

PARTIALLY CODED FIELDS AND
BASTIONS OF EXAGGERATION:
ANDREW JORDAN AND NONISM

Charles Mintern, known as “the Third Piltdown Man”, originally emerged in the 1950s as the inventor of a hoax ‘Jesuit palaeontologist’ named Teilhard de Chardin. Although he has been described as “a pioneer adaptor of heideggerian philosophemes to the Dorset singer-songwriter tradition”, I don’t really like his poems. I remember him best for a sartorial resemblance to Captain Haddock. He said my poetry was “pretentious” and took the piss out of my accent. An illegal Provisional wing calling itself “the sons of the Nomintern” has issued a bulletin accusing Andy Jordan of “hookerite tendencies” and “cryptoauthenticity”. They report a rumour that a moderate nonist wing has emerged with a reformist platform calling for “more links to local businesses”. Orthodox Nonist (Hillbillies) theory holds that there is no ancient subsoil, all objects found in the subsoil are recent artefacts and not “time soaked”. Nonist field teams (the Field Poetry Club) have found many flat so-called “profile urns” in the subsoil of Hampshire. They believe that this is the original form, and that three-dimensional urns with cremated remains inside developed later, “in line with the development of illusionist perspective drawing at the Renaissance”. Prominent hills are raised on artificial struts and embankments, regularly uncovered by nonists on their Sunday group rambles. Most of the English landscape was constructed by the Crown Film Unit, using conscientious objectors as labour, during the 1940s. The fact that the word ‘exaggerate’ includes the word for ‘earthwork’ (agger) implies that admen were originally landscapers creating artificial hills - the Pennines, for example. The past has been lost and so there is no ‘root of title’ by which lawyers can trace ownership, legitimation, stylistic sequence, or records of observations. Q-landscapes are easy to find near your home, but are more common in some parts of the country than others - hence writing authentic poems depends on where you live. The breakaway Moderate Nonists (for example, Beddington, the nonist Consultancy Agency) say that there is a past and that they can provide access to it, and to ways of influencing it, in return for money. This so-called Weymouth Fraction is led by ‘avant-garde neoclassicist’ Petroc Nondelson, a restaurateur and former follower of Jordan’s - who now accuses Jordan and Mintern of “proletarian idealism” and “French tastes”. His position is that “nonism can only be true to its own past by denying that that past exists” and he calls for “broadband access for West Dorset”. He and Ned Benbow argue that more stress should be put on the moment of appearance of cultural artefacts, prestiges, and stylemes. The disappearance of authenticity from poems by Andrew Motion and Tony Harrison is in direct relation with the appearance of authenticity in poems by David Barnett and N.S. Macias. These are in fact the same object: being transferred like a Greek vase being looted from an Apulian tomb and turning up at Sotheby’s. *This is also believed to happen underground.* Less stress should be put on primary (de-)production and more on retailing - the deliverables side. According to Finoola Minterbrot, head of the Wessex Country Record Office in Bridport, their new GIS shows that the Dorset shoreline is “an artefact” - “an incomplete Bronze Age contractual situation” related to a public-private partnership among the Dumnoriges. “The fingerprints of data compression techniques” are all over Lyme Bay, according to her recent posting on the Wessex Online website. The constant appearance of new fossils is “an artefact of the first release of perspective geometry”, and known as “the bends”.

While writing that in 2001, I found Andy Jordan's letter where he explains that "My landscapes are not directly related to religious or ritual man-made fields. I am interested in any false landscape and in any theories related to that notion. I have read *The New View Over Atlantis* (the 1980s re-edit of the original) and I did subscribe to *The Ley Hunter* magazine for a while but that stuff was not the source of my idea nor of attraction to it. My use of falseness is much more philosophical and pathological than that. It is allegorical/ metaphorical/ linguistic/ psychological (in particular, it relates to the workings of 'simile'). It relates to difficulties of belief (ideology) and trust inversions (affective dissonance, ouch). Working out how to respond to the falseness of 'things' is both an occult and an artistic endeavour, as well as a necessity within the realm of interpersonal relationships. The issues are to do with myths of authenticity, authorship, boundaries, identity, and responsibility. The absence of effective agency in relation to these things - which is a sort of given in my world - is a conundrum which I have to sort (whilst being happy, oh yes). If I do not sort these issues I remain disconnected from the world and from meaningful intimacy. I am then an economic cipher, a consumer, a foiled poet and little more. As the EPA slogan, *Realisation Now!*, suggests, I'm just looking for something that's real." More of this in his magazine, *10th Muse* (33, Harrington Road, Southampton, SO14 0EW). The EPA is the 'EquiPhallic Alliance', perhaps a reference to chalk figures of horses on hills in Wiltshire. "The EPA - the 'military wing' of the Poetry Field Club - occasionally destroys picturesque landscape features as these are used to construct a consuming ideal (nationalism)." For nonism see the site nonism.org.

Hegemonick is a volume of poetry which Jordan published in 2012 and which may date back to 2005 as a composition. The cover photo, a startling lyrical and rural image from 1932, resembles the cover photo on Macless's book and indeed the group on the cover of *Electric Eden*, which, excitingly, we will encounter in a later chapter. Landscape photography has been written about as a mass art where ordinary people got their vision into visible form. This was a genre where many amateurs captured the kind of sublime vision of the land which Jordan is trying to disrupt. These photos have the peculiar quality of capturing an ideal, something which should not show up in a mechanical image at all. I should point out that Charles Mintern is a fantasy figure written by Andrew Jordan. This chapter begins with a gossip column on nonism ghosted by me. Nonism believes that landscape is an illusion composed of projective fantasies and designed to produce social coherence in which the few have the greatest share of power. Mintern began inside *10th Muse*, Jordan's poetry magazine, a total environment of sarcastic commentary which is strangely more in the voice of Mintern, of whom Jordan is consciously an opponent, than of nonism, a system of disbelief in which Jordan believes.

This bulletin is produced as a response to the projection of place upon placelessness, to the fabrication of a 'Southern regional poetic', to cultural fascism in general and the imposition of destructive and picturesque aesthetics, a false cultural particularism, onto landscape, poetic and imagined (postnational) community in particular.

[...]

Dr Mintern's excavations within the virtual Wessex proved, to him at least, that not only were all of the archaeological remains synthetically made, and placed, but that the chalk underneath the archaeology was

also made, that it too is synthetic. If that is the case then all Wessex history is myth, right down to its version of the class struggle (that aspect in particular being cheesy in the extreme). He discovered the theory of the underchalk (and was the first person to postulate that caves are suspended in a wider void). Together with Barny, he proved that places are on stilts, that machineries exist which can raise and lower the elevation of place, as required, according to social conditions, in order to pacify the dispossessed, to quieten those who still suffer enclosure. Now we must finish his work.

[...]

The poetry of the south and south west sometimes seems to be synonymous with 'the poetry of place' (although this too is an illusion). The 'Blandford elite' (Ha Ha) have attempted to possess and enclose this 'poetic ground' in order to exploit it, but - as such - they have become entrapped within their (mystified) experience of place.

(from the *EPA Bulletin*, issue 1, [1997?])

Hegemonick is a kind of documentary about the symbolism of a landscape on Portsdown, a hill overlooking Portsea, an island in Hampshire (on which much of Portsmouth is built). It gives us a tour of a set of solid structures and symbolic networks which are completely invented. Here Jordan sounds like a cultural historian narrating a TV documentary in front of shots of prehistoric monuments:

Modernity assessing itself.
Modernity, the victim in all this -
like a child - abused
and demonised,
or made into an ideal;
always the same.
In the Pleistocene, at Leucomagus,
Carnac, even Rome. Modernity,
telling it as it is.
The true word they hate you for.
Stonehenge, an amended form
of the Brutalism
first practised at Avebury - the ugliest
stone circle in England, too modern -
loathed in Neolithic times
and eventually pulled down.
Now a rough facsimile,
faked for the tourists,
is improperly presented as
Romance and the blueprint
for St Paul's and the Reichstag.
The lyric of a work.
('News of the World')

The cover says the book is “a ‘free history’ of the war against children, something unearthed”. I don’t find a ‘war against children’ in it - the reference to ‘Modernity, the victim in all this - like a child’ seems to be something different. ‘Free history’ seems to mean roughly ‘data-free history’.

The impetus for nonism was a satire of writers who talked about a Wessex regional identity, who were some of the poets who wrote about ‘archaeology and landscape’. First came Thatcherism, then a panic among the cultural managers at realising that neo-conservatism was a losing cause and that they could go down with it. The fix was to find some Northern poets who could be wrapped up as innocent authenticity due to their victim status. This required exceptionally stupid and shallow people, to preserve the victim status in its pristine condition. They could have found real poets from the North but in their squirrel-like frenzy they didn’t take the time. So there was a lot of discourse about intact northern anti-bourgeois roots. This really irritated people in the south-west. Port cities there were especially hard hit in the 1990s by the end of the Cold War and the closing of the Cold War industrial base. Conservatism was big in the south-east, the dominant region with 17 million people and much higher average income. The south-west was irritated at being lumped together with the south-east, against gigantic economic gradients. This was the basis for the Wessex thing, which was not a big fuss. They did have a certain amount of resentment for the North, actually for talentless northern poets being paraded by cynical cultural managers in London. His work is mainly double coded, being a reaction to a source text and then a new statement made out of the objects in the source. It is, in architectural terms, not a portfolio of buildings but a series of designs by other architects which someone has re-drawn and annotated in an original way. Jordan in *10th Muse* is reacting to a large amount of cultural discourse, prominently editors in the south-west such as Tilla Brading, David Caddy, Brian Hinton, Tim Allen, Rupert Loydell, Norman Jope. Their ‘discourse territories’ in the magazines (*Tears in the Fence* and so on) were the main competitors of *10th Muse* and his immediate frame of reference.

Portsmouth and Plymouth were both large port cities on the south coast with a long tradition of naval service and defence industries. (This history goes back some way. N.A.M. Rodgers’ history of the navy describes an artificial improvement to the harbour at Portsmouth, a work in stone. This was in the year 1212.) Plymouth is larger and this is where a poetry scene really got going. I hear little about activity in Southampton - apart from Jordan and *10th Muse*. Jeremy Hooker lived in Wales for many years and is one of the classic commentators on Welsh poetry in English. After a while, he was writing Anglo-Welsh poetry about Southampton. This in many ways is where Jordan started from. *10th Muse* criticises everyone except Hooker - who writes about archaeology, the landscape, feelings of continuity in front of landscape and the deep past, working-class history and his own family. The Plymouth guys were really into the social or mythical divisions of their city, it was a shared metaphor. In this, Sinclair’s mythical and topographic vision of London may have been decisive. Jordan’s ‘psychogeographic’ writing about Southampton is partly a kindred line to what was happening in Plymouth - in the ‘90s, essentially - and partly a parody of it. When Jordan writes about ‘Wessex’ it is important to recognise that he is probably excluding Southampton from that territory - although over centuries the boundaries of Wessex shifted a lot and certainly included Southampton (in Settlement times supposedly Jutish) for a long period. (It may be true that there is a cultural affinity between south-west England and

Wales.) Jordan was reading magazines from the ‘classic south-west’ all the time but wasn’t really part of it.

The most striking aspect of nonism was that Jordan was parodying the kind of poetry he himself wanted to write. Hooker was very close to the poetic archaeology that Jordan was satirising. This ambivalence has stuck to the nonist project, and its ability to capture forces of discontent, withdrawal, and rage, usually excluded from the uttered part of the poetry scene, has been more impressive than its ability to create a voice. The authenticity which was so offended at the outset is unable to return because the ambivalence is too pervasive.

Hegemonick is his most impressive poetic work. It has a homogeneous high finish, like a building made entirely from a single material. In this thoroughness of fabrication is the full realisation of themes he has been working with for twenty years. It comes integrally out of its own world and is freestanding from literary models or personal experiences - even from the people he is satirising. Yet it is not as mordant and subversive as the nonist prose, cast entirely as a parodic recoding of something he hates. The final validity of the critique is less impressive than the voltage of the intellectual process which takes place along the way. Here Jordan writes his ‘cultural history’ about the objects of the modern defence industry, on the Hampshire coast, as if they were megalithic masterpieces:

I was due north of the research facility now called QinetiQ.

The fort on Old Winchester Hill forms a high abutment overlooking the Meon Valley, a once Jutish buffer state between the West and South Saxons. Even then it was redundant, adrift amongst the chalk hills like an abandoned raft.

The view from the summit seems immense
and the hill appears to be much higher than it does
when looking up from below.
Copses, farmsteads and the homes of rich settlers,
the landscape around in perpetual motion,
tossed on the waves, - and there is the curvature
of the earth and the shifting of shadows as the sun moves.

I sat on a burial mound beside the triangulation pillar.
I ate my sandwich. I drank my orange squash.
(from ‘A Walk in Hegemony’)

Jordan explains what the firm-name means: “According to QinetiQ the name can be broken down into three component parts: *Qi* represents the firm’s energy, *net* its networking ability, and *iq* its intellect.” However, it seems unlikely that potential purchasers of kinetic solutions have those notions in mind when looking at the QinetiQ product portfolio. According to David Kilcullen, a leading contemporary practitioner and theorist of counterinsurgency and counterterrorism, “Kinetic operations are about killing the enemy and breaking their stuff . . .” *Kinetic* seems to be like *ballistic* but extended to include the high-velocity qualities of the vehicles that move the launchers of projectiles and the flexibility of the intelligence

that guides the obedient weapons. A ship carries a plane which carries a missile. It may also imply the projection of power - something else which covers vast distances and reacts at great speed. *Qi* is a Chinese word meaning 'breath' (hence oxygen, oxygenated bloodstream, energy, animating force), which in an older transcription came out as *ch'i* (as in Tai Ch'i).

"Even then it was redundant" is a reference to Hampshire naval bases and dockyards closing after the end of the Cold War. Jordan says: "There is a long history of weapons research on Portsdown Hill. It is a tradition continued to this day in compounds first enclosed during the Neolithic period. Many new or experimental weapons are based on prehistoric originals unearthed, it is said, from the very barrows upon which today's research facilities are located. What was once considered 'magical' is now merely 'state of the art'." The name Mintern comes from Patrick Wright's *The Village that Died for England*, an evocation of a particular part of Dorset built around the evacuation of the area in 1943 to serve as a tank exercise ground for rehearsing the invasion of north-west Europe, the storming of 'Festung Europa'. This was basic for Jordan but the linking of the military and the picturesque is pervasively present in earthworks like Maiden Castle and in castles - which for 19th and 20th century onlookers have a kind of visual beauty. To uncover the history of domination in these ancient features of the landscape justifies a version in which the undoing of power would liberate the great majority of individuals - a breakdown of something old, venerable, resistant and malign. This is almost a hippie philosophy. Jordan's sarcasm disguises hippie attitudes.

Start by deciding that the narratives of archaeology up to 1950 were largely the projections of the egos of the scholars putting the narratives together. It would follow that the central activity of archaeologists in the modern era is to uncover and critique the projective part of these narratives. It follows that the study of the ego and its narrative anatomy is a key activity of critical archaeologists. This is the founding assumption of Jordan's poetry, which simultaneously narrates and decomposes the fantasy projections. The poetry is bizarre in flavour but is continuous with a normal activity of most professional archaeologists, taking apart the emotional investments of older excavators in order to clean up and extract the retrievable parts of their write-ups:

The psyche exists within affective walls.
It has a single ditch and bank enclosing
a rectangular precinct surrounding a circular
timber structure which may have been roofed.
The latter appeared to him in a dream
as a series of three concentric V-shaped gullies,
the innermost containing post holes. Two
large post holes flanked an entrance
on the eastern side. This is where the self lurks,
holy mutant, craver, administerer of small things,
an addict swayed by sentiments, stupidly
vain host to thoughts, this dark interior.

The central area contained post holes and
a pit in the middle, perhaps used for libations.
(‘Theory: the Self’)

With these fake narratives, Jordan is further into the 'post-modern' thing than most poets, is in fact completely captured by it. He wrote movingly in defence of the Tricorn Centre, which "was a Brutalist shopping, nightclub and car park complex in Portsmouth, Hampshire", sometimes regarded as the ugliest building in Europe. It was demolished in 2004. (Portsmouth is on the same near-landlocked body of water as Southampton but is the naval base.) He was defending working-class culture even including alienation, failed modernist authority fantasies, crassness and monotony. He has a sort of headless loyalty to the imposed culture. He wants to preserve the memory of alienation. The memory of wanting to be somewhere else. This is the shared past. Its memory can produce reflexive knowledge even in the dialectic form of a plan for preventing it from ever happening again.

(When Jordan refers to Stonehenge as 'brutalist' the word means undecorated concrete as a visual feature of buildings, held also to symbolise 'the look of modernity' in around 1964. It was first written down in 1952.) *Beton brut* is 'unpolished concrete' (left as rough-cast, without the casting seams being polished down) and 'brutalism' was a witty reference to that. People are even more infuriated by authoritarian claims that taste is arbitrary than by ugly concrete high-rises taking over their cities. "Taste is a matter of conditioning" means "I am going to ignore your wishes". What else could it mean? The comparison between the rugged and undecorated stone of Stonehenge and brutalist buildings has been made by other people than Jordan. The photograph of the Tricorn in Wikipedia shows a tower feature capped by a cube, which actually looks like one of the trilithons of Stonehenge. The Tricorn was called 'the Casbah' by its creators, after the old citadel of Algiers. (The Wikipedia article cites Andrew Jordan as one of its sources.)

In this emotional complex, he is unable to develop 'working class utterance' as a counterpoise to the bourgeois ideology of owning the past which he hates so much. Besotted by grievance, he is nonetheless expert at insulting people and giving them grievances. There is a paradox, in the land downstream of Berger, that you define any creation of symbols and impressive artistic objects as the projection of power and so as alienating. But because you define everything impressive and grand as oppressive, you cannot take on any culture at all. Only something wretched and inconsistent and meagre could possibly be 'authentic'. The gap between being prosperous and being evil has been elided. Economic success has been redefined as theft and artistic success has been redefined as propaganda for theft. How then can you engage in economic activity or in art? There is no way out and the more impressive *Hegemonick* becomes as a work of verbal art the more it falls prey to the ballistic weapons of nonist critique. Inside his project is a deep attraction to the patriotic and sentimental archaeology which at a conscious level he rejects.

Around the time I read *Hegemonick* I read in *Fortean Times* about the 'popular conspiracy symbology' of someone named Rik Clay. He was a conspiracist/musician who produced a whole theory of alien conspiracy in reaction to the announcement of the London Olympics in 2008, analysing the Olympic logo as a complete figuration of an alien plot - a sinister message lurking beneath the surface of something cuddly and commercial. He also visited Central America:

>>So to conclude, a company using eye and pyramid symbolism, control and run these tall red masts which permeate the Yucatan Peninsula, the Mayan Riviera and maybe the whole of Mexico. A monopoly for sure. Without any doubt in my mind forces both terrestrial, extra-terrestrial and godly are at work. Time is drawing closer to the day when the capstone of the Great Pyramid will be laid and a grand plan, centuries in the making, will commence.<<

Clay saw a pattern in street names on the edges of the Olympics site in Stratford:

>>Temples Mills Lane. Temple Mills were water mills belonging to the Knights Templar - 'The Poor Fellow-Soldiers of Christ and of the Temple of Solomon'.<<

>>The Olympics 2012 site is situated between Leyton and Leytonstone. The 'Ley' found in their names originates from the term 'Ley lines'.<<

People found a hidden message in the 2007 design for the Olympic 2012 logo, involving a picture card in a card game, *Illuminatus: World Order*, and an episode of *The Simpsons*. This may not have been Clay. His style overlaps with Jordan's:

>>The bender site, and the old yew tree in it, were the shortlived heart of Leytonstonia, decorated with a kerb-henge, a replica of Stonehenge made with kerbstones. (Some talked of the significance of the names Leyton and Leytonstone, of their relation to ley lines more generally, as though this might explain the energy of the protest sites. A brickhenge was made at Claremont Road, halfway between Leyton and Leytonstone.) The Olympics site lies in an area synonymous with mystical - metaphysical - earth energy.<<

(This energy would be called Qi.) (Leytonstonia was the 'free republic' of road-building protesters in the area in 1994. It was Claremont not Clarement.) Rik Clay took his life in 2008 and he took all his web stuff down in the weeks before that - possibly a loss of faith was connected to his collapse. (See also <http://www.rikclayfoundation.org/rik-clay.html>, published by his friends.) This project is extremely close to *Hegemonick*, whose process is close to a core of paranoia, damage, apocalyptic resentment, which is a genuine tendency in modern society. It records something outside itself - it is the myth of a real structure (a delusional one). It is genuinely populist. The part of the book which devises a part of the landscape as a 'realisation' of Mary Millington, a porn star of the 1970s ('Come Play With Me'), portrayed as a fertility symbol and avatar of 'the Mother Goddess' is equally populist. The loss of negativity in the realm of the rejecting? Paranoia is not exotic but at this stage in history it is populist. Conspiracy theory has no standing in academic institutions, it is not registered among their modules of knowledge which are legitimate and which confer legitimacy. Dan Brown and *The X Files* are not just super-popular but completely assimilated, ragged memories of them fuel a million websites. The paranoia weakens the text because it is unattractive, its relation to gnosis and to enlightenment is distinctly a mirror projection - every value inverted even if every point is present in both patterns.

Jordan approaches Iain Sinclair, even, in channelling the desolate, the destitute, the illuminated. But the closer it gets the more desolate it gets and the stronger feelings of terror and simply disbelief grow in the reader.

Shape and analogy are the basis of magic (at least Western magic and its East Mediterranean sources) and both Clay and Jordan are preoccupied with unseen shapes detected in buildings or whole landscapes. The spelling *Hegemonick* can be related either to Magick or to 17th-century radical tracts with the *-ick* spelling. The book credits it to a paragraph in a popularising work on vocabulary which quotes “aegemonie and sufferaintie”. Magical practices are that other populist genre. Some regions of the websphere by now include a heady mix of radical post-Marxism, for example Situationism, and the occult. *Hegemon* in Greek means ‘leader’ or ‘guide’. Mount Igumen, near Sarajevo, means ‘Abbot’s hill’. In political geography, hegemony over a territory implies authority over it, but not monopolistic and permanent sovereignty. The title refers in fact to a Marxist theory of hegemony (associated with Antonio Gramsci). This is the unspoken agreed and the rules which define the unspoken which is rejected (and which must not be spoken). It takes us to the heart of ‘subjectless action’. Law puts rules into words but there is another class of rules which is never verbalised and which it is very difficult to bring into consciousness. Hegemony defines the domain of propositions which people will not even react to but simply act as if you hadn’t said them. The action of writers might be to push the silent into consciousness. (This is a modern view of writing.)

It is a political notion but it must surely be applied to art as well - to the weave of shared symbolism which is the basis of art and which allows strangers to understand your personal creation. The weave is frayed and distressed by recent cultural processes. To speak seriously of ‘hegemony’ challenges the warm identification between writer and reader which is the attraction of poetry for so many readers. It launches a critique of participation.

The unspoken is above all beneficent and warm and the peaks of art occur where that warmth and togetherness reach a peak. Coldness is being outside the human weave, the light that pours out of human beings. The music of human behaviour has a boundary. Anywhere on the outside is cold and if you have ambivalence then you are always outside the music. Becoming something that light and warmth just bounce off. There is a geological power of resentment that shows in its landscape, the fall of its hills and rivers.

A point of departure for all of Jordan’s work is John Berger and his 1967 TV series (later a book) *Ways of Seeing*. This redefines all art which shows beautiful places, things or people as display, and display as a behaviour of the bourgeois, and the bourgeoisie as inherently bad and dissimilar from everyone else. For Berger art is the projection of power, and of pleasure which he is happy to write off. Identification is something he feels no need to do. Even if the way he writes is quite unlike the way Berger writes, Berger’s distrust of art is a stratum underlying the whole Jordan thing. For Jordan too the cold metallic feel of power spoils virtually all art and the association of art with power means that he rejects history. He is expert in the anatomy of egoism, how projection creates the meaning of symbols and the scenario of symbolic experiences. On every page he punctures these projections. It becomes very difficult for him to project values of his own. Berger too is someone whom light and warmth just bounce off. (The interaction between the critique of nationalist archaeology and this critique of non-Stalinist art is significant.)

If you accept that symbols are not solid objects and that projection is a basic human psychological act - basic at least for contented and vigorous human beings - then the critique both acquires universal validity and loses all validity. Why should the bourgeoisie not project their wishes into the symbolic realm? How can power be bad if powerlessness is so close to despair and destitution? Is any symbolic order free from ego projections? These are fundamental questions but it is arguable that Jordan has resolved them in too fundamental a way and has not allowed an organic quality to ripen in his work.

Jordan talking over Stonehenge is a kind of parody of the designed landscape, a soft flow of talk lapping over the silent objects. Imagine a BBC voice murmuring that Stonehenge offended a lot of people because it was too modern and its surfaces were rough and brutal. It is as if the surface of English life were a kind of guided tour, a series of views. We give ourselves to consumerist wandering, unable to pull out of this flow that soaks and leaks everywhere. Somehow the material environment, something which we originally can know by the senses alone, is covered with a facing of words and these words are basic to our consciousness. They are the English mythology, like the elaborate verbal structures of some tribe in Melanesia or Brazil. They are the organs of the collective.

Hegemony decides that 'to write in the terms of conspiracy theory is to acquire low prestige'. No individual decided this. It is not the outcome of a reasoned and controlled process. It is simply there, pervading every street and every room. (I should clarify that Jordan is not advancing a conspiracy theory in *Hegemonick* but devising a fictional one that he does not believe in.) If universally accepted, hegemonic values are not a conspiracy - but if you reject them, they become one. Both the dissident opinions repressed by the system, and the act of silencing, are silenced - this is the conspiratorial secret. Some widespread opinions are, I presume, correct.

The symbolic content of the best underground work is a feeling of a successful group - intelligence, knowledge, idealism, feelings of freedom and an achievement about to be reached. This feeling was rather well founded, and is the reality on which the attraction of the high-flying language is based. As Jordan's position brings to light, the poets of the underground abandoned the radical critique of form, actually form/power relations, in order to write underground poetry which was beautiful, autonomous; which created warm feelings about each other, gave a sight of a life being led. They abandoned the critique which had originally led them into the wilderness and so their work is a ripe subject for a new stage of that critique. A prolonged education has become a form of wealth and defined them as a new bourgeoisie. In this context of prosperity, there are anomalous individuals without prosperity, and they own the original critique more thoroughly than the others. Their forward dynamic is unimpaired - at the same time that their feelings of ambivalence and resentment permeate their work. At this point it would seem that unhappiness is authenticity - but when turned into verbal art it is not attractive and so its dynamic energies, its ability to mobilise masses of people, are restricted.

People did not drop out in order to be unhappy. The status of the Underground as an 'imagined village' where everybody knows each other has brought about stability - and compromised the forward dynamic written into its charter. This describes, at least vaguely, the role of the malcontent. No-one is more malcontent than Jordan. And it describes also

the feelings evoked by *Hegemonick*. The 'affective dissonance' is unpleasant. I am unwilling to describe Jordan's poetry as good. It doesn't take you anywhere. I had qualms about publishing it and I have qualms about putting it over as major poetry in a book. It is full of bad feelings. But genuine malcontentment.

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