Later texts show how within China warfare at the aristocratic level was conducted between

chivalrous gentlemen, with an agreed battlefield prepared by levelling up irregularities of the ground to avoid accidents on either side.

vi Joseph Dan, “Three Types of Ancient Jewish Mysticism,” *Jewish Mysticism: Late Antiquity* Vol. I (Northvale, New York: Aronson, 1998-1999), 40. In *Hechalot Rabbati*, which describes the ascension of Rabbi Ishmael, such paradoxical practice of “descension” in ascending to the divine chariot is known as *yeridah le-Merkavah*, with the mystics called *yordey ha-Merkavah*. Finding the same usage in *Hechalot Zutarti*, Dan gives some explanations for the paradoxical appellation: “In *Reuyot Yehezkel* the chariot is revealed to Ezekiel in the waters of the River Kevar, so that he must look down to see it; there is no indication, however, that such a vision of the chariot is found in the *Hechalot* books. A possible explanation may be based on the verse in Song of Songs 6:11, describing the ‘descent’ to *ginat egoz*. We have medieval quotations for *Hechalot* literature identifying this ‘garden of the nut’ with ‘the depth of the chariot’ (*omek ha-Merkavah*). Our *Hechalot* texts, however, do not contain a reference to this identification, so that the possibility of explaining the ‘descent’ to the chariot as derived from this verse remains a hypothesis.”

vii Yehuda Amichai, *Yehuda Amichai: A Life of Poetry 1948-1994*, trans. Benjamin and Barbara Harshav (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1994), 227. Here is *False Interpretation*:

As in a shoestore
You walk lightly back and forth
On the carpet in front of me.

Does it press? Hurt? Good?
What was there? A café? What scent?
Those, and others, are the questions
To bury whole epochs
In history, the king and his horses,
Burning temples and their priests

They interpreted your screams
Falsely.

viii Joseph Dan, “The Concept of Knowledge in the Shiur Komah”, *Jewish Mysticism* Vol. I (Northvale, New York: Aronson, 1998-1999), 211-212. Dan points out an often overlooked aspect of a Hechalot hymn that remains in Jewish liturgy: “Conceivably, whereas the disciple is being invited to ‘know’ the mystical dimensions of the Creator, all that can be asserted regarding the ‘Holy One’ is that He should be praised – probably with the mystical, esoteric hymns that constitute a great part of the Hechalot literature. This juxtaposition of the Creator who can be ‘measured’ with the ‘Holy One’ who is simply to be praised is likewise to be found in a Hechalot hymn identified by Scholem that has become an integral feature of the Jewish liturgy, namely the prayer known from its first word as *Aleynu*, the first two hemistichs of which run as follows: Upon us [rests the duty] to praise the Lord of all, to ascribe *greatness* to Him who *fashioned the work of creation*.”

ix Hugo Odeberg, ed., *3 Enoch or The Hebrew Book of Enoch*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1928). At the beginning of the first chapter of this book, Genesis 24 is stated: “And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.”

x Joseph Dan, “Jewish Gnosticism?,” *Jewish Mysticism: Late Antiquity* Vol. I (Northvale, New York: Aronson, 1998-1999), 8. Figuring squarely in the change in the very concept of Gnosticism throughout scholarly history is Gershom Scholem and Heinrich Graetz’s antagonism of ideas. Dan notes that while both Scholem and Graetz “described ancient Jewish mysticism as gnostic in character”, even including the appellation in the titles of their respective books, both of them understood the term “gnostic” in stark difference. Dan details this deep-seated difference of opinion:

For Graetz, gnosticism was an evil heresy, anarchistic and destructive, as it was portrayed in the writings of the early Church Fathers, whose polemics against the gnostics were the only source at his disposal. For Scholem, gnosticism was an ancient secret tradition of creative religious power, vivid and dynamic, in opposition to the formal, dogmatic, and rationalistic systems of Christian thought that were evolving in Late Antiquity. Graetz, in his attitude to gnosticism as well as to other matters, gave expression to an eighteenth-century Enlightenment view, seeking within history in general and religion in particular the rationalism and positive social elements that build an ethical, authoritarian, and structured society. Scholem’s view was influenced by a newer romantic attitude, which emphasized the importance of individual creativity, of the rebellious spirit of the great mystical masters. Scholem was well familiar with studies published in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that tried to reach the world of the gnostics themselves by setting aside the criticism of the Church Fathers and viewing mythology as a dynamic expression of the human religious spirit. To some extent, therefore, when Graetz used the term “gnosticism”, its connotation was

negative and derogatory, whereas for Scholem the same term meant something dynamic, creative, and rebellious.

^{xi} Joseph Dan, “Jewish Gnosticism?,” *Jewish Mysticism: Late Antiquity* Vol. I (Northvale, New York: Aronson, 1998-1999), 8-11. When one names ancient Jewish mysticism as gnostic in character, does one gaze at it as an “evil heresy, anarchistic and destructive” like Heinrich Graetz or as “an ancient secret tradition of creative religious power, vivid and dynamic” like Scholem? Advocating a historical approach *sans* prejudice, Dan distinguishes the current usage of the term “gnostic” and “gnosticism” as an adjective and as a noun: “When used as a noun, gnosticism refers to a specific group of mystical sects and movements between the late first century C.E. and the thirteenth, sects and movements that had different ideologies, symbolisms, and religious views, with very few, if any, characteristics common to them all. When used as an adjective, ‘Gnostic’ denotes the proximity of a certain idea or symbol to an artificial, modern concept created by scholars in the field of history of religions, a concept that may have never existed in historical reality.” Other scholarly biases include gnosticism being associated with the pagan, anti-monotheistic, foreign, anti-Jewish, primeval or romantic. In recent times, Dan states that gnosticism has begun “to be regarded as a term denoting external, non-Jewish influence over Jewish mysticism, while the insistence on the absence of gnostic elements has been identified with the view that Jewish mysticism is an intrinsic development within Judaism, and not a receptor of non-Jewish ideas”. The “authenticity” of any Jewish mysticism labelled Gnostic is thus brought into question.

^{xii} Joseph Dan, “The Concept of Knowledge in the Shiur Komah”, *Jewish Mysticism* Vol. I (Northvale, New York: Aronson, 1998-1999), 211. Stressing the importance of both form and meaning of the passage below, Dan comments that “the insistent use of the term ‘Creator’ (*yotzer*) throughout the *Shiur Komah* cannot be explained as an accident, and there is little doubt that the idea of the demiurge was prominent in the minds of these mystics”. Indeed, Dan goes further to say that one may assume “the seemingly anthropomorphic divine being described in this text is, in fact, the demiurge”:

Rabbi Ishmael said, ‘When I said this (sc. the text of the *Shiur Komah*) in the presence of Rabbi Akiva, he said to me, Anyone *who knows these dimensions of our Creator*, and the *praise* of the Holy One, Blessed be He, who is hidden from all created beings, may be assured that he will participate in the world to come, everything will be good for him in this world as part of the next world, and he will live a long life in this world.’

Rabbi Ishmael then said to him in the presence of his disciples: “I and Rabbi Akiva are pledges for this – that anyone who knows this *dimension-catalogue* of our Creator and the *praise* of the Holy One, Blessed be He, may be assured that he will participate in the world to come, so long as he studies it in the Mishnah every single day.’

^{xiii} Joseph Dan, “Jewish Gnosticism?,” *Jewish Mysticism: Late Antiquity* Vol. I (Northvale, New York: Aronson, 1998-1999), 13. “If we use,” Dan writes, “this distinction between historical and typological gnosticism to analyze the list of Jewish mystical groups and movements that scholars, headed by Gershom Scholem, have associated with gnosticism, we arrive at a surprising result. *The clearer the gnostic outlines are, the farther these phenomena are from historical gnosticism*”. In Dan’s opinion, “Hechalot mysticism neither includes any dualistic element nor describes a bisexual pleroma”, not that this prevented scholars like Graetz or Scholem from labelling it gnostic for their own reasons. In *The Heart and the Fountain*, Dan, in establishing that the association between Metatron and Enoch only first appears in *Third Enoch* and no earlier, queries: “Why did he [the author] describe the great divine power as a transformation of a human being?” Dan offers his answer to the question (63-64):

A probable explanation is that the concept of “two powers in heaven,” the lesser of them being the creator, the demiurge (*yotzer bereshit*), identified with Metatron, was prevalent in some Jewish circles, and this treatise is intended to refute this, by describing Metatron as a transformation of a human being who was born several generations after the creation so that he could not participate in this process. This necessitated describing him as endowed by all the external attributes of God, so that Elisha’s mistake is an understandable one. This might be the theological-historical reason for the emergence of this myth. Yet the devotion to detail that is demonstrated by the author in the description of the transformation may attest to a possible identification of Enoch with the paradigmatic mystic. If Metatron evolved from a human being – even if that was a biblical figure – maybe other human beings may aspire to share a similar illustrious fate. Talmudic and Midrashic literature ignored the figure of Enoch, and the verse in Genesis indicating his elevation to heaven while still alive was interpreted as referring to his death. The author of this work, while presenting a conservative view opposing the existence of a divine demiurge, expressed a radical position by endowing Enoch not only with everlasting life but also with the achievement of almost complete deification.

^{xiv} Herman Rapaport, *Heidegger & Derrida: Reflections on Time and Language* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 246-264. Rapaport cites Derrida’s “The Time of a Thesis: Punctuations” to introduce Derrida’s own questions concerning the tenuous relationship between philosophical and literary works:

“Should one speak of an epoch of a thesis?... Should one speak of an age of the thesis?” To Rapaport, Derrida’s remarks about his own age suggest a Derrida who “rejects an experience which pretends it is fully present to itself in any particular time, in what we might call a certain age, [and] this divisibility of experience in time relates to Derrida’s resistance to completing the thesis, a resistance which is to philosophy itself”. Rapaport has Derrida explain this in his own words (247):

Between youth and old age, one and the other, neither one nor the other, an indecisiveness of age, it is like a discomfiture at the moment of installation, an instability, I will not go so far as to say a disturbance of stability, of posture, of station, of the thesis or of the pose, but rather of a pause in the more or less well-regulated life of a university teacher, an end and a beginning which do not coincide and in which there is involved once again no doubt a certain gap of an alternative between the delight of pleasure and fecundity.

xv Joseph Dan, “Gershom Scholem: Between Mysticism and Scholarship,” *Jewish Mysticism* Vol. IV (Northvale, New York: Aronson, 1998-1999), 256. A historian himself, Dan defines “a historical approach as the recognition of the creative power of the individual”. Below he describes Scholem’s views on the history of ideas:

According to the kabbalists themselves, the mystic is nothing but the spokesman, the vehicle, for the transmission of eternal truth from one generation to another.... For Scholem, every mystical expression is the revelation of an individual phenomenon that is the result of his own creativity, supported by the totality of his cultural experience and heritage. No kabbalist is identical to another, no mystic is identical to another; each is an individual historical phenomenon that can be studied and respected on its own terms without needing the crutch of eternal divine truth, eternal human experience, or eternal human archetypes. These are the three basic concepts, intrinsically united, that express Scholem’s concept of the history of ideas: history, individuality, and the rejection of every apologetic element. This is achieved by the direct and complete acceptance of the text on its own terms, studying it in its own sequence, cultural environment, sources, and impact, needing no transcendent justification for its spiritual greatness.

xvi Mette Hjort, *The Strategy of Letters* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1993), 24-25. Unlike traditional conceptions of strategy the likes of Sun Tzu, Derrida’s idea of strategy, Hjort asserts, in fact points to a “systematic negation” of such accepted notions. Rather than means-end rationality, strategy lacks explicit goals, guidance of agency, and consistency or coherence. As Hjort quotes Derrida from “The Time of a Thesis: Punctuations”:

Strategy is a word that I have perhaps abused in the past, especially as it has been always to specify in the end, in an apparently self-contradictory manner and at the risk of cutting the ground from under my own feet – something I almost never fail to do – that this strategy is a strategy without any finality; for this is what I hold and what in turn holds me in its grip, the aleatory strategy of someone who admits that he does not know where he is going. This, then, is not after all an undertaking of war or a discourse of belligerence. I should like it to be also like a headlong flight straight towards the end, a joyous self-contradiction, a disarmed desire, that is to say something very old and very cunning, but which also has just been born and which delights in being without defence.

xvii Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1974), 239. Scholem writes that the Merkabah symbolism of the nut was later evident in the Zohar through Eleazar of Worms, “the shell” of the nut being a metaphor for evil.

xviii Ezekiel 1:19 states (NIV): “When the living creatures moved, the wheels beside them moved; and when the living creatures rose from the ground, the wheels also rose. Wherever the spirit would go, they would go, and the wheels would rise along with them, because the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels. When the creatures moved, they also moved; when the creatures stood still, they also stood still; and when the creatures rose from the ground, the wheels rose along with them, because the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels.”

xix Joseph Dan, “The Dangers of the Mystical Ascension in Ancient Jewish Mystical Texts,” *Jewish Mysticism* Vol. I (Northvale, New York: Aronson, 1998-1999). Unlike Christian or Islamic mysticism, Jewish mysticism is unique in its warnings of danger both physical and spiritual of the endeavour to approach God. In the *Hechalot Rabbati* for instance, one mystical hymn details the six voices of cherubs, or *ofanim*, the first voice of which turns “anyone who listens to it immediately...crazy and...an idiot” (267). Dan sums up the dangers like so (308):

...we may state that the earliest rabbinic and mystical texts that have reached us contain an unusual emphasis on the dangerous character of the mystical process. Great sages like Ben Azzai, Ben Zoma, and Elisha ben Avuyah perish, spiritually or physically, as a result of such an attempt; fire bursts out from the hashmal and kills anyone who approaches; and there is a place at the gate of the sixth palace where even God Himself is not obeyed, and the guardians, originally obedient angels, embark on a rampage of anarchic behavior and

massacre indiscriminately anyone who approaches. A somewhat later stratum describes an incomprehensible test for which one cannot prepare and the results of which are predetermined, which assigns most of the ascending mystics a cruel death.

^{xx} Nahum N. Glatzer, *The Language of Faith: Selected Jewish Prayers*, trans. Jacob Sloan and Olga Marx (New York: Schocken Books, 1947), 116. In the short epilogue of this book, it is written: “ ‘Prayer is to religion what thinking is to philosophy. The religious sense prays as the intellectual organ thinks.’ Prayer, to carry this saying of Novalis a step further, is a significant type of discourse, a human language. In becoming the central act performed in the House of Worship, prayer was exposed to the danger of institutionalization, of losing that spontaneity without which it is formula. Yet prayer has had sufficient inner strength to withstand convention. It has remained a living language, surviving, in the words of Jewish tradition, as the ‘Service of the Heart.’ The chief care in this selection of Jewish prayers has been for this heartfelt quality, rather than historical value or liturgic significance.” Below is reprinted the last prayer within this book, a prayer recited by mothers at the close of the Sabbath (114-117):

God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob,
Protect your dear people of Israel with your love.

The good and holy Sabbath nears its end,
Now turn to us in tenderness, and send
A happy week, a brim
With life and health, with bread and savor.
Let us be pure and righteous, grant your favor,
Untarnished gains and greater strength of limb.
Amen Selah.

I rise at dawn, and there on high
Our dear Lord sits in the seventh sky.
Have pity on me, dear God, and on
My husband and my little ones.

Show me the way, a path that is good,
Your faithful hand will dole me food,
And what you dole will be my stay
Today and every day.

Dear my Lord, oh, come and be
Here inside this room with me,
Bring with you sweet felicity.
Rule and bless the well, and heal
Those who are sicken – let me feel
Free from human charity.

Elijah, the prophet, is in our house,
All evil things shall keep out,
All good shall enter by this door
And never leave us any more.

^{xxi} Leon Surette, *Pound in Purgatory: From Economic Radicalism to Anti-Semitism*, (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 157-175. Surette relates Heidegger and Pound as both believing in the redemptive power of words towards history in recovering the past, a faithfulness to Enlightenment optimism, as opposed to, say, Nietzsche and Derrida. “It is somewhat ironic,” Surette says, “that Pound was almost alone among historicists and metahistorians in believing that the catastrophe could be avoided by the power of words” (166). While Pound scholars now admit to the fascist overtones of *The Cantos*, Surette exhorts that “Pound scholarship still has not come to terms with this distressing feature of the poem” (160). Surette argues that from *Eleven New Cantos* to the final fragments, *The Cantos* exhibits an in-your-face fascism in celebrating Mussolini’s own – even graver still is how the work “also embodies totalitarian political, economic, and cultural principles”. With an understanding of Nazism and Marxism as historicist ideologies, Surette lays bare his desire to study the cultural principle of historicism, “the view that historical events follow either some discoverable principles or some discoverable pattern”. Of Pound, he goes on to say (162-167):

Pound was motivated to attempt an epic poem in the midst of the tangled, violent, and confused first half of the twentieth century by the occult belief that the world was on the verge of a new age. As it has turned out, *The Cantos* is rather more a symptom of that period than the transcendent analysis of it that Pound wished it – and that some of his admirers believe it – to be.... *The Cantos* is not based on the assumption that historical events are caused by some immanent or transcendent power, nor that they instantiate some overarching

historical pattern. On the contrary it is grounded on the assumption that history is determined by individuals, and that individual behaviour is rational. Hence the way to have some impact on the course of events is to persuade individuals of the truth and disabuse them of error and falsehood. It is not too much to say that *The Cantos* represents a Quixotic attempt to determine the future by promulgating the truth and denouncing falsehood and error. Alas, Pound put his “truth” and “good ideas” at the service of Mussolini and Hitler, who were committed to falsehood and error.

xxii James Longenbach, *The Resistance to Poetry*, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 84-94. In his chapter “Leaving Things Out”, Longenbach looks to Jorie Graham’s works, including her book *Never*, to posit questions of “locating the object in space and time” and “the temporality of the act of recording”. *Never* contains an epigraph which itself frames the question: “How can I believe in that?” Longenbach goes on to say (91):

What it is: Graham is focussed “head-down and over some one / thing” throughout these lines as throughout the whole of *Never*, but her devotion does not guarantee a confident rendition of the object world. She craves the certainty of location, but each wave passes, becomes some other thing, no sooner glimpsed than gone. What’s more, the rendered wave becomes a figure for the poet’s language, which also exists in a constant state of flux, its drive to predication constantly diverted.... A poem may make us more or less aware of the intricate relationship of words to things, however, and in this sense “For One Must Want / To Shut the Other’s Gaze” foregrounds the complexity of any poem’s relationship to its place. All poems are troubled about their own locations because their language is troubled by its referentiality; they recognize that the effort to include a clear sense of a location in the poem may become indistinguishable from the effort to omit it.... To wonder about a poem’s conversion of history to poetry is consequently to reiterate poetry’s long-standing resistance to itself.

xxiii Piggott, *Wagon, Chariot and Carriage*, 113-114. Piggott describes how the horse as a prestige steed was approached within the ancient nomadic world, where “horses indicated status in herds rather than as individuals”. In showing how numerous horses are sacrificed in for instance the Pazyryk burials in the Altai, Piggott says “this vast number is astonishingly excelled by a Chinese burial” at a tomb at Zibo in central Shandong province, traced to the Qi, a powerful vassal state of the Eastern Zhou dynasty in the fifth century BC. Piggott writes: “In a 5-m wide trench-grave on three sides of the tomb some 600 horses (they would have been chariot pairs) had been sacrificed and buried.”

xxiv Longenbach, *The Resistance to Poetry*, 50-60. In his chapter “Untidy Activity”, Longenbach asks the question: “How can poetic language simultaneously ask us to imagine a world and incite us to forget it, distracting us from it simultaneously renders it viscerally *there*?” In describing the power of figurative language to provoke in us the feeling of self-forgetfulness, Longenbach cites Baudelaire’s “Correspondences” in saying “our world is made up of nothing but figures – ‘forests of symbols’ in which any given word brings to mind another word”. As a counterpoint to such a Baudelairean penchant for losing oneself in the language of possibility, poets of the last century like Ezra Pound would think of such things: “*Le Paradis n’est pas artificiel*” (52-53):

Pound objects to the notion of correspondences because he wants to be liberated from associations that have accumulated around a particular thing.... He wants poets to employ a kind of diction that would emphasize the thing referred to rather than the exfoliating connotations of the word.

But even if Baudelaire’s symbolist inheritors oversimplified the notion of correspondences, Baudelaire himself was no more interested in predictable meanings than Pound was. The world is alive, says Baudelaire..., with “perplexing messages”: one object conjures the obscure memory of another, one word slips precariously to the next, and our attention is drawn as much by the vagaries of sound as of sense.... To look at one thing is to think of another thing; to utter one word is inevitably to be distracted by its relationship to other words – to enter the space of untidy activity.

From this perspective, Baudelaire’s notion of correspondences is not a way of predicting how the universe fits together, but a way of acknowledging that the effect of the words we use is always to a degree out of our control. The language of a poem inevitably encourages us to forget what we are simultaneously compelled to remember, and poets who want to emphasize the iconic relationship of words and things are giving the strategic impression that their words do not participate in an uncontrollable network of associations. The opposition between Baudelaire and Pound, between symbolism and objectivism, between a poetry that forgets what it points to and a poetry that merely points, depends less on how language actually functions than on what poets say about their language....

xxv Harold Bloom, “Lying Against Time: Gnosis, Poetry, Criticism,” *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism: Proceedings of the International Conference on Gnosticism at Yale, Vol I: The School of Valentinus*, ed. Bentley Layton, (Belgium: E. J. Brill, 1980), 64-65, 70. Bloom looks at evasion, or the lying against time, as expressed in poetry through pure invention, and an invention contingent on heavy interpretation of prior texts, frequently even resorting to a misinterpretation or misreading, what Bloom calls a revisionary hermeneutic. So important is the need to innovate and particularly to invent something new that Gnostic negative theology goes to the most drastic of lengths to do the work, in the name of creation. As Bloom states:

...Gnostic negative theology is yet more drastic because Gnostic transcendence really needs a word beyond transcendence to designate so hyperbolic a sense of being above the world, “that world,” our mere universe of death. Gnostic metaphor depends therefore upon the most outrageous dualism that our traditions ever have known. In a Gnostic metaphor, the “inside” term or *pneuma* and the “outside” cosmic term are so separated that every such figuration becomes a catachresis, an extension or abuse of metaphor.

Bloom argues that the aesthetic that Gnosticism commits itself to is such an insurrection precisely because it moves beyond the mimetic that is Platonic and the anti-mimetic that is Derridean to the supermimetic in allowing itself to unflaggingly overthrow even the most resilient of texts – those of religious scripture. The question this collection of writing thus poses to itself is: Which texts does it seek to overthrow, if at all, and if it does, what nature of revisioning has it launched, if at all?

^{xxvi} Piggott, *Wagon, Chariot and Carriage*, 66-67. Reports dating back to 2nd century BC told of the “fine horses of *Da Yuan* or Ferghana, east of Tashkent, 3500 km westwards along what became the course of the ancient Silk Route”. Piggott cites Arthur Waley when he identifies these as the famous Heavenly Horses, numbering thirty ‘superior’ animals and 3000 of ‘middling or lower quality’ – these swift chariot ponies would “take the Emperor to the abode of the Immortals”. Used in diplomatic negotiations and military campaigns, these Heavenly Horses in one account circa 115 BC were paid tribute to in a triumphal hymn, possibly even written by the Emperor Wu himself: “The Heavenly Horses are coming / Coming from the Far West / They crossed the Flowing Sands / For the barbarians are conquered, / The Heavenly Horses are coming...” (66)