

THE PERSPICACITY OF REPETITION
(THE BIRTH OF HELLER LEVINSON'S HINGE THEORY)

Books by Heller Levinson

Smelling Mary, Howling Dog Press, 2008

From Stone This Running, Black Widow Press, 2011

Hinge Trio, (with Linda Lynch and Felino A. Soriano), La Alameda Press, 2012

To enrich the latent possibilities of poetry by undermining it, *adding* to the sterility of its virtues by dragging the chain of its ever-loosening syntax into the void, is the limitless devotion Heller Levinson has set himself with 'Hinge Theory'—which is what, in these three books, has managed to spin the last cry of man (today) into a sun *already* blackened by the final 'full-stop' of humankind. So what is Hinge Theory? Levinson explains: 'Hinge, as a highly advanced incorporation of "language games" provides a self-regenerative expansive logic, which, as it shifts its shape into increasingly complex forms of linguistic relation, offers angles and perceptions not available in conventional syntax (...) No more dead poetry, a Hinged universe leaps through the matrix of perception... always projecting forth from its wellsprings of potentialities.' Neither fatalistic nor posthumous, Hinge Theory conceives of time itself as an infernal monologue, one using Levinson's own tongue as a noose to hang all of those *first* beings unable to be lured to the frontiers of the desert of each of the unforeseen geographies in his mind. Is the poem then dead? Temporarily subjugated maybe, with an entire mute race waiting to be born and to speak Hinge's next *first* words. The most important document thus far written about Hinge Theory is undoubtedly 'An Introductory "Manual" for Hinge Theory' by Levinson's publisher and biggest champion Michael Annis, who explains that the quasi-poet of Hinge 'has spent his entire literary career inventing and reinventing poetic form, theory, voice, structure, style... (...) his work is "hinged" not only to history, but reveals an essential coda for reinterpreting it'. To be capable of this would suggest that it could well become a new literary life-fluid, one ready to oppose the *failed* blood of the 'conventional' author.

Hinge though as a poetic prelude to the vacuity of the universe is only really a prelude to what most haunts being, i.e. *space*. Thus to celebrate the abyss is to celebrate what one day might just rescue us from it. Levinson has remade of the universe an idol, one *caused* by the projected sculptures of his own mind, and has decided, at all spiritual costs, to devote himself to it. When he writes: 'Creation continues unabated, independent of discussion and analysis' he contemplates the very screen of the page that hides everything and reveals nothing. Each poem is in itself a paradoxical debate, a syntactical interrogation, thought *without* thought, ideas that are in themselves cyclones ready to dissipate into other cyclones. We as readers are always entering into a posthumous poetics, a lexiconical universe of limit-worlds and indefinite revelations; we are constantly tottering on the brink of our own imaginative deaths, and of the final repudiation of the word:

With
RULES SUBSIDING,... erosion
relieving a surface fortuitous
paramour
permits
traveling with insinuation
renewal leases from orthodoxy

(from *From Stone This Running*)

Beginning with one of his many 'pivot' words, in this case 'with', Levinson seeks to re-begin language, to snuff out and then relight its eternally burning fuse, to realign its associations and complete what E.M. Cioran thought, that 'our beginnings matter, but we make the decisive step toward ourselves only when we no longer have an *origin*, when we offer as little substance for a biography as God...' Is it possible then that in the future or in future-past, a circle of men might well be heard to chant 'Hinge' Poems, to post-date the post-articulate pang at the centre of their chests? That in an empty cell, an ascetic might also carve, beside a guttering candle, 'Hinge' poems into the plaster of his wall? This WILL happen, but only when the fossil-language that precedes mankind is deemed more holy than that of the ascetic's own thoughts, those which would be, if they were anything at all, *unintended* Hinge poems...—Hinge Theory if it is successful will of course pervade into everything, science, biology, mathematics, philosophy, will reduce even the crucifixion to the word-limits of an interminable carpentry. 'At the level of Hinge Production, each word insists on its word associates. In this sense, the practice of the author is to detect (to

identify) the reproductive impulses inherent in the word being witnessed', thus assuming the idea of discontinuity as an always *first encounter* again with language. As naturally as a tree yields fruit Levinson seeks to yield words, and as such each approximation of accident is negated by Levinson, that is until the world proves itself grammatically compatible with *itself*. To shift from the primordial to the syntactical is to graze every form of failure and success, and is as much a feat of transition as it is of literature. Therefore Levinson's estimate that 'Negative language impacts negatively on all components of human physiology' is in itself a highly advanced form of pro-creation, one that seeks out boundlessness rather than mere boundaries. 'Hinge' then as a term for everything that exists and goes on existing to secure the continuation of language. The obscure is given several accounts of eternity before it admits what Paul Valéry thought of the poems of Mallarmé, that they existed if only 'to put in doubt the very purpose of literature'.

When we approach a mind like Levinson's, the words themselves make us feel *dissimilar*, forcing us to infallibly express our flaws; for even total objectivity will provide no better argument to usurp the absolute. To actualize and *not* founder upon the foundations of literature's best kept secrets is, even by modern standards of criticism, a false awakening into syntactical nihilism, an accursed trick to make of the author an impassioned ghost. Yet Levinson, a pitiless analyst, is marked also by an adept introspection, providing as he does for the reader an *unconsidered* diary of the chance interlockings of both hyperbole and impersonal speech-patterns. But does 'hinged' literature, at the mercy now of an acute critical clairvoyance, run the unnecessary risk of unmasking a reality never to be seen by its author's face? A reality blocked by a perversion of non-being; for to *see inside* the human psyche is the most anti-human preoccupation, revealing always only an endless train of contradictions, half-stories and artifices—Levinson though has learnt to become his own commentator, using 'Hinge' language to override poetry. The majority of modern poetry, while being nothing more than a camouflaged autobiography, ignores, to a degree of breathtaking lucidity, man's capacity to *forget* the crucial questions of existence, and clearly this quasi-poet, judging by his own unanswerable commentaries on it, feels that all languages have become too *contaminated* by their own self-made vacuity. Levinson it seems will no longer be duped by the non-linear modifications made by *other* minds. The mind will have to be re-deified by excluding all of those religions that seek out each geography dreamed up by the infidel of the conventional author. 'Hinge' poetry is therefore a *second* attempt at writing Mallarmé's 'Book', that which forced the French poet in a letter to Verlaine in 1885 to write: 'I have always imagined and attempted *something else*, with an alchemist's patience, ready to sacrifice all vanity and all satisfaction...(...) in order to feed the furnace of the Great work. Which is what? It is hard to say: a book, quite simply, in many volumes, a book that really is a book, architectural and premeditated, and not a collection of chance inspirations.' In short, to create a work, like Levinson's, that actually seeks to *rival* the world, and be not in any way its double.

So, to become a reconstructor of the universe, 'Hinge' must seek to translate into outer music the inner music of words, to silence art and render physics and religion once again into the great early dreams of man; to induce an ongoing and perpetually fecund state of the anathemas that will help Levinson aspire to his new literary role of syntactical demiurge. It will be a quite necessary act of madness, an attempt certainly to achieve what Paul Valéry imagined of Mallarmé's task, i.e. 'to raise a page to the power of the starry heavens.' Levinson then assigns himself to the task of realizing the impossible, to conceive of failure as the only captivating success, and to hallucinate himself into the only obsession worth pursuing, that of locating the only true literary fracture at the earth's crust, i.e. *our belonging*. To abort the self, in mid-sentence, is for the writer of 'Hinge' to *celebrate* the requirements of abortion, to complete what demands of itself to be undermined by words. 'Hinge', a catalogue and impulse of an always unforeseen matrix disengages itself long enough for us to *snag ourselves* on our own thoughts:

With
disease, prolific...
hastily unabated
moisture compromised
a cause circumstantial
& circumferenced
Supererogatory
(from *Smelling Mary*)

The imagination, that great carrier of the illogical bric-a-brac, affords itself in 'Hinge' a concept of a revealing clue to its own existence. We find reality reacting to *itself*, permitting the author to mythologize a vision of himself in his *own* role. So what in reality might we miss that 'Hinge Theory' might reveal to us? That *part* of our minds perhaps that masquerades as something other than anything word-felt in the firmament, that or what we extract from our being in consciousness on opening our mouths to speak, that which 'Hinge' seeks to expose the skeleton of; what our mind feels always contrary to, i.e. nothingness. The horror of systems is not what is *insisted* on by each idea, but by the unendurable durations in time to which those 'ideas' subject *us* to. After all Eternity is the great non-sequitur and God the one noteworthy dilettante in our skies, and for that reason Levinson's attack on the dialect of the gods seems the most necessary of all of his ideas. His attack on dead poetry is what might best

To situate before capitulation
To determine prior to lance-through
“holding sway” as in holdup, a held, an arrestation? No, ...for sway to sway it must be
Acknowledged as sway, — *the around tilt swirling list rattle* — the “hold”, then, as a
handling, a way of orienting/tending to/ a tenderly coaxing forth — sway must be
he(and)I(e)d so that sway holds as a continuously enduring disposition
‘out of the cradle endlessly rocking’
Into the whorl heedlessly swaying
(from ‘Sway’ in *Hinge Trio*)

To exist only at the *junction* of language, at the point of its every divagation from speech, while in the realm of being a non-poet, is a welcome attraction for an author who seeks always the obnubilation of meaning. Hinge Theory, by its very definition, is ostensibly *too* literary, yet if we approach it with a mind as violent as its births and its miscarriages then a rare pleasure emerges, that what feels akin to opening a new textbook on the history of post-poetry. Levinson has understood that *understanding* literature has always been a failed encounter, a gnawing regret for what first inspired it, and that only a poetry written by a disabused mind can ever truly understand anything. ‘By beginning with a preposition, language becomes loosened from habitual usages. The preposition “with” allows a word to explore, explode, become fluid, mobilized: word embarks, becomes nomadic, erupts with new meanings’, thus Levinson questions Derrida’s idea of ‘the hierarchy of dual oppositions’, that which inevitably ‘always re-establishes itself’. Yet when he invokes meaning into his poems, it is only to denounce the ‘meaning’ that cannot be legitimized by being, or by accident. Thus the ideas behind Hinge can rightly assert the myth of revealing everything, wherever theories cohabit and flourish and each new spoken civilization resides in and relies on Levinson’s own mouth. The great poet, when confronting the problems of existence, translates into his own words only the *rigor* of a thought yet to be translated into words, and thus proceeds (temporarily) to exist inside of the unreality of a new quasi-absolute world. Rimbaud, believing briefly in the ‘hallucination of words’ sought out only a world bordering on an aversion to *matter*, realizing that all writers, philosophers and scientists would remain *impure* as personalities as long as they were confronted with the absolute world; for each improbable universe hatched at the heart of a human ‘Theory’ is, in truth, nothing but a mortification of the truth, an already obsolete parasite eating into the atom-fruit of the future.

I would expect and hope, if not demand, that the majority of Academics would denounce Hinge Theory, denounce it as a disease unable to be verified by the empirical knowledge of the literary critic; most I am sure will make a point of it, that is to ridicule Hinge, but inevitably will *fail* themselves to offer up any new kind of a spiritual awakening to replace it. The kind of positivism that ruins an imperfect literary discovery will, in the scale of the absolute, achieve no goals other than to increase the Hinge phenomenon even further. Hinge will clearly be as efficient when working from within a theory as outside of one, its certitude will remain for as long as the literary diagnostician founders upon his own (already dissipated) estimations. The truest response to Hinge will be when man, having abandoned the laboratories, begins his search for a cure to the *cure* in a post-poetical world of nanotechnology, fibre optics and only computer anatomies, after Narcissism has reverted back into the optical and mathematic problem between the mirror and the face; but what will be the fate of the ‘self’ in Hinge Theory? A new hero in a drama lost to the limits of a duped clarification? The French poet Paul Claudel’s depiction of Mallarmé as a ‘syntactic genius’, while overstated, might one day apply to this ‘author’ of Hinge poems, for if Hinge is ever one day to ante-date the imagination then the only literary ‘event’ to make that happen would be for the most imaginative poet in the world to begin rewriting and rethinking his own poems using the concepts of Hinge. But could Hinge Theory cost us another Rimbaud or a Donne? No, for poets such as these two dispossessed language of a critic’s right to understand it, forcing their own personalities to *resist* the idea of using the imagination as anything other than an instrument to humanize the will, metaphysics, language. Hinge Theory is nothing but the writing of writing, the fits and starts of syntactical refrains, for unlike in, say the work of Rimbaud, we perceive of no worlds existing *behind* the semantic origins of the words; poetry if it is ever to be finally eradicated from the mind will be forced to refer and derive all of its causes from theology *not* literature. All of the great works have been written in *spite of* the imagination, not in anyway because of it. Between the wire-mesh of two fictions Levinson gives us his confessions, since even his obsessions with Hinge must say what he *has* to say, not necessarily *how* he will say, and thus instead of relying on purely the imagination, rather he creates in line of and adherence to the despotism of what he calls ‘the pivot, the particle, and the postulate (the 3 P’s)’, each in turn to pre-figure the exhaustion of merely *imagining* a grammarian solution for the ‘content’ of the poems. In his book *From This Stone Running* this poet, or should we call him this quasi-fictive poet, begins to locate what E.M. Cioran called ‘the anti-podes of the Ego...(...) a summa of refusals, quintessence of nothing, conscious void (not consciousness of the void but a void that knows itself and rejects the accidents and vicissitudes of the contingent subject)’:

with celerity this credulity
omnibus, ... ombudsman

respiration extension lung → thrush
thresh
manufacturing
quick apt aptitude
the health about wielding as much as the
welding
tribulations & justice
the court systems
Christ!
what a waste of time

(from *From Stone This Running*)

Poetry has been eradicated and replaced by a lucidity purified of its own exacerbated will to create. Hinge Theory here is not concerned in anyway with a contradiction of its own earliest theories or with a stripping of itself down into the nuts and bolts of any kind of a 'fixed' content, merely it is a new phase of poetry that has been (quite rightly) stripped of the poet's face, it has *no history*, no universal idiom other than the machinations of the ruins of life. Consciousness exists only to frustrate the execution of the words, and thus the continual broken edifice of Hinge is rooted in the apotheosis of its own mutilated discourse, a discourse of renewal that relocates and reinforces itself under the conviction of each new model of invention, whether 'Modular Velocity', 'Migratories', 'Hinge Propagatory', and/or 'Modular Multipliers', where amid each of these syntactical contemplations Levinson himself looms invisibly inside of his own mental operations, unable or not wanting to revisit his own personality, and never seeking to celebrate his mind, rather than just *be* a mind. It is clear then that this poet will continue to be *present* in every moment that language continues to pursue itself, amid the abstract and indestructible foundations of words. But by the time we get to his latest book *Hinge Trio* we realize all too quickly that the fact that Levinson is a poet is utterly unimportant, actually it is an abomination, for in the pages of this book we find him under the spell of the same kind of inflexibility that keeps *distance* and *space* apart, of what stops man reverting back into what God hoped he might be. Levinson himself has already written: 'we replace the lexiconically static with the Impregnative-fertile... Hinge is paradoxically about creation and discovery', in the same way perhaps that today in the 21st Century a fanatic might say 'religion is paradoxically *about* salvation and damnation'; yet Hinge Theory has nothing more in common with humanity or religion or anthropology than humanity has to do with *man*, for man himself is an invention of speech, and history an absurd yawn caught between the first and the last days of the world. To *believe* in Hinge, while a barely estimable advantage when reading it, provokes nothing satisfactory in anything other than itself, for poetry, *any* poetry has never been more important than as a counter-desire to reality; and Levinson it seems, if it even matters, is providing for us a literary autopsy, a paralysis of the word itself, that is to counteract the silence in the *middle* of syntactical conversation, that which amounts to nothing more than an island, a momentary reef on which all humans seek to pause. Each sentence of Hinge is born of the misconception that when reading a text we believe that we are reading about anyone other than *ourselves*; therefore Hinge Theory must never be read as anything other than a ready-made repudiation of what repudiates man from the history of pain. Its syntactical exaggerations are true for they quite clearly *keep up* with the fluctuations of the modern mind, the only one naturally that follows us throughout our existence.

The only etymological impasse that prevents the truth getting through and into the world is of course man's own larynx, palate and tongue; if it were ever possible to identify what *low sensations* transgress the human personality when we speak, then man, for the first time, would actually appear *undisturbed* and relaxed amid the polytheistic disturbances of the world. Levinson counteracts every last impasse, both etymological and human, by declaring that languages, like ideologies, have only ever inherited a series of false dawns. And according to Nietzsche in *Ecce Homo*, the world is 'so overfull of the beautiful, strange, questionable, terrible and divine that our curiosity and our thirst for possession are both beside themselves so that nothing can any longer satisfy us!' and certainly Levinson, to avoid an inescapable aridity in language has taken a giant stab at a second beginning for language, that is for us all to re-exist upon a planet still too 'questionable, terrible and divine' today for its own good. Hinge Theory will undoubtedly seek to kick-start *again* the belief that man can indeed inhabit a new nation of *himself*, a new race and creed. Literature has always been an elaborate form of failure, but a failure so imaginative it has often found itself purged of the fear of success. Kierkegaard aligned this with this statement from his journals: 'with the strange free masonry of poets I can use these words as the motto for part of my life's suffering', and indeed the word 'motto' in Hinge Theory has frequently found itself a servant of the need to repeat ourselves, to accept suffering only ever as a *second existence* abandoned to dialects, fugitive fragments and what Levinson calls 'tussling muscle mesh shivering alphabeticals' ('With Orchestration'). Repetition renews history, yet it is time that dictates what repetition can *record*, thus the birth of Hinge Theory as an ever-burgeoning concept is bringing forth new goals contrary to man's nature, producing an anti-language that can only fall short, of language—an indistinguishable but integral chaos that reconstitutes our need for un hoped-for words; and thus unrivalled in his worship of oral frenzy Levinson writes and writes until the moment arrives when the phrase *All to no Avail* becomes a negation drunk on the idea of *something else*. In short, we are being forced to

contemplate the page as a wall that protects and hides us from nothing. If Shakespeare was to be put through Hinge's syntactical machinery then 'To be or not to be' might well acquire its most interesting variation yet, i.e. 'To generate or not to generate', for no matter what the language or who the author, Hinge will, as Levinson has stated already, continue to create 'unabated, independent of discussion and analysis'.

A writer with nothing to say should always surpass the writer with *everything* to say, for it is all a question of *insinuation*, the disparity *felt* in language between man's pre-birth existence and his final ONLY earth-bound one. The interminable human fact that we proceed from one catastrophe to the next should not stop poetry being written, in fact it should most definitely encourage the writing and rewriting of it, that is until the day when language *by itself* manages to traverse all of the terrains *owned* by God! Levinson, biblical and anti-biblical, Socratic and anti-Socratic, Hegelian and anti-Hegelian (et cetera), provides a self-fulfilling prophecy that perpetually erupts into first, secondary and tertiary phases of his breath, an ever-evolving network which sees this quasi-fictional poet entering into the unknown country of his every next phrase, sentence, word. The reader of Hinge will find though that each 'new' world is only really a *thought* of a new world, an insinuation of a progression of a thought of a 'new' world. But Levinson, possessing a modular *sagesse*, is not to be found inside of these poems, is in fact only to be found amid the echo of the echo of the work, a repetitious jawbone snapping on the wire of each line. So, it seems, that should the imagination ever become lost, we should not despair, for Levinson is informing us that the universe of Hinge Theory will swiftly take its place. The author of Hinge is not in any way interested in seeing himself fulfilled by his art, as a name and nothing more, but as someone who has both conquered and delivered himself of the old 'literary' gods, and in the meantime has decided to wait before the altar of every new postulate, at the end of literature's limits, 'consider-ing', entranced, and ready again to transcend himself a million more times *in the same place*.

Paul Stubbs, 27th August 2013, Paris.

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