

## A.D. Hope: Nomad of the Mind, Land and Space

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The paper will be inter-disciplinary in nature in that it attempts to collapse the divides between biography, philosophy, aesthetics, poetry and psychology. I will draw on three Hope poems that invoke Australian landscape, and which enact a unique creative identity with the land. Characterising Hope as having a nomadic subjectivity which is defined by its dynamism, by its *becoming*, by its variability of continuous and open modification, I wish to draw attention to the extent that Hope's work pre-empts contemporary theory.

Hope's poems 'Australia', 'Ascent into Hell', 'Country Places', 'Beyond Khancoban' and 'The Drifting Continent' all invoke the Australian landscape; each of these poems engage the 'I' of Hope's persona. Are they inside or outside Hope's philosophical vision that denies 'personism', and mostly excludes references to the physical geography of Australia? Or do they enact the breaking apart of a subjectivity in which the physical, the spiritual and the psychological collapse into each other producing a subjectivity that seeks to 'step into unknown spaces' in order to discover 'new countries of the mind' (*Selected Poems* 13). Perhaps they enact Deleuze and Guattari's thought that 'writing has nothing to do with signifying, but with land surveying, map-making, even of countries yet to come' (*On the Line* 5).

In 'Beyond Khancoban' the narrator, Hope, negotiates a land whose 'hills', 'valleys', 'still great mountains' are 'Feasted with music of which' Hope maintains within the poem, he is 'not aware'. It is a landscape lost in thought, composed of winding roads and rises that elicit a music not know until now, and Hope turns 'its world into music' as he drives. From the perspective of the moving car the trees are dancing, not happening out there but 'in the mind', though Hope insists, the mind is also entering into the dance, making this 'land' conscious, and gives this his voice. The poem ends with Hope arriving at Monaro, the place of his birth, 'where a mind began'. and he claims that place as his own (*Selected Poems* 183). The land, identity and mind fuse in this poem whilst Hope tells a story of the part he plays in capturing music and thought from the land. The space of the land he has re-territorialised as the nomadic mind tests the relevance of his birthplace to the voice that emerges from it. The Philosophy endemic to this nomadic mind is expressed in his poem 'The Nomads'.

### The Nomads

Men in cities, men busy everywhere  
Live by a faith that needs lead to some end:  
Home, pleasure, a goal achieved, a lover, a friend  
'If it were not so', they say, 'we must despair'.

But not the nomads, they never think this way;  
Where ever they chance to stop, the roads go on,  
To nowhere, to anywhere. For them the one  
Despair is a fixed roof, a permanent stay.

Theirs are different natures. They see the things we see;  
 The words are the same—they look with different eyes.  
 I wouldn't call them more human or less wise  
 Nor think them less happy, more justified than we.

They are simply other: they give and they forgive  
 But do not ask for anything in return,  
 Learn only what they have no need to unlearn,  
 Clutch at no rights, claim no prerogatives.

When I ask my friend the nomad, 'Would you agree  
 I have made my mark in the world?' he answers: 'Why,  
 Yes, you have made something of your life; but I  
 Prefer to find out what life will make of me!'

I speak of love. He laughs, saying: 'Friend, you have won  
 That treasure to hold and keep; but love for me  
 Is a wayward lightning, a chance felicity  
 An ungrasped gateway opening on the unknown.'

I talk of his life, the endless, empty miles  
 The trivial monotony of the wanderer's way.  
 He asks, have I lived by the joy of the single day?  
 I talk then of death, but he looks at me and smiles,

Saying, 'Ah, but you live so rooted in time, you see.  
 You have never experienced an absolute moment, my friend.  
 Death is not the beginning of anything, nor the end  
 But, as each instant lived for itself must be,  
 That pure, that limitless "now", Eternity.'

(Unpublished Notebooks, Bk XVIII, 1975, 5)

Hope, would like, I think, to cast himself as a kind of nomad of the mind. He speaks with evident pleasure of these nomads. They are people who find it impossible to settle down within any settled system, in any country of belief, though the advantages of settlement and the power that comes from the corporate ownership and organization of ideas may be obvious to them. Instead they wander from place to place, learning the language of the settled inhabitants, and often taking on the colour of their civilization and perhaps contributing something here and there. But they remain fundamentally untouched and untamed. They are not scorers, critics or sceptics, nor are they indifferent or agnostic. They are simply without the urge or the instinct to take root. Because of their very lack of interest in acquiring property, they are born thieves and plunderers of the settled lands, where they may even settle for brief periods. But something always drives them back to the desert. They have their own legends and songs which the city-dwellers develop a craze for.

The nomads understand themselves in another sense, the sense of being too much one with the whole world to identify themselves with any single part of it. They rarely meet. They do not form societies or alliances and yet in a mysterious way they are in touch with all the other members of their curious tribe. When two of them do meet casually, they recognize each other at once and the bystanders suddenly hear the guttural language of the wilderness, the speech of people who do not sleep under roofs and whose words never echo back from enclosing walls. It is the forgotten primitive speech of men without possessions, vested interests and family ties, a tongue which is

therefore safe from and even inept for argument or persuasion. For Hope this is the language of poetry.

There are four areas of either withdrawal or antagonism that form a large part of Hope's poetic vision. These concern an avoidance of direct reference to the landscape of his homeland, Australia, and stories and memories of his childhood. These, he maintains, are deep sources of his poetry from which he draws incessantly but are not manifested in any literal sense in his poetry. Hope dramatises, also, a certain detachment from the notion that the personal life of emotional turmoil be invoked directly into the final production of a poem and asserts without qualification the necessity of a poem being in verse form. The nomadology of his philosophies, in seeming contradiction to these areas, combine with them and create a particular kind of subjectivity that lies buried in his productions. Each of these qualities of his art remains itself. Each is like a subject of the statement endowed with relative power, and these relative powers combine in a subject of enunciation, that is the poem's form of interiority.

The forms imposed by the poet code and decode space but the negative capability of Hope's philosophy partially manifested in his poem 'The Nomads' proceeds altogether differently. It makes the outside a territory in space, consolidating the territory by constructions of a second adjacent territory, deterritorializing itself by going elsewhere. What kind of nomad is Hope? His adaptation of Keats's negative capability informs all his poems: he sees himself as entering into ideas and beliefs as an actor simply to see where they might lead him (Bk X, 1969, 93) but not—and he is emphatic about this—to confirm a truth about them. In Hope's *Notebooks* which he compiled over a fifty year period, and in which he scribbled almost nightly, Hope wrote extensively about his particular brand of nomadology. He propounds his view that knowledge is provisional and that there is no way of building permanent beliefs, that values are man-/woman-made and that even a notion such as the relativity of values is unprovable, as what people think and say are parts of nature and not separate from it (Bk X, 1969, 91). He points out that there is no such thing as a 'normal' man/woman and yet how curious it is that 'most social, moral and other types of value theory are built on the supposition, and most literature takes it for granted' (Bk IX, 1967, 66-67). Hope queries the laws of science and in discussing the fallacy of Eddington's net suggests it might be implicit in all our thinking (Bk XIV, 36-39) and points out the extent to which we have had to limit and formalise our perceptions to exclude certain perfectly natural forces and types of operation which could have been alternative methods of perception and communication. He writes of how he never loses sight of the awareness of the narrowness of the bases of knowledge of the world and the way what we are aware of gets in the way of what we are totally unaware of (Bk XXI, 1979, 10-11), an idea expressed in his poem 'A Swallow in the House'. In this poem the swallow, which becomes the human being who is searching in the dark for answers, for a way out of failed systems, falls stunned to the ground after crashing against glass. He writes:

Something left out, not to be reckoned with,  
Not conceived by science or adumbrated in myth;  
Something of which he is totally unaware  
As the swallow of its undreamt nightmare, solid air.  
(*Orpheus* 33)

This problematisation of reality is not a recent development. Whether one refers to philosophical thought derived from Nietzsche's critique of analytical enquiry and its

metaphysics, or from Wittgenstein's reflections on the limits of language, or from the foundation of psychoanalysis, based on another repressed language, that of the unconscious, it is clear that the idea that reality is not graspable has a long history. It is also the case that Hope has explored these territories of thought long before the modes, forms and thoughts became an acceptable new paradigm in literary discourse and in ways that Nietzsche, Wittgenstein and Freud, for example, were unable to imagine, caught up as they were within the contexts of their time with what Deleuze and Guattari might characterise as a 'pivotal taproot [system] that doesn't comprehend more multiplicity than the dichotomous root' (*On the Line* 7).

Hope's suspicions towards scientific hypotheses pre-date, for example, Kuhn's work on the shifting nature of scientific paradigms. This is merely one example but there are parallel ones to be found in numerous areas. Hope deals with the passions and thought, whether causing or affected by social feelings, moral feelings, fear, love, religious awe and ecstasy, hate, greed, lust, anger, pride and mastery. His nomadology takes him to other lands of mythology, biblical stories and cosmology, where he thieves, plunders and re-invents ideas and music without thinking of settling there. He translates poems from one language to another and one recalls his thoughts in 'Western Elegies.V: The Tongues': 'For the man who knows only one speech is an ox in paradise orchard/... Shut in on himself by conventions he is only dimly aware of,/ Like a beast whose mind is fenced by the narrow extent of its instincts' (*Orpheus* 12). His favourite means of dramatising these passions of thought, feelings and languages is via the poem, which, in his view, gives the whole frame of things, whether explicitly stated or implied.

In a Deleuzian sense Hope is concerned (at least regarding the content of his poems) with the outside, with perspectivism with 'multiplicities ... by the abstract line, the line of flight' (*On the Line* 16) and with 'the unthought, the exterior, the surface, the simulacrum, the fold, [that which] resists assimilation, [that which] remains foreign even within a presumed identity' (Grosz 131). I have attempted to argue that Hope's philosophy inherent in his art falls within the gamut of what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as schizophrenic, and might therefore escape the effects of bourgeois repression. Hope's capacity via his thought to break down barriers, to engage in multiplicity, becoming, flowing, and to engage with partial objects, fragments of experience, memory and feeling which may be linked in chance and unexpected ways might characterise his work as a rhizome. The opposite pole to the schizophrenic is the paranoiac. The paranoiac pole is marked by its unifying ways, its procedures, its search for order, similarity, wholeness and it assumes an identity and completeness of objects and selves within conforming constraints and recognised limits. At the paranoiac pole there is an incessant pressure to 'territorialize', to make out and maintain the directions of desire (Wright 165).

I refer now to two areas of Hope's work that might be construed as paranoiac: his insistence of the superiority of traditional verse form and his antipathy towards poetry in which the poet treats the poem as a confessional wherein personal feelings and belief systems can be identified. In the first instance he believes that poetry, more than any other art, most encapsulates the 'being' of existence and that only poetry, written in traditional rhyming verse structures, embodies the nature, rhythm and music of life.

Hope's detachment reflects his life-long belief for his poetry 'to test and taste with no irritable concern with right and wrong' yet it seems at odds with his irritation towards confessional poets and those who choose to write in free verse who under-

mine the only structure that he believes extends human consciousness, that captures the music of existence and grapples with the mystery of being. This coding and decoding of his own space within a poem combines with his rhizomic territories in a way that offers up a simultaneous revealment and concealment. No system can provide an answer, Hope the nomad thinker propounds: no poem that works outside the system of traditional verse structures can grapple with the mystery of being, Hope the 'paranoiac' craftsman dictates. The dialectic is set, one in which repression and expression of desire are enacted. The paranoiac tendency in Hope's work eludes binary oppositions by a constant dialectic of repression and expression of desire. These oppositions recombine through the art of his irony, which allows the myth of his detachment to remain unjudged and/or categorised. The subject for Hope is not at the centre but on the periphery, with no fixed identity, forever decentred, defined by the states through which it passes. The subject spreads itself along the entire circumference of the circle, the centre of which has been abandoned by the ego (*A Thousand Plateaus* 20). The form of his poems, the verse form, may be a striated space, but it is a space in which the nomadic mind finds his music.

Given Hope's views it is not difficult to understand his non-literal rendering of his personal life or the geography of his homeland. He maintains they are there, emerging in his choice of language, image and story—always the most insistent and sacred of all sources. The 'land' and snatches of personal experience from life or dreams are not to be understood as one part of a tri-partite division between the realm of reality, the realm of representation or representivity, and the realm of subjectivity. The 'space' of the physical and/or psychological landscape is traversed in an excursion towards the construction of 'desire' and/or thought. Hope characterises this as 'the creation of being', that is not bounded or comprehended via oppositions of inner/outer and subject/object. The geography of his poetry is physical, spiritual and psychological, 'aspects' that collapse into each other breaking apart a subjectivity whilst seeking a dimension beyond the purely physical boundaries.

It is fascinating to note that the two poems that do draw directly from Australia's geography/landscape are those that touch on, albeit in a rhizomic manner, aspects of his personal life. In 'Australia' the geography of 'drab green and desolate grey', and 'rivers of waters' which drown among 'inland sands' sets up a geography of the mind. This is a country he saw as empty of 'songs, architecture, history'. It was a place in which her five cities, like five teeming sores, drained her of her substance, and yet it was the place that he chose to return to.

Yet there are some like me turn gladly home  
From the lush jungle of modern thought, to find  
The Arabian desert of the human mind,  
Hoping, if still from the deserts the prophets come  
(*Collected Poems* 13)

If Hope is one of those prophets from the 'Arabian desert of the human mind' negotiating smooth spaces within his nomadology, he does so by creating striated spaces or at least entering into models of thought to re-create new spaces. 'Ascent into Hell' is indeed a daring poem of Hope's dealing as it does with incidents in his childhood that led to nightmares and recurring adult nightmares that take him on a pathway back in time to probe them. Guattari notes that psychological theories provide a multiplicity of subjectivations: 'None of them, whether fantasmatic, delirious or theoretical can be said to express an objective knowledge of the psyche' (*Chaosmosis* 11).

Hope, like Guattari, rejects the Freudian dualistic rendition of consciousness and unconsciousness and all 'the manichean oppositions correlative to Oedipal triangulation and to the castration complex' (*Chaosmosis* 12). Hope created his own concept of the unconscious which is fertilised by his dream-team, an army of helpers, who in his dreams, inhabit a more schizophrenic unconscious 'one liberated from familial shackles, turned more towards actual praxis than towards fixations on, and regressions to the past. An unconscious of flux and of abstract machines rather than an unconscious of structure and language' (*Chaosmosis* 12).

A reading of Hope's 'On the Night Shift' (*Orpheus* 17-21), informs us of their activities. They move in when 'the body is put to bed' and 'The oceanic rhythm of sleep draws on'. The brain is taken over by a throng of 'revellers and roisterers who proceed/To invent whole theatres of improbable dreams'. These revellers rewrite Hope's scripts, they invoke the 'envious Doubles who haunt [his] looking glass', they parody his worries of the day, they show him 'marvellous landscapes, prospects of sky and sea,/Reminders that living is an act of joy', they scribble verse, give lectures, plan whole novels; they tease Hope and give him powers that real life denies him; they are the helpers on whom Hope depends. Hope maintains that without his dream-team his part as the poet would falter and become flat and tame, but that without him, 'the wild surreal play of his unconscious' would result in 'formless inconsequence'. The dreams are there for the poet 'to tap creative energy from a host of clues'. His point is that half the process by which poems grow is something that not even their authors understand but that they nevertheless, 'do give themselves away'.

Hope's notebooks rarely include personal experiences from his childhood. It is fascinating to realise that the ones he has recorded appear in his poem 'Ascent into Hell' (*Selected Poems* 12) and that the story he tells is set within the Australian landscape of his childhood. The poem begins by Hope noting that he looks in his dreams for answers. The poem dramatises the conscious poet who talks of the dreams he has had as an adult that include childhood experiences and memories of dreams he had as a child and the events of his actual life that may have given rise to them. The poet draws on clues in order to celebrate the mystery of always being an imagined beginning, looking forward for ascents, moving forward towards finding the lost soul. The dreams of his unconscious both of the 'I' of the present, and the 'he' of the past are turned towards the praxis of poetry-making, creations of being rather than on emergent narratives that focus on fixations or regressions.

The actual landscape of his Tasmanian home figures predominantly and is glimpsed momentarily as a realm of reality. But just at the point at which we might see 'the land-locked valley and the river', 'the poplars' and 'the gum trees', we are told that the very geographic formations 'make distance an emotion'. He revisits his childhood land which in itself is unchanged, but it is seen as always growing within him as his search amongst the old dreams and memories extend his territories of the present. The poet, as in 'Shifting Continents', sustains a detachment in that he is reflecting on his role as a creator. It is the poet creating music about himself as a dreamer, as a son, as an adult negotiating the child still within him, and as someone who knows that in entering the lost receding country of his past and present he both fears an abyss but also ascends towards new constructions of himself as a lost one. The physicality of the land is seen by its being touched and met by the mind deterritorialising settled notions regarding the relationship between the unconscious and conscious modes of thought and being.

Hope's last book of poetry, *Orpheus*, opens with the poem 'Trees', which is a tribute

to his wife Penelope who had recently died. In 'Trees' he recalls sitting with Penelope and watching the trees in their garden. But now, in the act of writing the poem, he surmises that the trees he now experiences alone 'remember her' within their foliage. In 'The Drifting Continent' it is the people that become the ciphers and the land the enduring drifting essence; in 'Trees', it is the foliage that contains the music and the mind. Subject and object merge and recombine in Hope's constant reterritorialising of new continents of the mind, of space, and of the powers that come with searching for new knowledge.

I conclude with a 'dream' that Hope jotted down in his notebooks. It characterises for me a nomad of the mind and space whose poetry is understood in its dynamism, by its becoming, and by its variability in which the self or identity is on the periphery, defined by the states which it passes whether that be smooth and/or striated space of both the mind and the land.

There was this image. It was that of a human, specifically the poet's imagination being like a swan coasting on the surface of the world-mind and continually casting down its thoughts into into the deep blue below. But the blue was that of the sky and the real swan was swimming on the inside of the surface of the sphere and was mirrored on the outside by his reflected image, while the song in which his thoughts were embodied sank outwards into the endless depth. It had a peculiar significance which now escapes me, though the vividness of the image remains unimpaired. As I recall, the swan itself was white, but its mirror image was a pale gold or biscuit coloured against the intense blue of the sky.

(Hope, Unpublished Notebooks, Bk XXI, 1979, 2).

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