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Carter/Dark Writing

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INTRODUCTION

Outlines

All my world is scaffolding.

—GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS, *Spiritual Exercises*

The Dapple of Things

When the dark writing that informs our environments is perceived, it can be discerned in everything. The pied beauty of clouds, foliage, and limestone walls comes into view not as a background to important events but offering an alternative focus of its own. The mackerel shimmer of offshore waves, transposed downtown, is crystalized in a hive of windows, while down below the crowds flow cinematically to and fro. Dark writing indicates the swarm of possibilities that had to be left out when this line was taken. It notates reflections, warping the grids of harborside façades into tremulous concentricities. The assembly of shadows, the organization of optical phenomena that resist the light, the look of things that suggests a face, the depth of bodies that cannot be unconcealed—all of these fall under dark writing's jurisdiction. Like the ground, the meaning of dark writing cannot be excavated; it resides in the footstep, the leap and the instant between two strides. It is the dappled history of those marks; its blotches are the signature of time, its litter the resistance of slovenly nature to every attempt to clean it up. Dark writing is complexity's hieroglyph, pointing to what the medievals called the *thisness* of things. It alludes to distance and the difficulty of meeting.

It may be wondered, then, whether the perception of dark writing's abiding presence can have any practical consequence. It changes the way we see things, but can it change the way we *design* them? Writing this book, I have begun to see the straight edges of our constructed environment as narrow pencils of shadow, as dark mortar joining the parts of the world together. But how can the

doubling of appearances, which dark writing transcribes, enter the language of place making? Always gesturing toward other presences, the marks dark writing makes outline other places inside the one we agree to inhabit; written within the enclosures we set aside for public life, they signify forms of communication that resist the self-same logic of linear reason. They suggest patterns of meeting that cannot be represented or prescribed. Transposed to the auditory realm, their scatter and drift, their oceanic ebb and flow, has the effect of many voices speaking at once. Because it always exceeds what can be conventionally represented, dark writing is the discourse of the sublime. But of what use is *that* to planners, architects, and even journalists—all of whom, in the society of the spectacle, are employed to quantify phenomena in a way that dissociates them from the matrix of multiplicity where they belong and excel?

Yet even if designers are complicit in phasing out dapple, in eliminating the background noise of the environment but for which our linear constructions would not stand out, it is with designers that we must begin. Artists, all agents of symbolic transformation, may have signed up to the cult of smoothness, from which every wrinkle of time has been airbrushed, but they remain able to see the supplement of dapple that has been left out. They may not be able to represent the aging of their environment, or the cosmic chiaroscuro—night and day and now the ineffable change of the climate—but they can register these sublimities as blind spots in the present representational regime. Immanuel Kant anticipated this when he hypothesized the “saturated phenomenon” which “refuses to let itself be regarded as an [object] object . . . precisely because it appears with a multiple and indescribable excess that annuls all effort at constitution [assimilation to an abstract concept].”¹ Confronted with the exceptional, Jean-Luc Marion explains, “the gaze can no longer discern the ‘poor or common phenomenality of objects’ . . . hence, there arrives ‘counter-experience of a non-object.’”² The non-object is not invisible. It is what cannot be focused. It is the content of peripheral vision. It is an experience of looking up into a cathedral of tremulous leaves or trying to make sense of the heaven of stars endlessly expanding through the telescope.

It is blinding and, although instrumental reason—the kind of bureaucratized logic that traverses the turbulence of the world like a trapeze artist suspended over the void—cannot countenance it, the creative imagination *can*: “For intuition, supposedly ‘blind’ in the realm of poor or common phenomena, turns out, in a radical phenomenology, to be blinding.³ . . . Bedazzlement begins when perception crosses its tolerable maximum.”⁴ This awareness doesn’t have to be the domain of one philosophy. It touches every one of us if we dare to listen to the senses and allow their take on the world to touch us. It is this proprioceptive capacity that artists, and all designers when they permit themselves to be conscious of what they do, put to good use. Even if the dark writing of the world cannot be

represented, its absence can be registered. Traces of what is missing can shine through. There is, as I say, nothing arcane about this fact. Everyone who draws or writes knows that they retrace lines of thought that have already been taken, that their lines if good are wiser than the wit that produced them. Whoever does mathematics, Ernst Mach reflected, “will occasionally have the uncanny sense that his science and even his pencil are more clever than he.”⁵ The same is true of artists. They often paint more than they intend.

François Boucher’s charming personification of Architecture is an example (Plate 1). It is one of sixteen personifications of the arts and sciences, which Boucher painted for his patron, Louis XIV, between 1750 and 1752. Arranging them in eight panels, Boucher presented his allegorical portraits as pairs. It’s hard to know whether much should be read into the pairings. Some exploit likeness and difference (Painting and Sculpture), others simply yoke like and like (Fishing and Hunting). Yet others, though, join fields of endeavor that, on the face of it, have no connection. Among these are Astronomy and Hydraulics, and Architecture and Chemistry. Still, even if too much shouldn’t be read into the arrangement, the painting sweetly captures the double bind of the designer—who, on the one hand, both designs the world *and* sees how much this design leaves out. The question that the infant architect seems to pose is also the question posed by the painting itself. How, the figure seems to ask, can a drawing represent an object? How does a two-dimensional design drawn on a page become the basis of a building? What flight of the material imagination gives this design its purchase on the world?

This is one question. But to answer it, another, a negative one, has to be asked: How does this act of translation occur *in the absence of a mediating body*? Because one thing is clear in Boucher’s design: The little architect is nowhere to be found in either the ideal form of the drawing or the Euclidean abstraction of the column base underneath his foot. An artist there must be who carries out this act of translation, but the shadow of his presence does not fall across the transaction. The architect whom Boucher depicts is left out of the environment he constructs. But this does not mean that his absence cannot be represented. *Boucher shows him there amid the scaffolding of the new temple*—where he can only appear as the personification of an abstraction, where his pudgy milk-smooth flesh signifies paradoxically only the phantom of an idea. This paradox of the unrepresentable body situated at the heart of our designs on the world extends to the composition at large. Because even if Architecture’s drawings conspicuously leave it out, Boucher can represent the dapple of an environment that surrounds the architect’s endeavor. Rearing behind the rude scaffolding of the portico are the turbulent clouds of a world whose structures, while ephemeral because constantly changing, embody principles of vitality that the lines of the building rule out. Equally, the illumination of the scene, the chiaroscuro that highlights the

little realm of reason within which linear thinking operates, is due to the unseen hand of nature that has, fortuitously, opened up a gap in the clouds where the sun can come through. And all of this natural-seeming composition is, of course, at the disposal of the artist, Boucher.

Boucher's charming design effortlessly captures the enigma of dark writing. Mediating ideal forms and their design on the world are bodies—human bodies, atmospheric bodies and the movement forms they constantly assume and leave behind. Yet the maps, the plans—and the future history they inaugurate, of colonization, territorialization, and the authorization of new political and social orders—entirely discounts them. It is as if Cartesian thinking is afraid of descending into the world of “Hair and Mud and Dirt or any different thing that's very worthless and lowly,” as Parmenides puts it in Plato's dialogue. But this cuts both ways. If linear thinking fears the unbraiding of its line of command as it descends into complexity, so it is also anxious to tether the copy to its original—in Boucher's painting, for example, it's unclear whether the child is confidently demonstrating the power of architecture to exercise an influence on the design of the world or nervously comparing the mason's unfinished block of stone with its ideal form. That great poet of “dappled things,” Gerard Manley Hopkins, understood this anxiety profoundly: the deeper he went into the thisness of phenomena—“All things counter, original, spare, strange”—the more intensely he felt the need to sheet them back to the unifying creativity of God, “whose beauty is past change.”⁶

To recuperate the dark writing of the world is to go both above and below the line of disembodied reasoning that currently mediates our design on the world. It is to put the figure of the architect back into the picture. But in what way? You see that there is a child mediating the passage of lines into the world. But there is also Boucher, the artist, depicting that figure. The architectural drawing in the picture may look like an ideal form, but it is the offspring of the artist's hand and eye. It materializes a yet earlier idealization. In other words, there is inside the outline a history of drawing. The lines on the map, the outlines on the urban plan, may pose as the minimalist representations of pure ideas, but they contain within them a history of earlier passages. Nothing is more repetitive than a straight line, as any railway commuter will tell you, but it nevertheless possesses movement. It traces the intention of the one who made it, and anyone who travels that line again retraces the track of the tracker. It's in this sense that *Dark Writing* brings bodies back into our designs on the world: not to insist on a neglected interiority but to recover instead a movement that occurs in-between the makers of marks and the marks they make. This is the realm between Boucher the painter and the child Architecture. It is simultaneously a movement of mind and body, of idea and gesture.

Stepping Stones

To look for the last time at Boucher's vignette, you can see the movement I am talking about inscribed there. It is in the mid-stride of the child as he extends his left leg experimentally, as if about to take his first step in the world. In that instant, he contemplates the heuristic value of the drawing he holds up: will it, can it, yield solid ground on which to advance? And yet, of course, the medium of painting demands that this seeming movement prove illusory. Eternally poised, Boucher's child gestures toward a movement form that cannot be represented. Our world is composed of the traces of movement, but our representations conceal this. Our thinking is a movement of the mind, but our forms of thought are static. Whether it is the outside world or the inner world, we write about it and draw it as if it were motionless. Look at geography's maps; you would never guess they were the cumulative trace of many journeys. Or look at the drawings architects make; where are the performances of everyday life that their diagrams are meant to foster? Thinking about the places we make for ourselves is similarly inhibited. In fact, we seem to think much as we draw, in straight lines and flat planes. To get from one place to another involves a leap of the imagination. Even those who believe that rational thought advances step by step cannot deny that thinking begins in an orientation to one's human surroundings. But nothing of this provenance survives in what is counted as knowledge. We think as we draw, creating self-enclosed figures, cut off from one another and from the history of their coming into being.

Like photographers taking care their shadow does not get into the picture, we absent ourselves from the scene of discovery. A description of the world is accounted most authoritative when it contains no trace of the knower. Invention means to come across something, to fall in with it, but our inventions are presented as ruptures with the past. They spring out of nothing to offer us new choices—new landscapes to command. Maps do this with their alluringly complete coastlines and calligraphically consistent ranges and rivers. But so do the designed places of urban planning with their suddenly complete patterns of paths, squares, bridges, and roads. Nothing moves in these ideal representations. They are theaters from which the possibility of anything happening has been removed. To walk in them is to be an actor in someone else's dream. How remarkably silent our graphic descriptions of the world are: no breaking surf is heard in them, no animated conversation, no reports of gunfire or anguished whale song.

Could a richer animation be possible? Could we read—and write—our environment in a way that did not mummify its dynamic character? As it is, animation is a preoccupation of our science, for the odd thing is that the line drawings in which we display our design on the world demand a commentary that will

believe appearances. The journals of the colonial surveyor are an early example of this. They contain a record of encounters that are nowhere to be found in the completed chart—or so it is said, although in *Dark Writing* the traces of a movement history embedded in the map *are* recovered. A contemporary case is the drawing practice of architects, landscape architects, and planners; because they depict dead cities and untenanted places, they have to be animated with words. But while it tries to conjure up images of people meeting—women walking strollers, men purposefully clasping briefcases—the rhetoric of designed place making cannot conceal its death wish. It presents all forms of dynamic interaction as in some way exceptional—as if the general condition of places is to be empty, without memory, bare of desire.

Dark Writing is about a double movement that shapes our being in the world but which our representations oddly bracket off. It is about the way in which we figure forth the places we inhabit. This involves two operations: a way of thinking and a way of drawing. To figure something out means to think figuratively. It is to associate formerly distant things on the basis of some imagined likeness. It is to draw together things formerly remote from one another. The line of such thought represents a movement, a dynamic contraction that cannot be adequately represented by the dimensionless line of cartography. To think figuratively is to inhabit a different country of thought. In this, the ground cannot be taken for granted as a uniform and flat plane in which the ideal figures of thought are incised. The environment of figurative thinking possesses topological properties: it has points that lie far apart but belong together; it also has surfaces that look close together but in fact never meet. It is a world where the laws governing relationships count, and where the value of passages is recognized.

The world I am describing is not hidden. It is all about us in full view. It is the plenitude of other bodies in motion, and the traces these leave. It is the ordinary experience of a public place where an intuition of incalculable opportunities for meeting sustains a peaceable to and fro. It is the discourse of places when they are recognized as dynamic compositions. This recognition dissolves the glass between observer and observed. It does not reduce the distance between people. On the contrary, it was the illusion of science to pretend that distance no longer counted. What it does is open up a choreographic intuition of the organization of parts. Social philosophers argue that Western thought has disparaged the body. The body has been left out of theorizing about the nature of the world; linear maps and unpeopled plans represented a tradition of disembodied thinking. But while *Dark Writing* agrees with this, its emphasis is on the spaces in-between people. Its interest is the mobile body, the body—at once ideal and real—that throws itself into space, and in this way draws the world together.

To draw this world, to represent it and make it available for a richer dis-

course about place making, involves a different engagement with the materials of writing. It entails, for example, recovering the origins of writing in drawing, and drawing in writing. Before they became conventionalized as the vehicles of concepts, letters were the material traces of a mental movement. In Enlightenment thought this idea is transposed to the world of nature, which is imagined as composed of hieroglyphs awaiting decipherment. The character of nature is written in the face of the rocks, in the morphology of embryos, in the fractal formulae of ferns and snowflakes. And it becomes the task of the natural scientist to extract the through line, the graphic algorithm, that holds the key to the history, evolution, and present appearance of natural things.

But this determination to linearize the enigmatic gestalts of the external world depended on extracting them from the matrix of encounter—and, again, absencing the detective-observer from the scene of discovery. In this way the dark writing of the environment was rendered light, transparent, and a double movement was repressed—that of the observer and that of the observed. Fossils, cloud forms, even the faces of people shocked by the sudden appearance of men with guns, they are all forms of impression, all bear witness to something that impressed itself upon them but which is not (and never was) there. It could be the mold of an ancient shell, it could be a blast of wind shaving off edges of cloud, or it could be the deposited trauma of an unprecedented violence expressed in a running footprint. These kinds of evidence cannot be treated as images or representations. They do not represent anything but themselves, a fleeting relationship with the environment, a trace of passage.

To read traces it is necessary to be a tracker—to let the shadow of one's intention fall across the track; it is to become part of the movement. This logic extends to the language of description and the conventions of drawing. There is no outside place anymore. Of course, it has been increasingly accepted that maps are cultural constructions expressing ideological programs. But our point is different: that it does not matter how maps are redrawn unless they are drawn differently. Unless they incorporate the movement forms that characterize the primary experiences of meeting and parting, they continue to territorialize desire even when they seek to establish common boundaries. How can this different writing happen? Is it through a naïve copying of the blotches, smears, and stains that constitute the language of traces? Or is it through a different attitude toward the drawing of lines? In this latter case, the new drawing does not dispense with lines but recognizes their drawing as a movement simultaneously of hand and eye. It is a new reading practice that is advocated, one that preserves what is currently dark in writing and drawing, its style.

And the same logic applies to thinking about the formation of places. Places are made after their stories. They emerge from discourse, from acts of naming.

Nowhere emerges silently. Every act of place design has its double in a spoken or unspoken invocation of place. Even the meanest design figures forth a kinesthetic impulse. Within every line there is a braid of other lines. The one line that emerges from this quiver of intentions is the reduction of a multiplicity of orientations, invocations, and prayers. To be conscious of this is a start. By refiguring the line as a meeting place of ambiguous expectations, as the trace of a mental journey—so that drawing the line is not an act of cutting off and conclusion but a process of directed movement—the discourse of place making would be practically reoriented. The stories told about these lines would not be the animation of the dead but the accompaniment of dynamic forms, and it would be a dialogue with builders, and with the rest of us, the performers of a life in which meanings are not fixed but, like the to and fro of discourse, constantly appear and fade away. Such a world is composed of impressionable surfaces; it retains impressions that when imaginatively recollected allow readers to become the writers of the places where they will be.

First Pass

How did our representations of the world become hard and dry? One place to look is in the field of Enlightenment geography. The maps that furnished the spatial authority of empire emerged from a history of journeys. But the collectivity of movement forms they distill is accorded no value. It can be shown that what happened in the process of surveying the world *did* make it to the map—in the form of place names, for example—but these particulars are treated as poetic and of no scientific value. Chapter 1 reverses this perspective and suggests that modern geography's foundations are poetic—and it is geography's myth to suppose otherwise. The inductive sciences—of which geography is one—make use of spatial figures of speech in order to describe the nature of reality. But for geography—which, after all, is the science of describing physical space—these figures of speech are indispensable. The maps we inhabit represent mental geographies—ways of thinking and drawing that idealize the appearances of the world in the interest of saving the appearance of reason. But the ironic result of this determination to reduce the world to an algebra of points and lines is that it opens up abysses both in thought and nature. Only the creative imagination can bridge these gaps in reason.

Chapter 2 stays with the history of geographical thinking, taking a practical example of linear logic found in the map. Perhaps the most prominent—and from the point of view of imperial ambitions the most significant—feature found on maps of new places is the coastline. The continuous line that differentiates a mass of land from water is the indispensable prerequisite of territorial expansion. It is also the geographical generalization—the extrapolation from particular calculations of position—that justifies geography in calling itself a science. But the

coastline is an artifact of linear thinking, a binary abstraction that corresponds to nothing in nature. This would not matter except that the construction of the coast as ideally thin and oppositional has real-world consequences. As a cut in nature, the coastline becomes the favored site of scientific enquiry, but it is also the place where Western and non-Western people are suddenly exposed to one another. As an imaginary place, quarantined off from the normal comings and goings of social life, it incubates strange, and often fatal, performances. The unreason of the antics that cluster along its edge points to the madness inherent in thinking and drawing the world digitally.

At the same time, the reductionism of linear thinking continually produces rebellion. To get on—whether in scientific or human terms—means finding a way to manage change. It is the experience of movement, interaction, exchange, that the idealism of Western reason leaves out. This is paradoxical because the same reason prides itself on invention, the inauguration into the world of new concepts, places, and things. The bodies—agents of those movements that give the world its shape and coherence—are always left out of the calculations. The same is true mentally; in theories of creativity, thinking is treated as an ideal point or line. The fact that thought is a coming together of recollection, imagination, and invention, and that ideas emerge as positions within a larger dance of ideas—this is ignored. Chapter 3 discusses two theories of creativity that wrestle with the incapacity of logical thinking to think change. Toward the end of his life, the philosopher of phenomenology, Edmund Husserl, realized that his theory of ideal forms could not explain how these forms were transmitted. In his *Origin of Geometry* he imagined the interaction of ideas and history occurring through “an act of concomitant production.” This idea turns out to be a variation on the much older, Platonic concept of participation or *methexis*. The discussion of these ideas is useful here because it shows how a new thinking (and drawing) practice does not abandon the line but goes inside it. The line is always the trace of earlier lines. However perfectly it copies what went before, the very act of retracing it represents a new departure.

To think the line differently is not only to read—and draw—maps and plans in a new way. It is to think differently about history. To materialize the act of representation is to appreciate that the performances of everyday life can themselves produce historical change. The beginnings of the Western Desert Painting movement at Papunya in central Australia in 1971–1972 illustrate this. The paintings that came out of that place and time, as well as a number of the artists, are world-famous now, but the role played by Geoffrey Bardon, the white teacher who facilitated this extraordinary event, is little known. Bardon’s engagement with the schoolchildren, with the adult painters, and with the white authorities was non-linear in every sense. Far from standing outside the creative situation, Bardon cast himself in the role of instigator, play-actor, provocateur, and collector.

He realized that the so-called dot-and-circle style of painting embodied a profoundly non-linearist conception of the environment and of human obligations to it, and that these were rooted in a conviction that the human and non-human worlds were unified through movement forms that were at once mythological, participatory, creative, and recreative.

The key point about the Papunya drawings was that they were both plans, or maps of place, *and* traces of passage. They established the Indigenous deeds of title to the lands from which they had been exiled. They were proclamations of the Law, made manifest through the descent upon the painters of the rights and obligations to preserve the stories of these places that had brought them into being and which underwrote their eternity. Legitimate access to this country was bestowed by knowledge of these stories, and the artist's place there was embodied in his competence to reproduce (to recreate) the constitution of the place through his story. Unlike our maps, though, these symbolic representations were not written in lines. They were transformations of tracks. As Bardon wrote, "[t]he Western Desert viewer seemed to me to understand the paintings as being not unlike imprints on the surface of the sand, which like a person walking could look forwards or backwards, these visual words looking over their shoulder as it were, the orderings of the graphic signs, not following a line as in cursive writing script, but read comprehensibly from any direction in interrelationships seemingly understood as a cluster, or patterning, or aggregation of written forms."⁷

As forms of dark writing that notated a design on the environment, the Western Desert paintings are a challenge to European ways of documenting relationships with place. The story of their recognition and the beginnings of their circulation in a non-Indigenous and uneducated white community is one of reconceptualizing the foundations of Western representation. To retrace what happened at Papunya is to have in one's hands a worked example of how linearism can yield to non-linearist grammars of place making and marking. For this reason the details of Bardon's thought and action in that period are not simply of historical interest but provide a manual to how, in general, we will have to rethink our assumptions about place making. The way we draw and the way we think (drawing one point out to the next) will have to be replaced by a faith in the gap between dots. When this happens, the intervals will turn out not to be empty but embodying instead a rhythm. The passage from one position to the next—and the passes themselves—will acquire interest and meaning. The composition of their intervals presupposes the existence of a rhythmic geography, one that manifests itself as the movement form of a place when it is understood affectively as the trace of belonging. For all of these reasons, chapter 4 occupies a pivotal position in the development of *Dark Writing's* argument.

The dark writing of change—that experiential manifold of movements and its traces in the environment that our non-figurative linearism is blind to, and

whose meaning it therefore discounts—represents a design on the world quite as powerful as that promoted by the light writing of the scientist and the orthodox designer. But how can it gain recognition in the practical world of place making? Husserl may have theorized a way in which recollection can morph into invention, but in practice our positivistic mindset means that public authorities commissioning new public spaces assume that they spring out of nothing. Chapters 5, 6, and 7 describe three case studies—and three different ways—of combating this attitude. In the first, an opportunity to revisit William Light’s canonical foundational plan for Adelaide is described. Light’s grid was not an ideal form but a complex synthesis of movement forms both local and foreign. It was dynamic, deliberately incomplete—and when this origin is recollected and the creative intention it embodied acknowledged, the redevelopment of North Terrace can, or should, proceed differently. It becomes possible to incorporate and articulate a hidden ground history of tracks, to choreograph a myriad of informal meeting places, and to reconnect the grid with the folded topography of the hinterland. The formal outcome of this is practical—a new kind of public artwork—and theoretical, a new ichnography or science of reading the dark writing of tracks.

Solution is the name of a public spaces strategy developed for a site in Melbourne’s Docklands. Victoria Harbour is the result of draining a swamp and redirecting the course of a river. Postcontainerization, it has been redeveloped as a leisure boating, residential, and commercial zone. A swamp is a humid zone without sharp edges. Enlightenment maps, and their contemporary descendants, the urban designer’s master plan, have no use for them. They represent the world as ideally dry or wet and allot no value to amphibious environments. However, when such environments are recognized as colloidal systems, this changes. The “World of Neglected Dimensions” in which colloids lie provides a figurative way of thinking about history, architecture, and programming. Colloids are movement forms that model the Brownian motion of people meeting in public spaces. Tending to form tracks and junctions of irregularly stepped surfaces, they suggest the characteristic architecture of lagoons and shallow seas. Above all, they place transformation at the heart of the place-making process. The discovery of this case study is that drawings of public spaces need not represent objects to be built but quite the opposite: their lines can indicate passages that must be kept open. These correspond to the omitted or neglected dimensions of movement that constitute the place historically, performatively, and by design as a place of constant exchange.

The third case study goes back to a question posed at the beginning of chapter 1 and considers it in the context of making a public artwork celebrating sporting achievement. What would a rhythmic geography look like—one that annotated the journeys that underwrite the map? It would be a history as much as a

geography. But then there is a second question: What kind of history can be written about the instants—those fleeting moments of supreme movement—that form the content of sport? Franz Kafka imagined the history of mankind as “the instant between two strides taken by a traveller,” but it might as well be a runner. A history of timing and spacing would have to imitate its subject matter, materialize reading as traveler, and make an athlete of the eye. This at least was the program of *Relay*, a text-based artwork created for the Sydney Olympics. The composition of *Relay* and the distribution of its elements across a large terraced site put back into a landscape design the performative potential that its linearist conception had eliminated. It created the conditions of an informal choreography. Secreted inside what the poetic texts said, though, was another cryptic communication—a dark writing inside the light. In this way, remembering and forgetting were intertwined, the immortal and the ephemeral. A way was found to inscribe jointly a movement of limbs and a movement of mind.

The three case studies respond to the challenges of the earlier chapters. They propose different techniques for drawing and thinking movement back into the design of places. They also respond to the practical precedent Indigenous cultures set, in which geography, performance, and design are different expressions of one constantly renewed act of self-becoming at that place. But it is clear that profound cultural differences cannot be dissolved, and thinking and drawing practices peculiar to one relationship to country cannot be directly transposed to the circumstances of postindustrial place making. Such advances as we make in reintegrating theory and practice, rehabilitating the movement forms buried in our habits of thinking and drawing, will depend on looking for precedents within our own cultural background. The discovery of the figurative basis of geographical thought is one step in the right direction, but the more general challenge is to resurrect the mobile body that our ideal forms of thought and design have hitherto largely banished from consideration.

The next chapter of *Dark Writing* begins this process. It takes three instances in which the absence of the body is noted. These are interesting because in each case the remedy is not to represent the body but to trace its absence. An image of what is not there is not formed; instead, its passage is retraced. Paradoxically, this means that the body—or the bodies of all others—are not imprisoned in the grid of representation but allowed to exist apart from what can be visualized and fixed. In the first case the novelist Charles Morgan meditates on the handwriting of an unknown girl. In the second, the trace of the environment is found in the early photographs of Henry Fox Talbot. Finally, the paradox of tomb paintings is considered: What does it mean to paint images of the living and to bury them out of sight (in the dark) with the departed? In all three cases, the absent body is conjured up through a concomitant act of production. The observers are implicated in what they discern. They participate in acts that try to conjure up what is

missing without destroying it by reducing it to the light writing of classificatory reason. From this it emerges that the dark writing of the body must remain on the edge of sight. It is the mobile and the immersed who write and read it, those who are prepared to take passage (even into death) seriously.

Blurring the Line

Some of the material in the first half of *Dark Writing* is a development of ideas first put forward in *The Road to Botany Bay* (1987) and *The Lie of the Land* (1996). The notion of *spatial history* set out in the earlier book rationalized the discovery that the making of colonial Australia (and perhaps all Enlightenment colonies) was a poetic adventure. Frontiers were invented, and then advanced, figuratively. It was one of the ironies of what I called imperial history that it repressed this collective act of bringing space into being. Imagining colonial space like a theater, it was blind to the creative heritage of place-making acts—including physical acts of displacement as well as metaphorical processes of replacement—that constituted the *difference* of colonial history.

In *The Lie of the Land* the poetic constitution of place was lifted from its historical matrix and used as the basis of a new politics, one in which human relations were detheatricalized and their performative nature reactivated—“our footsteps are also footprints, our wanderings are also designs.” Walking in the steps of the ancestors is not only to repeat what happened but to participate in making something new. The key terms in chapter 3—Husserl’s theory of “concurrent actual production” and the Platonic concept of *methexis*—are also key terms in *The Road to Botany Bay* and *The Lie of the Land* respectively, but this is the first time that they are considered together and their practical implications teased out. The performative view of history, the recognition that making history and writing history are (at least under the aegis of spatial history) one and the same, provides the theoretical framework for a reconsideration of the beginnings of the Western Desert Painting movement in chapter 4.

The first two terms of *Dark Writing*’s subtitle, geography and performance, emerge from this provenance. Their connection with the third term, design, was the result of the way those books were received, for their early readers were not only geographers, historians, or students of culture in general; their poetic logic appealed to artists, composers, dancers, and architects. I was drawn into conversations with a variety of practical place makers who had in common a desire to think our relationship to place differently. They wanted in their various ways to resuscitate a prehistory of movement. They were interested in the ways country and people write back. Above all, they were committed to finding the points of coincidence that might operate as pivot points of a new exchange. These fictions of place, as Arakawa and Gins would call them,⁸ could be ephemeral or lasting, unique or repeated, solitary or grouped, but they were places where the graphi-

cality of geography and choreography coincided, where place making and place marking met. The result of this interest was a number of chapters published in different, specialist collections. There, though, the broader poetic thesis underlying these forays into different fields was necessarily obscured. Parts of *Dark Writing* are descended from those earlier publications, but in recasting them, either in part or wholly, the disciplinary lines that separated them have been blurred again.

In the last chapter of *Dark Writing*, geography, performance, and design are brought together through a discussion of a history of the line. Throughout the book the argument is made that an expanded design language will be found inside, not outside, the line. It occurs when the line is reconceptualized rhythmically. The modern line of drawing and thinking has at least two genealogies, a Cartesian-deductive one and an inductive one associated with the rise of the empirical sciences. The Modernists spiritualized or dematerialized the line in an attempt to represent essential forces, but the movement attributed to their lines remained linear, as it were, progressive and ruthless. There was little sense that the line had a history, or, as we might say, a lining, that it was the formalization of a field of traces rather than the outline of a past, present, or future object.

The lining, which is simultaneously the rhythmic geography underwriting the map and the vernacular choreography of other bodies that secures the Brownian motion of the public coming together in public space, is stitched into the garment of representation, but it does not adhere to it completely; there are gaps between the stitches, the hem of the lining is puckered, and the body of it may billow out like a shadow. In other words, the line that surfaces in representations is rhythmically underpinned. This becomes important in discussions about the relationship between representations and the world they seemingly represent. Bruno Latour feels that all the modern attempts to resolve this conundrum philosophically have failed. Instead of thinking of the relationship between Society and Nature (and, in our terms, between thinking/drawing and the environment) as abyssal, instead of seeing philosophy's task as bridge building, he calls us to attend to the "pass" itself.⁹ In our terms, he is saying: recognize that you are stitched into the lining of the world, aligned with its field of operations.

But Latour's "transcendence," which privileges passage, or Nigel Thrift's overarching concept of "movement space"—the claim that the contemporary world is entirely a "flow world"—encounter this problem¹⁰: that the movement they promote as the new ontological ground of thinking lacks rhythm, the counterpointing of motion that would make it discernible and susceptible to manipulation. Geography, performance, and design share this desideratum: that the terrain they recollect, imagine, and invent is dotted, an assembly of survey points, poses, and lines that meet and cross. They deal in movement forms, not pure movement. They notate rhythm. Without this, there would be no content in what

they do. Rhythm is the contraction of movement into physical forms; it makes sense of both movement and stasis. And I suggest that this sense of a rhythmic alignment with the environment has its origins in our earliest projective fantasies. What I christen “the eido-kinetic intuition” refers to a primordial desire to be stitched into the passages of the world. Its explorations supply us with an environmental unconscious, a kinesthetic grasp of the ground in terms of pivot points that prevents the experience of passage from spiraling down into vertigo.

The practical outcome of these reflections on line and rhythm is that our designs on the world need to make room for things to happen. They should be scores that mediate between the abstract and the actual, encouraging improvisation. This is not only a technical challenge. It is a social and ethical one, for the people who come to dwell in these differently designed places will have to take responsibility for arriving and leaving. They will see the cost of the marks they make and leave. They will live constitutionally “in flight.” They will have to learn to live in hope and with disappointment. They will have to hope that nothing happens as planned, and learn how to plan for this. This is the serious play democracy might incubate, but to be players it is necessary first that the line be democratized. Learning to read dark writing is part of that process.

Notes

1. Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, trans. J. L. Kosky (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2002), 213.
2. *Ibid.*, 215.
3. *Ibid.*, 203.
4. *Ibid.*, 206.
5. Quoted by Paul Feyerabend in *Realism, Rationalism & Scientific Method: Philosophical Papers*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 8.
6. Gerard Manley Hopkins, *The Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ed. W. H. Gardner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 69–70.
7. PMS, 127; PAPUNYA, 46. For meaning of abbreviations, see notes to chapter 4.
8. “The fiction of place has no ascertainable dimension. Within and around the body, it can be everywhere at once or localized—inventing, as it goes along, where it is to be next, very much in the manner of fiction-making in general or a nearly wide-open anything goes.” (Arakawa Shusaku and Madeline Gins, *Pour Ne Pas Mourir [To Not To Die]* [Paris: Editions de la Différence, 1987], 86).
9. Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. C. Porter (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002), 129.
10. Nigel Thrift, “Movement-space: The Changing Domain of Thinking Resulting from the Development of New Kinds of Spatial Awareness,” *Economy and Society* 33:4 (November 2004): 582–604, 590.