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Citation: Kejriwal, Pritha (2021) On being, subject and truth in the works of Pablo Neruda and Alain Badiou. [Thesis] (Unpublished)

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**ON BEING, SUBJECT AND TRUTH IN THE WORKS
OF
PABLO NERUDA AND ALAIN BADIOU**

PRITHA KEJRIWAL

A Thesis presented for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy



Department of Iberian and Latin American Studies

Birkbeck, University of London
2021

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Professor John Kraniauskas for giving me the freedom and confidence to think and pursue the kernel of an elusive idea, which in the beginning had seemed impenetrable. His guidance and approval at crucial stages helped me navigate the complexities of Alain Badiou's extraordinarily intricate and complex philosophy. The delight that he took in reading Neruda's poetry woven through the Badiouan fabric, kept me motivated throughout the journey of writing the thesis. This thesis couldn't have been completed if he had doubted it's premise even once. Once again, I acknowledge my absolutely heartfelt gratitude for his belief in the project.

I cannot express in adequate words, my gratitude to my spouse, Amitabh Kejriwal for his constant and unflagging support in helping me in every possible way one can, throughout the long and often arduous process of writing this thesis shuttling between two continents. I would also like to mention his helpful contribution in the final formatting of the thesis which made the toilsome task much easier.

I can never thank my parents enough for always inspiring, guiding and supporting me in all my pursuits.

And last but not the least, I would like to thank Anthony Shepherd, Birkbeck's Postgraduate Research Team Leader, for easing out all kinds of administrative formalities throughout my time at Birkbeck. His presence has always been reassuring, especially during the uncertainties of the last two years.

ABSTRACT

The theoretical underpinning of this line of inquiry into the poetry of Pablo Neruda is the mathematico-ontological work of contemporary French philosopher and author of two philosophical magnum opuses, *Being and Event* and *Logics of Worlds (Being and Event II)*, Alain Badiou. His radical ideas of the ‘object’, the ‘world’ it is contained in, the occurrence of an ‘event’ in the world, and the eventual production of the ‘truth’ as the consequence of the ‘event’ – all of which form the substantial basis of his second book, *Logics of Worlds* also guides this inquiry.

This research aims to map Pablo Neruda’s works onto the mathematical/philosophical framework established by Badiou. After having established the Badiouan idea of an ‘object’, this thesis, instead of treating Neruda’s works as one seamless fabric, would proceed, ‘object’ by ‘object’, as they occur and recur in Neruda’s poetry. Through various proofs in the mathematico-ontological language developed by Badiou in his *Logics of Worlds*, this inquiry will be a radical new entry into Neruda’s poetry.

Alongside, some other texts of a more narrative nature by Alain Badiou on poetry and philosophy would also support the study, by creating more points of intersection between poetry, mathematics, ontology and philosophy.

This thesis a purely theoretical/mathematical intervention, hence would progress mainly via 1) a thorough and rigorous reading, analysis and application of related texts – which would include not just the extensive work done by Alain Badiou, but also related philosophers of phenomenology and 2) by creating mathematical proofs at each stage to establish homeomorphisms between the Nerudian and Badiouan universes.

The thesis would aim to apply the rigor and exactitude of mathematics to ascertain and concretize the concepts of Being, Subject and Truth in the combined universe of Alain Badiou and Pablo Neruda.

CONTENTS

TITLE PAGE	1
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	2
ABSTRACT	3
TABLE OF CONTENTS	4
INTRODUCTION	5
CHAPTER 1: SEVEN PROOFS	9
CHAPTER 2: THE TOOLS	25
CHAPTER 3: PERSPECTIVES 1-2 –THE PRE-EVENTAL ONTO-LOGICAL POEM AND THE POST-EVENTAL TOPOLOGICAL POEM	42
CHAPTER 4: PERSPECTIVES 3-4 – THE ‘BEING QUA BEING’ OF AN ONTOLOGICAL OBJECT AND THE ‘BEING THERE’ OF A TOPOLOGICAL OBJECT – AN EXPLORATION OF ‘NERUDIAN EQUIPMENTAL SPACE’	51
CHAPTER 5: EXISTENCE UNDER THE OPERATION OF THE PHENOMENAL COMPONENT	67
CHAPTER 6: POETRY AS THE ‘SITE’	91
CHAPTER 7: THEORY OF POINTS AND A LESSON IN SIMPLICITY	109
CHAPTER 8: THE BODY	124
CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION- END NOTES ON OBLIVION, SHARP STONES AND COMING BACK	149
BIBLIOGRAPHY	157

INTRODUCTION

Most literary criticism around the works of the Chilean poet Pablo Neruda has focused on one subjective trope or another. Neruda as the surrealist poet turned Marxist dialectician (Dawes, 2006)¹; Neruda, the political poet (Johnson, 2015)²; Neruda, the passionate patriot (Karmakar, 2015)³; Neruda, the diarist and recorder of overwhelmed feelings (McInnis, 1997)⁴; Neruda, the hermetic, neo-romantic pessimist (Feinstein, 1982)⁵; Neruda, the voyager (Duran & Safir, 1981)⁶; Neruda, the unpredictable poet (Alazraki, 1972)⁷ and so on. Strangely and surprisingly, the most distinctive character of his work - the immensity of quotidian objects strewn throughout its length and breadth - has been overlooked or side-lined or relegated to the idea of celebration and glorification of commonplace objects as simply the prerogative of the poet. His *odas*, especially have been painted with broad brushstrokes as mere eulogies (De Costa, 1979, Brunet, 1974)⁸ or products of an agnostic religiosity (Boero, 1985)⁹. They were written “*para glorificar objetos comunes, hasta prosaicos, de la experiencia diaria – un par de calcetines, el alambre de púa, el jabón, la cuchara, el serrucho*” (Rivero, 1975)¹⁰.

In another part of the world, most analyses and interpretations of the French philosopher Alain Badiou’s works have focused mainly on his first two books – *Theory of Subject* and *Being and Event I*. As a result, his ‘mathematical ontology’ has often been criticised as that theory of the subject that fails to account empirically for its complexities. “The axioms of set theory themselves dictate strict limitations on the kinds of objects they can and cannot be applied to. Any rigorous attempt to base an ontology upon them will entail such a drastic loss of life and experience that the result can never amount to an ontology in any humanly meaningful sense.” (Nirenberg, 2011)¹¹ In similar vein, Peter Hallward writes, “Conceiving the being or presenting of a person as a mathematical set can by definition tell us nothing about the empirical or material - let alone historical or social existence of such beings.” (Hallward, 2008)¹² Badiou’s

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1. Dawes Greg, *Verses against the Darkness: Pablo Neruda’s Poetry and Politics*, Bucknell University Press, 2006
 2. Johnson Penelope, “Constructing Images, Translation and Ideology. Pablo Neruda’s *Canto General* during the McCarthy years in the US”, *Journal of Siberian Federal University, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2 (2015 8) 229-243
 3. Karmakar G, “Poetic Vision of Pablo Neruda”, *European Journal of English Language and Literature Studies*, 3(1), 1-6. 2015.
 4. McInnis, J. B., “Pablo Neruda: Inventing el mar de cadadía”, *Latin American Studies Association*, 19, 1-19. 1997.
 5. Feinstein Adam, *Pablo Neruda, A Passion for Life*, Bloomsbury Publishing, 1982
 6. Duran M., and Safir M., *Earth Tones: the poetry of Pablo Neruda*, Bloomington, Indiana, 1981
 7. Alazraki Jaime, “Pablo Neruda, The Chronieler of All Things”, *Books Abroad*, Vol. 46, No. 1, Winter 1972
 8. De Costa René, *The Poetry of Pablo Neruda*, Harvard University Press, 1979
 9. Boero Mario, “La Religión en las *Memorias* de Neruda”, *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos*, 417, March 1985
 10. Suarez Rivero Eliana, “La estética esencial en una oda Nerudiana”, *Simposio Pablo Neruda: Actas*”, New York, 1975
 11. Nirenberg Ricardo L. and Nirenberg David, “Badiou’s Number: A Critique of Mathematics as Ontology”, *Critical Inquiry*, Vol 37., No.4, Summer 2011

subsequent work, *Logics of Worlds*, which hasn't received as much attention yet is however, a far more nuanced theory of the 'subjectivisation' of objects based on far more complex mathematical theories of topology and category theory.

These overlooked 'objects' in Neruda's works and the yet obscure mathematical tools of Badiou seem to gravitate towards each other – one looking for the proper instruments so they could be carefully excavated and the other looking for a rich soil to dig into. This thesis is therefore a radical new entry into the Nerudian and Badiouan universes as it locates the Nerudian objects in the post *Being and Event* Badiouan field. By wrenching itself away from the slippery terrain of the 'subject' and moving freely amongst 'objects' in the external world, the thesis frees itself from some of the familiar ambiguities and anxieties of the internal world. "Something warm, then, that relieves us from the chill of dogged ideation, something concrete that relieves us from unnecessary abstraction" (Brown, 2001)¹³.

Structure

In the very first chapter, this thesis locates the common ground or the points of intersection between the poet and the philosopher. Badiou had written briefly about Neruda in his essay titled, 'Poetry and Communism', alongside other communist poets such as César Vallejo, Paul Eluard, Nazim Hikmet and Bertolt Brecht, and had said, "Communist poetry with its resource and gentleness combined with that of enthusiasm, tells us: rise up with the will to think and act so that the world may be offered to all as the world that belongs to all, just as the poem in language offers to all the common world that is always contained therein, even if in secret."¹⁴ While both Neruda and Badiou shared the common ideals of Communism, this thesis seeks to go much deeper into the material core of each of them, and identify their common building blocks. The treatment here is more akin to Badiou's own revaluation of Beckett,¹⁵ where he sets Beckett's works as a 'Badiouan site' where operations of truth occur, "Through the revaluation of Beckett, he can plan the renegotiation of the tie between 'prose and concept' which will free philosophy from its subjection to the 'exclusive condition' of the Poem: a renewal of the live collaboration and mutual specification of philosophy and art, in the shared exercise of the affirmative production of truth."¹⁶

The first chapter thus proceeds through various proofs in the mathematico-ontological language developed by Badiou in his *Logics of Worlds* and through his texts in the *Age of Poets* and discovers an entire shared universe between Badiou and Neruda. This creates solid ground upon which to build the edifice of a thesis which holds the promise of a 'true encounter'¹⁷

12. Hallward Peter, "Order and Event: On Badiou's Logics of Worlds", *New Left Review* 53 (September-October 2008)

13. Brown Bill, "Thing Theory", *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 28, No. 1, Things, Autumn 2001

14. Badiou Alain, 'Poetry and Communism', *The Age of the Poets: And other writings on poetry and prose*, Trans. by Bruno Bosteels, Verso, 2014, Pg 108

15. There are mainly three texts by Badiou on Samuel Beckett in chronological order – the concluding section of *Conditions* (1992), *Beckett – le increvable désir* (1995) and a chapter in *Petit Manuel d'inaesthétique*

16. Joubert Claire. "Badiou with Beckett: Concept, Prose, and the Poetics", *Journal of Beckett Studies*, vol. 21, no. 1, Edinburgh University Press, 2012, Pg. 33–55,

17. Badiou Alain, *Beckett – le increvable désir*, Hachette, 1995, Pg 5

The next chapter establishes the Badiouan glossary of concepts and ideas which would then act as the common grammar of the Badiouan-Nerudian universe enabling one to analyse each object as they occur and recur in Neruda's poetics. By first zooming into each of these objects and treating them as a member of a Badiouan-Nerudian set, and then slowly zooming out to establish a Von-neumanish hierarchy¹⁸ of Badiouan-Nerudian sets, one aims to furnish a privileged vantage point for viewing this shared universe.

Chapter three proceeds via detailed and formal studies of two Nerudian objects – the first one is the 'horse' as it appears in two separate poems 'Caballos' and 'Oda al caballo' and the second is the 'moon' as it appears in different contexts in various poems. Through these case studies of 'being' and 'appearing', the Nerudian object is slowly established as an onto-logical category at par with Badiou's concept of the idea.

Chapter four is a detailed inquiry into Nerudian 'equipment' – the hammer, the axe, the saw et al. The chapter clearly distinguishes between a Heideggerian phenomenology and a Nerudian-Badiouan one and identifies a Dasein-less postulate for the equipment, giving it back its freedom and autonomy and restoring to 'objects' the dignity of free movement through the annals of history – where they aren't completely absorbed by the logic of the commodity market, but retain the agency to become anything at any given point in time; as Arjun Appadurai, writes in his essay, 'The Thing Itself', "The corrosion of history only supports and intensifies the inherent tendency of things to move on to some new state in their social lives. And this is as true of art objects as it is of things in general."¹⁹ He further writes in his essay, 'The Social life of things', "we have to follow the things themselves, for their meanings are transcribed in their forms, their uses, their trajectories."²⁰ – While Appadurai, sells this approach as a purely methodological one to better illuminate the human and social context, Badiou and Neruda's intervention lights up the purely 'methodological' approach as the only true approach – illuminating contexts of worlds animated by eventual truths.

Chapter five onwards the thesis reaches the periphery of deep Badiouan territory and continues onwards. It formally establishes the idea of 'appearing' under the influence of the 'phenomenal component', via the analysis of Neruda's poem, 'El hombre invisible'. Within the poem, the poet exists in different worlds or contexts and establishes the true measure of his identity under the influence of the 'phenomenal component' or the criteria under which the elements of a set are 'counted as one'. The discourse of existence under the 'phenomenal component' effectively fills in the gap between 'being' and 'appearing' and enables one to suture different worlds according to the relations between their components. Thus having formally established the structure of worlds as a transcendental set, the thesis deals with the question of 'change' in the subsequent chapters.

Chapters six, seven and eight are explorations within the core of Badiou's new mathematical methodology via the operations of Topology and Category theory. It establishes the formal procedure of 'change' in a Badiouan world and identifies a similar grammar of 'change' in the Nerudian – through the extraordinarily fragile and contingent process of 'Truth' production through various stages. First – a meaningful concentration of significations generating points

18. For a better appreciation of the foundation of sets according to the von Neumann hierarchy, see <https://platonicealms.com/encyclopedia/Von-Neumann-Hierarchy>

19. Appadurai Arjun, "The Thing Itself", *Public Culture*, 18:1, Duke University press, 2006.

20. Appadurai Arjun, *The Social life of things*, Cambridge University press, 1986

of torsion in a given world, second – the occurrence of an event – and thirdly – the choice that is made/or the ‘Truth’ that is generated via objects that have been subjectivised – and fourthly – their commitment to the ‘Truth’ so it remains eternal and universal.

Methodology

This thesis is a purely theoretical/mathematical intervention, hence progresses mainly via 1) a thorough and rigorous reading, analysis and application of related texts – which includes not just the extensive work done by Alain Badiou and Pablo Neruda, but also related philosophers of phenomenology and 2) by creating mathematical proofs at each stage to establish homeomorphisms between the Nerudian and Badiouan universes.

Thesis *al alimón*

At the end of the entire exercise, the thesis seeks to somewhat concretize the three nodal philosophical concepts of Being, Subject and Truth in the works of Pablo Neruda and Alain Badiou and gets both the poet and the philosopher to testify for each other. It has perhaps recreated the form of the talk which Neruda and Federico Garcia Lorca had given together at the Plaza hotel in Buenos Aires in 1933,

*“We had prepared a talk al alimón. You probably don't know what that means, and neither did I. Federico, who always had some invention or idea up his sleeve, explained two bull fighters can fight the same bull at the same time using only one cape between them. This is one of the most perilous feats in bullfighting. That's why it is so seldom seen. Not more than twice or three times in a century, and it can be done only by two bull fighters who are brothers, or at least blood relations. This is called fighting a bull al alimón. And that's the way we will do our talk.”*²¹

Neruda and Badiou in this thesis fought the philosophical bull together as brothers. Now Neruda no longer remains just the surrealist or the political poet and Badiou is no longer the propagandist/reductionist mathematical philosopher. Neruda is now, also the philosopher of ontology and Badiou is perhaps the poet who could read the golden numbers of the eyes of the Nerudian cat.²²

21. Neruda Pablo, *Memoirs*, Trans. by Hardie St Martin, Rupa & Co, 2005

22. See these lines: *I don't know who the cat is./ Everything else I know, life/ and its archipelago,/ the sea and the incalculable city,/ botany/ the pistil with its deviations,/ the plus and the minus of mathematics,/ the volcanic funnels of the world,/ the unreal husk of the crocodile,/ the hidden kindness of the fireman,/ the blue atavism of the priest/ but I can't decipher a cat./ My mind slides in his indifference,/ in the golden numbers of his eyes.* Neruda Pablo, “Oda al Gato”, *Full Woman, Fleshly Apple, Hot Moon*, Trans. by Stephen Mitchell, Harper Perennial, 2009, Pg 191

CHAPTER 1

SEVEN PROOFS

Oh! To speak the language of proofs...to be able to exhaustively deduce something that can be called a truth and to construct the most rigorous argumentative framework to support it...that might be every philosopher's dream, but is often a privilege enjoyed only by mathematicians or a select few who have been able to appropriate the mathematical language and concepts adequately enough to infuse their philosophical ideas with the power to capture within its steel grasps, even the gossamer threads of poetry. Alain Badiou, the contemporary French philosopher and author of two philosophical magnum opuses, *Being and Event* and *Logics of Worlds* is one of them. His radical ideas of the 'object', the 'world' it is contained in, the occurrence of an 'event' in the world, and the eventual production of the 'truth' as the consequence of the event – all of which form the substantial basis of his second book, *Logics of Worlds* is also the theoretical underpinning of this object-oriented line of inquiry into the poetry of Pablo Neruda. One might be tempted to call this thesis "Neruda through the Badiouan lens" or use some similar trope; however, the potential of Badiou's language is so powerfully universal, just as mathematics is, it would be better to hunt for a more generic title, something on the lines of 'An algebraic reconstruction of the poetry of Pablo Neruda' or 'The Nerudian objects as an abelian group²³' or 'The poetry of Pablo Neruda as a topological space²⁴, or very simply, 'The truth of Pablo Neruda's poetry'. One could defer titling the thesis until the last, and can at least hope that the overly ambitious last proposition for the title, remains in the reckoning till then.

Why Badiou? - I

Before one can rigorously map a formal theory, analysing Neruda's work using Badiou's tools, two proofs should be enough to tell us we are on the right track. To follow and understand these proofs, one merely needs an intuitive understanding of a structure containing certain objects/elements which are related to each other. In a Badiouan context, we can denote these structures as 'Badiouan categories', which would be a collection of Badiouan objects with certain relations or 'morphisms' between them, which can be represented by arrows.

Proof 1 using Badiouan category B_1

The first Badiouan category defines a world which is composed of Objects (O), its object elements (o), their atoms(a). Once an event (E) takes place in a world, it leads to local rearrangement of the elements (we can denote this morphism as R) which leads to the formation

23. Abelian Group - An abelian group is a set, A, together with an operation \bullet that combines any two elements a and b to form another element denoted $a \bullet b$. The symbol \bullet is a general placeholder for a concretely given operation. To qualify as an abelian group, the set and operation, (A, \bullet), must satisfy five requirements known as the abelian group axioms.

24. Topological space - a topological space may be defined as a set of points, along with a set of neighbourhoods for each point, satisfying a set of axioms relating to points and neighbourhoods

of a new object (N). The relations between objects in this category could be represented by arrows.

Hence we could denote B_1 as $(O, o, a, E \xrightarrow{R} N)$

Let us now analyse a passage from Neruda's memoirs to look for structural similarities with the Badiouan category B_1 . Perhaps the most poignant passage in all of Neruda's Memoirs is the one in which he describes his final separation from Josie Bliss. His Burmese lover Josie Bliss, who he had abandoned in Rangoon, had followed him all the way to Colombo armed with a sack of rice, the couple's favourite Paul Robeson records and a rolled-up mat. But the poet still wouldn't let her into his house. After spending days camped at his front door she finally gave up and was ready to leave and Neruda recalls that time in his Memoirs,

"She begged me to go with her to the ship. When it was time to weigh anchor and I had to go ashore, she wrenched away from the passengers around her, and seized by a gust of grief and love, she covered my face with kisses and bathed me with tears. She kissed my arms, my suit in a kind of ritual, and suddenly slipped down to my shoes, before I could stop her. When she stood up again, the chalk polish of my white shoes was smeared like flour all over her face. I couldn't ask her to give up her trip, to leave the ship with me instead of going away forever. My better judgement prevented me from doing that, but my heart received a great scar which is still a part of me. That unrestrained grief, those terrible tears rolling down her chalky face, are still fresh in my memory."²⁵ (Memoirs, Pg 96)

Let us now try to deconstruct the Nerudian passage.

World(m') – Neruda abandoning his lover Josie Bliss and taking the ship at the port

Object(O') – Neruda's feet clad in Canvas shoes polished with chalk, Josie's face

Set of Object elements (o') – (Shoe, Feet, etc)

Set of Atomic elements (a') – (canvas, shoe laces, chalk paint invisibly layered on the canvas, five toes of the feet comfortably sutured to shoes from the inside...)

Event – (E') – Josie Bliss suddenly falls on Neruda's feet to cry. Her tears smear his shoe and she gets up

Rearrangement – (R') – Neruda's toes now curl up inside the shoe, to disengage. The chalk paint leaves the surface of the shoe and smears itself on Josie's face.

New Object – (N') – Josie's face smeared with chalk, which is now an eternal scarring memory for the poet; a truth, symbolizing his deep guilt, that stays with him forever.

Hence now we have, a similar structure or category. We can call it N_1 and denote it as $(O', o', a', E' \xrightarrow{R'} N')$

25. Neruda Pablo, *Memoirs*, Trans. by Hardie St Martin, Rupa & Co, 2005

With the above exposition we can say that a Nerudian world is an example of a Badiouan category. Without going into the formal construction of each element at this stage, the proof seems elegant enough to continue to proceed.

Proof 2, using Badiouan category B_2

Another intuitive example could be Neruda's poem, 'Oda al traje'²⁶ (*Full Woman, Fleshly Apple, Hot Moon*, Pg 57) or 'Ode to My Suit', which again demonstrates Badiou's theory of the 'body'. Again at this stage, just a conceptual definition should suffice. "The materiality of a subject of truth – a body – is what polarizes the objects of a world according to the generic destiny of a truth."²⁷ Or in other words, it is ultimately the "body", that is forged out of the object elements of a world, through which truth is created, it is the body which treats the decisive "points" of a world.

In this Badiouan world, there are atoms(a) which belong to object elements(o). An event (E) takes place, which leads to a rearrangement of the object elements (R), forging them into a new subjectivizable coherent body (C) which goes on to create the truths (N).

Hence we could denote B_2 as $(o, a, E \xrightarrow{R} C \Rightarrow N)$

Now let us look at some stanzas of the poem –

*Every morning you wait
On a chair, suit,
For my vanity, my love,
My hope, my body
To fill you.
I have hardly emerged from sleep,
I leave the water,*

Thus - the Nerudian world is – 'Every morning when the poet gets ready for the day'

The object elements (o') – the set comprising the body of the poet whose atoms (a') are parts of his physical body – his hands, legs, elbows etc and his spirit – his vanity, love, hope..., the set comprising the suit – its sleeves, legs etc, the chair on which the suit waits, the water from which the poet just emerges after taking a bath etc.

*I leave the water
I enter your sleeves,
My legs search for the hollow of your legs
And thus embraced by your untiring loyalty
I go out to walk the pasture*

The event (E') – The poet puts on the suit

26. Neruda Pablo, "Oda al Traje", *Full Woman, Fleshly Apple, Hot Moon*, Trans. by Stephen Mitchell, Harper Perennial, 2009, Pg 57

27. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. By Toscano Alberto, Bloomsbury, 2013, Pg 453

*And thus,
 Suit,
 I also keep shaping you,
 Pushing out your elbows,
 Tearing your threads,
 And thus your life grows in the image of my life
 You flap and rustle in the wind,
 as if you were my soul
 at bad moments
 you cling
 to my bones*

Rearrangement (R') – The poet's body is now sutured to the body of the suit, shaping each other, pushing out elbows, tearing threads, flapping and rustling together in the wind...

*I ask
 Whether someday
 A bullet
 From the enemy
 Will stain you with my blood
 And then
 You will die with me
 Or perhaps
 It may not be so dramatic
 But simple,
 And you will gradually get sick,
 Suit,
 With me,
 You will grow old
 With me, with my body,
 And together
 We will enter the earth.
 That's why
 Every day
 I greet you
 With reverence and then
 You embrace me and I forget you, Because we are one
 And we will go on facing
 The wind, at night,
 The streets or the struggle,
 One body,
 Perhaps, perhaps motionless someday.*

Formation of the body(C') – The poet's body in his suit is now a new body, which creates all the truths of his life (N').

Once again, we can denote the Nerudian category N_2 as $(o', a', E' \xrightarrow{R'} C' \rightarrow N')$ and can propose that N_2 is an example of Badiouan category B_2 .

Unlike the first passage from the *Memoirs*, which required some amount of deduction, this poem especially, holds extreme affinity to Badiou's own language and without the need for taking complicated detours, one is able to perfectly lay this poem onto Badiou's prose, without a single crease or overlaps, and it is the hypothesis of this research from here on, that Neruda's treatment of objects is absolutely akin to Badiou's and in the end both bodies of work point to certain universal and eternal "truths". And to prove this hypothesis, one would rigorously reconstruct the entire 'Transcendental Algebra' of Badiou, to filter Neruda's body of work in order to finally arrive at a Boolean algebraic logic²⁸ of true and false.

Why Badiou? – II

The Age of Poets

The *Prohodna* is a *karst* cave in Bulgaria, well known for its interesting anatomy. It has two eye shaped holes on its ceiling which illuminates its interior, bathing it in pools of light. These eyes are popularly referred to as "the eyes of God" or *Oknata*. In a 1988 Bulgarian film directed by Ludmil Staikov, called 'Time of Violence', a scene depicts a priest named Aligorko sitting under these eyes to pray. It is a powerful image, framed by the eyes, potent with the expectation of an imminent revelation. The cave also boasts of two entrances – one big and one small. So, let us also dig another hole into the Nerudian *Prohodna*, open another Badiouan eye into Neruda to reinforce and complete the frame. To establish the *Prohodna* metaphor will be useful here, in order to bring in some other important texts of Badiou, apart from *Logics of the world*, which cannot be overlooked, especially in the context of poetry.

In his essay, 'The Age of Poets'²⁹, Badiou writes, "The age of the poets is a philosophical category. It organizes a particular way of conceiving the knot tying the poem to philosophy, which is such that this knot becomes visible from the point of view of philosophy itself." He adds, "I call 'age of the poets' the moment proper to the history of philosophy in which the latter is sutured – that is to say, delegated or subjected to a single one of its conditions – in a situation in which philosophy is sutured either onto science or onto politics, certain poets or rather certain poems, come to occupy the place where ordinarily the properly philosophical strategies of thought are declared." The idea is then to prove that Neruda belonged to this 'age of poets' as defined by Badiou. Badiou identifies several 'operations' which should be active in the poems of 'the age'. He specifies three of them in the essay in question.

- 1) Counter-romanticism, 2) Detotalization and 3) the Diagonal.

1) **Counter-romanticism** – Without treating the idea of 'romanticism' here as a historical or a literary category (which is anyways beyond the scope and against the methodology of this study), we shall go ahead with this exposition. By 'counter-romanticism', what Badiou means here, is merely a subtraction of the poem from the power or allure of its "dream", which in other words would mean the relegation of the poem from a space of pure emotion and passion

28. Boolean Algebra - In mathematics and mathematical logic, Boolean algebra is the branch of algebra in which the values of the variables are the truth values true and false, usually denoted as 1 and 0 respectively. The distinguishing factor of Boolean Algebra is that it only deals with the study of binary variables and utilizes conjunction, disjunction and negation as its primary operations instead of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. Thus instead of numerical operations, logical operations decide the progression of an algebraic equation.

29. Badiou Alain, *The Age of the Poets: And other writings on poetry and prose*, Trans. by Bruno Bosteels, Verso, 2014, Pg 4

to a place of cold un-sentimentality, devoted only to a ‘concept’, or ‘thought’. The idea or method of the “Poem qua poem”. Here, he quotes Mallarmè as such – “poetry is the place..”

*where the true poet’s broad and humble gesture must
keep them from dreams, those enemies of his trust”
(‘Funerary Toast’)³⁰*

and Rimbaud as such,

*Ah! Dreaming is shameful
Since it is pure loss!
(‘Comedy of thirst’-Rimbaud)³¹*

In many such instances Badiou cites the recurring image of the Earth as that image which one arrives at after the subtraction of the ‘image’.

If I have any taste, it is for hardly

(‘Alchemy of the Word’ – Rimbaud)³²
or

*Air kneaded thick as earth-
you can’t leave it, and its hard to get in
(‘Whoever finds a horseshoe’ – Mandelshtam)³³*

Proof 3, using Badiouan operation of Counter Romanticism or BO₁

If we consider the Badiouan Operation (BO₁) of Counter Romanticism as an operation, which when acts on a specific group of poetic elements (composites of objects and their dreams (x_c)), it subtracts the ‘dream element’(x_d) from its composite, and leaves the remainder as an image, devoid of it’s dream element, often metaphorized by the image of the ground or the earth (x_c – x_d = x_{ie}), we can formalize it as,

[For x_c ∈ (P), BO₁(x_c) = x_c – x_d then BO₁(x_c) = x_{ie}] (Since x_c – x_d = x_{ie})

P – set of objects/elements (x) inside the poem
x_c – The composite object with the dream element
x_d – The isolated dream element
x_{ie} – The image of the earth, devoid of romanticized nostalgia
(-) – the subtraction operation

30. Mallarmè Stéphane, “Funerary Toast”, *Collected poems and other verse*, , Trans. E.H. & A.M. Blackmore, Oxford University Press, 2006

31. Rimbaud, Jean Nicholas Arthur, “Comedy of Thirst”, *Complete Works, Selected Letters*, Trans. By Wallace Fowlie, University of Chicago Press, 2005

32. Rimbaud, Jean Nicholas Arthur, “Alchemy of the word”, *Complete Works, Selected Letters*, University of Chicago Press, 2005

33. Mandelshtam Osip, “Whoever finds a horseshoe”, *Selected Poems*, Penguin Twentieth Century Classics, 1991

At this juncture one can look at some of the poems of Neruda, whilst imposing an extra restraint – since this study has been set as an object-oriented inquiry, one shall try as much as possible to build the narrative and the proofs around ‘objects’ (at this stage, an intuitive understanding of the ‘object’ should suffice, till we formally define it at a later stage). Once again, we look at the foot and the shoe in the poem – ‘To the foot from its child’³⁴

*The child’s foot doesn’t know yet that it’s a foot,
And wants to be a butterfly or an apple.*

*But then stones and pieces of glass,
Streets, ladders,
And the paths of the hard earth
Go on teaching the foot that it can’t fly,
That it can’t be a round fruit on a branch.
The child’s foot then
Was overcome, it fell
In the battle,
Was a prisoner
Condemned to live in a shoe...*

*...this foot labored with its shoe,
it hardly took time
to be naked in love or in sleep,
it walked, they walked
until the whole man stopped.*

*And then it went down
Into the earth and knew nothing,
Because there everything was dark,
It didn’t know it had ceased being a foot,
If they had buried it so that it could fly
Or so that it could become an apple*

Here, P = The poem, ‘To the foot from its child’

x_c = The foot of the child along with its desire to be a butterfly or an apple

x_d = The desire to become an apple/butterfly or to fly etc

x_{I_e} = The image of the earth in lines – (stones and pieces of glass, streets, ladders, and the paths of the hard earth go on teaching the foot that it can’t fly, or and then it went down into the earth and knew nothing, because there everything was dark...or so that it could become an apple)

The lines of the poem are self-evident and do not need complicated deductions to carry out the B_3 operation or function – the foot of the child combined with the dream of being an apple or a bird (x_c) undergoes the effect of the operation of counter-romanticism (BO_1). It grows up to walk the hard stone and concrete of the earth, as the prisoner of its shoe, its dream marred and dragged through mines, fields, department stores and ministries ($x_c - x_d$) and in the end, devoid and subtracted from its dream, what remains of the foot is its image, still trapped in a shoe, dead inside the dark confines of a merciless earth ($x_c = x_{I_e}$).

34. Neruda Pablo, “To the foot from its child”, *Full Woman, Fleshly Apple, Hot Moon*, Trans. Stephen Mitchell, Harper Perennial, 2009, Pg 163

However, lest one imagines the poetry of ‘the age’ to be a negative or nihilistic enterprise, one more proof is essential here to show it as Badiou’s, “the affirmative interruption, of the dream”

Let us look at the poem, ‘Ode to the Book’ (I)³⁵

*Book, when I close you
I open life.
I hear
Half-severed shouts
In the harbors...*

*...Book, let me go.
I don’t want to walk dressed
In a volume,
I don’t come from a tome,
My poems haven’t eaten poems,
They devour
Passionate events,
They are nourished on the outdoors,
They extract food
From the earth and men,
Book, let me walk on the roads
with dust in my shoes
and without mythology:
return to your library,
I’m going out into the streets.*

Here, P = The poem, Ode to the book (I)

x_c = the composite of the poet/man/woman trapped inside the pages of the book

x_d = the book, now having freed the poet, returned to its library

x_{le} = the image of the earth in the lines – (my poems are nourished on the outdoors, they extract food from the earth, let me walk on the roads with dust in my shoes...I’m going out into the streets)

Here too, we have a simple and elegant proof of the active Badiouan operation BO₁, within the group of elements inside Neruda’s poetry.

2) Detotalization – “The poets of the age of the poets think Detotalization, the separate, irreconcilable multiplicity. They impose on themselves the rule of a principle of inconsistency.”³⁶ He provides this line from Celan as the maxim for this operation –

35. Neruda Pablo, “Ode to the Book (I)”, *Full Woman, Fleshly Apple, Hot Moon*, Trans. Stephen Mitchell, Harper Perennial, 2009, Pg 25

36. Badiou Alain, *The Age of the Poets: And other writings on poetry and prose*, Trans. by Bruno Bosteels, Verso, 2014, Pg 14

*Lean yourself
On the inconsistencies*³⁷

Proof 4, Badiouan operation of Detotalization or BO₂

Let us then formalize the fourth Badiouan function/operation, which is ‘Detotalization’ and try to establish it in one of Neruda’s poems.

[For $x_u \in P$, $BO_2(x_u) = x_{(d)}$]... (this operation can take place only in one direction) where

P – set of elements/objects belonging to the poem

x_u – A previously established unity (by time, geography, established meaning etc.)

$x_{(d)}$ - inconsistent multiplicities, parts of previously united objects, now irreconcilable into the whole in the previous manner

The poem – ‘Too many names’³⁸

*Monday is tangled up with Tuesday
And the week with the year:
Time can't be cut
With your tired scissors,
And all the names of the day
Are rubbed out by the water of the night.*

*No one can be named Pedro,
No one is Rosa or Maria,
All of us are dust or sand,
All of us are rain in the rain...*

*...When I sleep all these nights,
What am I named or not named?
And when I wake up who am I?
If I wasn't I when I slept?*

*...I intend to confuse things,
to unite them, make them new-born,
intermingle them, undress them,
until the light of the world
has the unity of the ocean,
a generous wholeness,
a fragrance alive and crackling.*

Here, P – The Poem – (Too many names)

x_u – previously united elements – the week, the year, Rosa, Pedro, Maria, light of the world etc

37. Celan Paul, *Selected Poems and Prose*, Trans. by John Felstiner, W.W. Norton, 2001, Pg 34

38. Neruda Pablo, “Too many names”, *Full Woman, Fleshly Apple, Hot Moon*, Trans. By Stephen Mitchell, Harper Perennial, 2009, Pg 171

$x_{(d)}$...- disintegrated, reconstructed, inconsistent multiplicities – (Monday is tangled up with Tuesday, week with the year, particles of dust, drops of rain, unity of the ocean, generous wholeness)

Even if the poem closes with words like ‘unity’ and ‘wholeness’, it’s evident that the Detotalization operation has already worked here, as the poet arrives to the end, via operations of “confusing”, “intermingling”, “making things newly-born”...The established order of the world is being thrown once again into a primordial chaos.

3) The Diagonal – It can be looked at as the completion of the Detotalization operation, where newly acquired significations cut diagonals through previously established symbols, meanings and classifications. “That there could be a light without light, or that one could navigate without ever having left: such are the acts by which the poem, naming a disappearance, suspends the game of sense and makes a diagonal of being and its annulment. The poetic diagonal declares that a faithful thought, thus capable of truth, makes a hole in whatever knowledge is concentrated in significations. It cuts the threads, for another circulation of the current of thought”.³⁹

Proof 5, using Badiouan operation of the Diagonal or BO_3

One can formalize the diagonal operation as:

Let X be the set of all the elements of a poem.

And P be the power set of X . Hence, $P(X)$ is the set of all possible subsets of the elements of X . Let X_C be the subset containing “concentrated significations” and X_ε be the subset of the lost or disappeared elements. Once a diagonal cuts through them, i.e - $X_\varepsilon \setminus X_C$, the vanished elements appear once again as themselves, separated from their previous concentration, through the very act of their disappearance (the diagonal), to circulate independently within the new premise of $X_\varepsilon \setminus X_C$.

Hence, $x \in P(X)$, $X_\varepsilon, X_C \subseteq P(X)$, $BO_3(x) = X_\varepsilon \setminus X_C = \{x \in X_\varepsilon \mid x \notin X_C\}$

(To be read as ‘ X_ε and X_C are both subsets of $P(X)$, and the relative complement of X_C in X_ε is the subset of all the elements that belong to X_ε which are not in X_C .)⁴⁰

Let us look at some of the verses from the poem – ‘Ode to an Aged Poet’⁴¹

*Never had the ancient
Bard
Captured*

39. Badiou Alain, *The Age of the Poets : And Other Writings on Twentieth-Century Poetry and Prose*, Trans. By Bruno Bosteels, Verso, 2014, Pg 16

40. Relative Complement of a set: When all sets under consideration are considered to be subsets of a given set U , the absolute complement of A is the set of elements in U but not in A . The relative complement of A with respect to a set B , also termed the difference of sets A and B , written $B \setminus A$, is the set of elements in B but not in A .

41. Neruda Pablo, “Ode to An Aged Poet”, *All the Odes*, Ed. by Ilan Stavans, Farrar, Strauss and Giroux 2013, Pg 21

*With pen and unyielding paper
 The overflowing river
 Of life
 Or the unidentified god
 That flirted with his verse,
 And now,
 On his cheeks,
 All that
 Mystery
 Coldly drafted
 the algebra
 of its revelations ...
 and the humble,
 unchanging
 things
 he had scorned
 imprinted on his brow
 their most profound pages,
 and
 even
 on his
 nose
 thin
 as the beak of the errant cormorant
 voyages and waves
 had sketched
 their ultramarine scrawl.
 Two unfriendly pebbles,
 Two ocean agates
 In that combat,
 Were his eyes,
 And only through them
 Did I see the extinguished
 Fire,
 A rose
 In the poet's hands...*

Here $P(X)$ - Set of all the subsets of the poem 'Ode to an aged poet'

X_C - cheeks, brow, nose, eyes, hands...

X_ε - Overflowing river of life, unidentified god that flirted with his verse, on his cheeks -coldly drafted the algebra of its revelations, and the humble, unchanging things he had scorned, imprinted on his brow their most profound pages, and even on his nose thin as the beak of the errant cormorant, voyages and waves had sketched their ultramarine scrawl, two unfriendly pebbles, two ocean agates, in that combat, were his eyes, and only through them did I see the extinguished fire, a rose in the poet's hands...

$X_\varepsilon \setminus X_C$ - Overflowing river of life, unidentified god that flirted with his verse, algebra of its revelations, most profound imprints of humble unchanging things, ultramarine scrawl of voyages and waves, extinguished fire, a rose.

Why Badiou - III

What does the poem think?

In another text on poetry, titled ‘What does the poem think?’ Badiou identifies two more features of the poetic thought -1) its encounter as an event (again, at this stage, the understanding of an event must be intuitive, before we formalize it - as something which happens without being predetermined) and 2) its capacity for de-objectification, carried out by three operations –a) of subtraction, b) of silence and c) of dissemination.

1) Encounter with poetry as an event – “The poem awaits us without anxiety, in the abruptness of its closed manifestation, as a fan that only our gaze unfolds...It is always an ‘ingenious deceit’ that links us to the encounter of the poem, for no sooner have we encountered and unfolded it then we act as if it had been forever destined for us”⁴². In similar vein, Neruda writes about the encounter with the poem, in the last chapter of his *Memoirs*, ‘Poetry Is an Occupation’, while lamenting the kind of poetry which had “lost its ties with the reader” – the phenomenon where one poet was publishing only for another poet and their poetry was trapped in a closed stagnant circulation within carefully cultivated readers, who were familiar with the slightest of movements within each other’s forms, poetry confined to the circles of literary criticism. Neruda writes about the ‘encounter’ as such, “*Poetry has to walk in the darkness and encounter the heart of man, the eyes of woman, the strangers in the streets, those who at twilight or in the middle of the starry night feel the need for at least one line of poetry...This visit to the unexpected is worth all the distance covered, everything read, everything learned... We have to disappear in the midst of those we don’t know, so they will suddenly pick up something of ours from the street, from the sand, from the leaves that have fallen for a thousand years in the same forest...and will take up gently the object we made...only then will we truly be poets...In that object, poetry will live...*”⁴³

Proof 6 via SSS – congruency⁴⁴

If we consider the poetic encounter as an event depicted by three co-ordinates in the respective space-time graphs of the Badiouan and Nerudian worlds, joining them would give us two triangular categories with similar relations or morphisms between them.

In Badiou – “the encounter of the poem” corresponds to “Poetry has to walk in the darkness and encounter the heart of man, the eyes of woman, the strangers in the streets” in Neruda

42. Badiou Alain, ‘What does the poem think’, *The Age of the Poets : And Other Writings on Twentieth-Century Poetry and Prose*, Trans. By Bosteels Bruno, Verso, 2014, Pg 24

43. Neruda Pablo, *Memoirs*, Trans. by Hardie St Martin, Rupa & Co, 2005, Pg 260

44. SSS congruency - Side-Side-Side is a rule used to prove whether a given set of triangles are congruent. The SSS rule states that: If three sides of one triangle are equal to three sides of another triangle, then the triangles are congruent, and if two shapes are congruent, they are identical in both shape and size.

In Badiou – “the poetry awaits us without anxiety” corresponds to “from the sand, from the leaves that have fallen for a thousand years” in Neruda.

In Badiou – “encountered and unfolded it then we act as if it had been forever destined for us” corresponds to “those who at twilight or in the middle of the starry night feel the need for at least one line of poetry” in Neruda.

Since the vertices of these triangles entertain similar relations between them, we can lay one on top of the other without any overlap. Thus we can say that the Nerudian triangle is congruent to the Badiouan triangle of the poetic encounter via SSS congruency.

2) Deobjectification – This is the most crucial operation which would perhaps occupy a major portion of this study as we proceed and build the entire edifice of the object with the tools from *Logics of the World*. As of now, one would look at its reference in the specific text on poetry. “What is an object? It is what disposes the multiple of being in relation to meaning or signification. The age of the poet animates a polemic against meaning, thus targeting objectivity, which is ‘being’ as captive of meaning, and proposing to us the figure without figure, or the unfigurable figure, of a subject without object.”⁴⁵ The idea which Badiou proposes here, in simple terms is to destroy that image which conjures itself the moment we hear a name and replace it - first with a blank, a void or a silence and then to slowly fill it with an infinity or excess of metaphors via the operations of subtraction and dissemination.

Proof 7, using Badiouan operation of Deobjectification or BO₄

If we were to formalize the operation in this way –

[For $x_0 \in P$, $BO_4(x_0) = x_0 - x_0 = \phi$

And

$BO_4(\phi) = \{\phi, \{\phi\}, \{\phi, \{\phi\}\} \dots \}$

P = set of elements present in the Poetry

x_0 – object

ϕ - void

$\{\phi, \{\phi\}, \{\phi, \{\phi\}\} \dots$ - unlimited production of new multiples, all drawn from the void.⁴⁶

45. Badiou Alain, *The Age of the Poets : And Other Writings on Twentieth-Century Poetry and Prose*, Trans. By Bruno Bosteels, Verso, 2014, Pg 31

46. One of the axioms of set theory demonstrates that all sets are derived from the empty set ϕ . Peter Hallward, in his book, ‘Badiou, A subject to Truth’, uses the following metaphor by John Crossley to simplify and illustrate this possibility – “Imagine numbers as lines or queues of other numbers, each of whose final member is obligingly identified as the sum total of all preceding numbers in the queue: should we then want to compare our numerical queues, we need only read off the number identifying the final member in each queue. An empty queue, a queue with no members at all, corresponds to zero: zero is defined as having no numerical predecessors. Since such an empty queue does not properly “exist” at all (an empty queue is surely a contradiction in terms!), we simply have to posit its existence. Call it \emptyset . The number that now comes after zero, the number 1, corresponds to the queue that has precisely \emptyset as its single element, that is the set $\{\emptyset\}$. The next largest number is defined as the queue of these two predecessors $\{\emptyset, \{\emptyset\}\}$, and so

Now let us look at this poem – ‘Ode to the humming bird’⁴⁷

*To the flower sipper
Flying spark of water,
Incandescent drop
Of American
Fire...*

*...To the humming bird
An arc,
A golden thread
A blaze of green*

*O
tiny
Animated
lightning flash,
As
your structure
of pollen
hovers
in the air,
feather
of live coal,
I ask you,
What are you,
Where
is your origin?
Perhaps in the blind age of the flood,
In the mire
Of fertility,
When the rose
Congealed into a fist of coal
And metals signed up,
Each one in
Its secret cubicle,
Perhaps then
From the wounded*

on. Such is the sequence of what is known as “ordinal” numbers: first, second, third and so on. Since it quickly becomes very tedious to write our numerical queues out longhand in this way, we adopt the familiar shorthand,

- a. $0 = \emptyset$
- b. $1 = \{\emptyset\} = \{0\}$
- c. $2 = \{\emptyset, \{\emptyset\}\} = \{0, 1\}$
- d. $3 = \{\emptyset, \{\emptyset\}, \{\emptyset, \{\emptyset\}\}\} = \{0, 1, 2\} \dots$
- e. (Badiou, a Subject to Truth, Hallward Peter, University of Minnesota Press, 2003)

47. Neruda Pablo, “Ode to the Humming Bird”, *Full Woman, Fleshly Apple, Hot Moon*, Trans. By Stephen Mitchell, Harper Perennial, 2009, Pg 99

*Reptile
One fragment whirled out,
One atom
Of gold,
The final
Cosmic silver, one
Drop
Of earthly fire,
And it flew
dangling your beauty,
your iridescent and quick sapphire...*

*...You are seed
of the sun,
feathered
flame,
miniscule
streaming
banner,
petal of silenced races,
syllable of buried blood,
plume
of the ancient submerged heart.*

As breath taking the poem is in its sheer beauty, even more breath-taking is the proof of the operation of Deobjectification – there couldn't be a more exquisite and graceful dance of the mathemes⁴⁸ as displayed within the confines of the lines of this poem.

Here,

P = The poem, 'Ode to the Hummingbird'

X₀ – the hummingbird

x₀-x₀ = the lines, "I ask you, what are you? Where is your origin?"

φ - the lines, "*Perhaps in the blind age of the flood, In the mire of fertility, When the rose congealed into a fist of coal, and metals signed up, each one in its secret cubicle.*

{φ, {φ}, {φ, {φ}}} - *You are seed of the sun, feathered flame, miniscule streaming banner, petal of silenced races, syllable of buried blood, plume of the ancient submerged heart.*

Subtracted from itself, the hummingbird is reborn from the primordial darkness of coal and metal, to be disseminated like the seeds of the sun onto the world like an incandescent drop of water, like a blaze of green, like a golden thread, like wild pollen, like cosmic silver... The

48. Matheme - The term *mathème* is a neologism which Lacan derives from the word "mathematics, presumably by analogy with the term *mytheme* (a term coined by Claude Lévi-Strauss to denote the basic constituents of mythological systems). They are formulae, designed as symbolic representations of his ideas and analyses. They were intended to introduce some degree of technical rigour in philosophical and psychological writing, replacing the often hard-to-understand verbal descriptions with formulae resembling those used in the hard sciences, and as an easy way to hold, remember, and rehearse some of the core ideas of both Freud and Lacan. (Wikipedia – Matheme)

void presents itself physically as the silenced races, buried blood and the ancient submerged heart – the hummingbird rises from it as petal, syllable, plume...

Oh Badiou, isn't in Neruda, who sings your songs in the most mellifluous, powerful voice?

Thus, we have dug our second hole, the second eye into the Nerudian *Prohodna* through the last five proofs – each one effectively demonstrating the active presence of the Badiouan operations in some of the representative poems of Neruda.

So far, with the preceding seven proofs, we have created enough grounds of compatibility between the poet Pablo Neruda and the philosopher/ mathematician Alain Badiou to use the latter's tools to excavate further. Compatibility however, does not yet prove that Badiou is the key that would unlock the Nerudian secrets. Until now, these tools are simply the shovel, the hoe, the spade or the trowel that could help us dig trenches into the Nerudian soil. Let us now sharpen them.

CHAPTER 2

THE TOOLS

Up until now we have encountered certain terms and used an intuitive understanding of them to write these proofs and they are listed here, not necessarily, in the chronological manner of their appearance within the preceding text. One might encounter more as one proceeds.

- 1) World
- 2) Object and its atomic logic
- 3) Void
- 4) Event
- 5) Body

Badiou has formally defined each of these terms in his *Logics of the World*. However, for the purpose of this study, one would need to familiarize oneself with them to an extent that would allow us to use them as effectively as possible and that would require one to deconstruct them to their very grain and re-forge them, make them our very own. Each element on the above list will thus be re-generated, not necessarily in the order in which they are listed above, but in the 'logical' order, even if one might keep revisiting and refining each one of them in the course.

The elephant in this room/proposed study that hasn't yet been mentioned, but whose loud trumpets can be easily heard in the background, is the combined power of the mathematical practices of Abstract Algebra, Set theory and Topology, (which could all perhaps be roughly grouped under 'Discrete Mathematics'⁴⁹) which forms the backbone of much of Badiou's work and methodology, and which from hereon, will also underpin this study.

THE WORLD

As all-inclusive the intuitive connotation of the word might be, if we have been equating the world to a poem in the text above, it must be defined as something else then. But to fight the intuition of the image of a container or a receptacle that contains everything which has any meaning for us, we must logically prove its fallacy or inconsistency.

Let us suppose there is a container that contains everything. By that definition, it must contain itself. Let us suppose it does. Let this property be characterized as 'R' for reflexivity, and all the things in the world which share that property of containing itself be denoted as $R(x)$, (read as all x , with the predicate R). We know the world itself has that property...there could be other elements that also have that property, maybe a mathematical set of other mathematical sets is one such set or a basket that contains other baskets is another. However, most elements inside

49. Discrete Mathematics - Discrete mathematics is the study of mathematical structures that are fundamentally discrete rather than continuous. In contrast to real numbers that have the property of varying "smoothly", the objects studied in discrete mathematics – such as integers, graphs, and statements in logic – do not vary smoothly in this way, but have distinct, separated values. Discrete mathematics therefore excludes topics in "continuous mathematics" such as calculus and analysis. Discrete objects can often be enumerated by integers. More formally, discrete mathematics has been characterized as the branch of mathematics dealing with countable sets (sets that have the same cardinality as subsets of the natural numbers, including rational numbers but not real numbers). However, there is no exact definition of the term "discrete mathematics." Indeed, discrete mathematics is described less by what is included than by what is excluded: continuously varying quantities and related notions. (Wikipedia – Discrete Mathematics)

the world do not have this property – a basket of apples is not itself an apple, a house containing people is not people itself. Let us call this property NR for Non-reflexivity and denote all the elements having this property as $NR(x)$. Hence, we should be able to effectively divide the world into two kinds of elements – the $R(x)$ and the $NR(x)$. The partition that contains all the $R(x)$ is the container that contains all the containers that contain themselves and the partition that contains the $NR(x)$ is all the elements that do not contain themselves. Badiou chose to call this container as the ‘chimera’. An interesting choice of word which literally means an illusion characterized by an impossibility of existence. So this ‘chimera’, which we could denote by $C = \{x \mid NR(x)\}$ - to be read as the set of all x , such that x is non reflexive or does not contain itself. Now the question to be asked is, is C , as a member or element of the world - reflexive or non-reflexive? If it were to be non-reflexive then it should be a member or element of C , since C contains everything that is non-reflexive. But if C itself was a part of C , then, by definition it is reflexive. Hence there is a contradiction, an inconsistency. And the chimera cannot exist as such, and because it is derived from the notion of a world which contains everything including itself, the world as such, cannot exist.

In other words, there cannot be a set which contains all the sets, because then it should contain itself. But it is impossible to prove that because, in order to do so we are forced to use as proof, the same thing we are trying to prove. On the other hand, if we assume that the set does not contain itself, then we can prove it, but then there will be a component that will be left outside our system and our proof will be incomplete. So, if our system is proven, it remains incomplete, and if it is to be completed, it cannot be proven.

Most people can identify it as the famous ‘Russell’s paradox’, a beautiful acrobatics of thought, perceived by Bertrand Russell in the spring of 1901, while he was working on his *Principles of Mathematics*. Thinking about a “supposed class of all imaginable objects” he writes,

*“The comprehensive class we are considering, which is to embrace everything, must embrace itself as one of its members. In other words, if there is such a thing as “everything,” then, “everything” is something, and is a member of the class “everything.” But normally a class is not a member of itself. Mankind, for example, is not a man. Form now the assemblage of all classes which are not members of themselves. This is a class: is it a member of itself or not? If it is, it is one of those classes that are not members of themselves, i.e., it is not a member of itself. If it is not, it is not one of those classes that are not members of themselves, i.e. it is a member of itself. Thus of the two hypotheses – that it is, and that it is not, a member of itself – each implies its contradictory. This is a contradiction.”*⁵⁰

Hence, the idea of an all-encompassing world lies shattered. There is no ‘one’, only the ‘multiple’. The oneness is achieved only through the operation of ‘count as one’. One can count multiple apples that are green as belonging to one set, and that is the operation which allows us the idea of oneness here. Hence, the multiple of green apples along with the operation of counting them as one complete the notion of the ‘one’ or the ‘world’. In Badiou’s words, “In context of the operations of thought whereby the identity of a multiple is guaranteed on the basis of its relations with other multiples, we call ‘being’, the multiple thus identified, and ‘world’, relative to the operations in question, the multiple-place in which these operations operate. We will also say that the identified multiple is a being of the world”.⁵¹

50. Russell Bertrand, *The Principles of Mathematics*, Cambridge University Press, 1903

51. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. By Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury, 2013, Pg 307

So, by the above definition, a bowl containing fruits can be identified as a world with fruits that are related to each other, either entirely (an apple to another apple) or to some extent (an apple to an orange). Their identities to each other can be established by a singular or multiple operations relating them, their being available for consumption or their shared function of adding a dash of colour to the drab wooden bowl, establishes them as belonging to the bowl – or as a being of the world – bowl. One may ask, what about the apple still hanging from its bough, somewhere in the hills or an orchard? Does it belong to the same world, by the virtue of being an apple? The answer is no, because the identity of the apple is guaranteed in the fruit bowl, on the basis of its identity to the other fruits in the bowl, on all of whom, a similar operation of simultaneously being a fruit and being present in the bowl operates. They are all placed in a common ‘situation’. This situation is their world. Of course, the same apple could belong to another world, that of the apple tree, where it is related to other apples, by the operation of hanging from one particular tree or of hanging from a tree that belongs to a particular orchard. Hence the apple appears in different worlds, in different capacities, performing different functions, even if its ontology remains the same.

However, we need a deeper, more systematic understanding of this ‘world’, which, until now, is still an intuitive one, perhaps derived out of a sense of geography or other kinds of intuitive commonalities. From here on, a basic understanding of certain mathematical concepts, mainly from the domain of Set theory would help us solidify certain ideas. While we usually deal with ‘homogenous’ sets in Mathematics – ‘homogenous’ implying a well-defined criteria of putting together elements in a set or counting them as one. For example, the set of even numbers below 10 which is - {2,4,6,8}, is a homogenous set, whereas when we are dealing with abstract objects, these are usually ‘heterogeneous’ sets with an infinite number of criteria to count them as one. For example if one were to take a look around a living room consisting of a table, four chairs, a bowl of fruits sitting on the table, a television set etc., what criterion could be used to count the elements as one – everything contained within a room could form a world, everything on the table could form another, everything inside the fruit bowl could form one more, everything that was made of wood could be another. There can be infinite operations which would allow us to group together any random collection of elements, which could again be regrouped into multiple subsets within the larger set. And we are allowed to do so – to make a random selection of objects. But to prevent us from going into an infinite ascent (starting from the table to the room to the building to the city to the country....to the visible limits of universe...) or into an infinite descent – (till the atoms, nucleons, quarks and so on), we need localized operations – an operation which links that singular being to other beings, and bases its thinking according to that identity. “We call situation of being for a singular being, the world in which it inscribes a local procedure of access to its identity on the basis of other beings”⁵². This world can be as small or as large as we want it to be, based on the operation. And as such a singular or ‘counted as one’ ontological being appears in multiple worlds in multiple relations, and we can say, in context of a particular world, that this being is “more or less different from another being belonging to the same world”.

“It is therefore certain that the identity of a being grasped in the efficacy of its appearing includes something other than the ontological or mathematical construction of its multiple-being. But what? The answer is: a logic, through which every being finds itself constrained and deployed once it appears locally, and its being is accordingly affirmed as being-there.”⁵³

52. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. By Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury, 2013

53. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. By Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury, 2013, Pg 116

In set theoretical terms, this operational set which contains the various degrees of identities between the various elements contained in the set, is itself counted as an element of the group/set. Or as a subset of that set. This subset has been termed as the Transcendental set or 'T' by Badiou. So, the world of the fruit bowl consists of all the elements contained within the bowl, and a Transcendental set T which specifies the relations between each of these elements. Since relations are binary, i.e the result of identity between two elements, the elements of the subset 'T' are better described as degrees. Suppose the fruit bowl contains four fruits – two red apples, an orange and a mango then the identity relation between the two apples is a maximum degree, 'M', and the identity relation between the apple and the orange is an intermediate degree, say 'p' and the relation between the apple and the mango is also a 'p'. However, if suddenly a fly came and sat on a particular fruit, it's identity relations with the other elements of the bowl would be minimum or μ , which would indicate that it does not belong to the world, and so on. We can write that $\mu < p < M$. Hence the Transcendental Set T is endowed with a certain order. Thus the structure of the world – 'm' – might look like this {apple, orange, mango {T}}.

If we refer to some of the previous proofs, and look at the appearance of the 'shoe' in different situations – say in the one, where Neruda wears them while bidding goodbye to his Burmese lover, and the one in the poem 'To the foot from its child', where it appears as the prisoner of the foot. The shoe, thus appears in two different worlds, in different relations/operations with the elements of that world, performing different functions. This appearing in different worlds, Badiou asserts, is never chaotic – it follows a certain logic, a structure, which is developed in detail as the Transcendental Algebra, which has its direct mathematical correspondence in the abstract algebra of set theory. Once we develop all the tools to examine the appearance of different Nerudian objects in different worlds, the main object of this study would be to lay out enough empirical evidence, not just to be able to distil some universal logic of the Nerudian world but also derive an onto-logical basis of a poetic object.

This is still a very vague entry into a concept. But at this stage, it should suffice that one thinks of a world as something which has the power to localize its elements. Hence, each poem of Neruda can be considered as a world in itself or there can be multiple worlds within the poems.

Let us look at this poem: 'Ode to Salt'⁵⁴

*This salt
in the saltcellar
I once saw in the salt mines.
I know
you won't
believe me,
but
it sings,
salt sings, the skin
of the salt mines
sings
with a mouth smothered*

54. Neruda Pablo, "Ode to Salt", *Full Woman, Fleshly Apple, Hot Moon*, Trans. By Stephen Mitchell, Harper Perennial, 2009, Pg 149

*by the earth.
I shivered in those solitudes
when I heard
the voice of
the salt
in the desert.
Near Antofagasta
the nitrous
pampa
resounds:
a broken
voice,
a mournful
song.*

*In its caves
the salt moans, mountain
of buried light,
translucent cathedral,
crystal of the sea, oblivion
of the waves.*

*And then on every table
in the world,
salt,
we see your piquant
powder
sprinkling
vital light
upon
our food. Preserver
of the ancient
holds of ships,
discoverer
on
the high seas,
earliest
sailor
of the unknown, shifting
byways of the foam.
Dust of the sea, in you
the tongue receives a kiss
from ocean night:
taste imparts to every seasoned
dish your ocean essence;
the smallest,
miniature
wave from the saltcellar
reveals to us*

*more than domestic whiteness;
in it, we taste infinitude.*

In a single poem, one can identify three distinct worlds within which the salt makes its appearance – first, in the world of the salt mine, and then on a living room table, and then in the oceanic world. In each of the three worlds the salt is phenomenologically different, existing only in relation with the elements that co-belong with it to that world. In the salt mines, the salt appears in deep relationships with the earth and its own mournful song, which envelopes the desert and the mine and stabilizes this world. Here, the salt disseminates itself via its song. There is no place for the table or the ocean in this world. Similarly, in the world of the table, the salt appears as the envelope which imparts its taste and vitality to every dish on the table. There is no mournful song here, simply a dissemination of the salt via its taste. And in the oceanic world, it journeys with every wave, rising and falling, exploring and preserving, being one with the ocean, as part of the oceanic multiple.

For the sceptical reader, or for someone which includes me, who has never had to use set theory to solve any problem in the practical world, the concept of the transcendental set might still seem a little skewed or unnecessary at this stage. However, what can be distilled at this point from everything above without any doubts or ambiguity is that a being acts or behaves in different ways in different situations, sometimes in completely contradictory ways. So what does it say about its pure being or essence? If its appearing in a certain world is controlled by a logic - the logical, mathematically ordered regime of the transcendental- and its pure being is without such regime, then how does one go about treating the multiplicity of the being, when it itself can be rendered as a world or a situation? “The goal now is to understand how is it possible that any situation of being is both pure multiplicity on the border of inconsistency, and intrinsic, solid relation (liaison) of its appearing?”⁵⁵. This is a legitimate question, which immediately sends us in the search of a limit to our descent – to the non-decomposable or the properly ontological part of any multiple – the atomic element, which is the building block of this element/object/multiple being, built according to the logic of the particular world that object is inhabiting. Or in the context of the above poem – what is salt in its pure multiple being? “Transcendental algebra legislates over worldly differences; but it is not yet a question of the object or objectivity, for we still lack the means to account for the real of the One.”⁵⁶

THE OBJECT and its atomic logic

In the entire discourse till now, the subject has taken a backseat, every element, or every multiple that appears in a world has been treated with ontological equality – their logic of appearing, not being governed by the subjective limits of cognition or by the laws of epistemology, rather, a higher, more universal logic, the algebra of ‘being-there’ is at play. The subject comes only *after* the object has been presupposed, or has appeared. At this point, if we ask the critical questions, we set ourselves on the path of formulating a rigorous theory of the object, as Badiou does – “What is a being grasped in it’s being? A pure multiple. What is its (ontological) determination? It is the set of elements belonging to it”⁵⁷. Often ‘Being’ as a ‘pure multiple’ or Badiou’s equation of ontology with mathematics is interpreted as a form of being with no features whatsoever like a plain cardinal number – signifying only ‘being’ or quantity.

55. Hallward Peter, *Badiou, a Subject to Truth*, University of Minnesota Press, 2003

56. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. By Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury, 2013, Pg 194

57. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. By Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury, 2013, Pg 195

However, if we can strip the statement from its overly simplified, propagandist grandiloquence and slightly change the perspective to see mathematics itself in a different light, we will see that mathematics is a constantly dynamic and growing field of ideas which has way too many atoms or pure ontic beings, which it finds difficult to deal with, in their atomicity – a number is just one of them. Concepts like Cantorian Dust, Fractals, zero, Hilbert’s space filling curves – are inconsistent multiplicities which can only be dealt with, when they are in relation to existing concepts of logical consistency. In such a context, Badiou’s understanding of set theory is that, it is the only system which admits within its folds all possible forms of multiplicity (Badiou’s principle of maximality), even the ones which are inconsistent. Thus this ontological equality, needs to be understood only at the level of inconsistency. This inconsistency grasped at the level of logical consistency always leaves a remainder that does not consist – which illuminates the truth or inadequacy of the situation. Badiou’s turn to ‘axiomatics’ as a way to determine ontology, rather than ‘problematics’ was to introduce a structure, such that one can identify what is outside the structure. Hence Badiou’s struggles in *Being and Event* with the vagueness or inconsistency of ontology and the inadequacies of set theory, resulted in *Logics of Worlds*’ theory of points – animated by a completely new ontological category of the ‘object’ – which borrowed its mathematical concepts, abundantly from the mathematical branch of ‘Category theory’ which focusses on context, rather than content. By studying entities in relation to other entities present in the same context, a ‘category’ – becomes a radical new unit, consisting of an entity and its relation or morphism to another, present in the same context, or under the same ‘functor’. Thus, if *Being and Event* constructed the concept of sameness or universality in terms of inconsistent multiples, *Logics of Worlds* constructs the concept of difference in terms of intensities of existence of these multiplicities. “With the concept of difference, I can construct the concept of what is an ‘object’ in a world – and an ‘object’ is something other than what can be reduced to an element, because an object is defined by the complete system of its differences with the other elements of the specific world”⁵⁸

Hence, in order to understand this new category of the ‘Badiouan object’, it needs to be deconstructed into its components until we arrive at its indestructible or ‘atomic’ particle or in Badiou’s words, we must,

“a. identify, within appearing, what a component (in fact, a part) of the transcendental indexing of a being is;

b. identify the minimal form (which we will term atomic) of these components;

c. find (or posit) an intelligible intersection between an ‘atom of appearing’ and an ‘atom of being’, that is between a minimal component of what is given as localized in a world, and the elementary composition of the multiple-being which underlies this givenness.”⁵⁹

The statement ‘c’ is the most crucial one, which lays the foundation of an entirely new and radical ontology, forging a new foundation on the basis of an intelligent intersection of ‘being’ and ‘appearing’ - which Badiou terms as the ‘logical-materialist’ clause. The new object is now formed entirely of these new units, which are all intersections of being and appearing. This

58. Badiou Alain, Alain Badiou: Five Points, Final Speech’, Prague Axiomatic Circle, YouTube, Speech by Alain Badiou, 10 May, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iWws287P1OU> - V

59. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. By Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury, 2013, Pg 195

new theory has interesting and radical implications – the very idea of ‘being’ is now anointed with a transcendental edge, ‘appearing’ becomes ‘being’ – “appearing infects being to the extent being comes to take place in a world”.⁶⁰ Josie Bliss’s face smeared by the chalk is one such new object forged out of two ontologically disparate elements, now inseparable or indelible from the poet’s memory.

Before formalizing his theory of the object, Badiou gives a phenomenological demonstration by describing the world of ‘the slow constitution of a demonstration at the Place de la Republique’.⁶¹ By analysing each component of the demonstration according to the nature of their appearing in that world, he is able to regroup them or categorize them as objects. Hence instead of one particular individual anarchist being an object/element of the demonstration, the entire group of anarchists, functions as a single object, each individual linked by an unbreakable phenomenological bond. The ‘relationism’ which Badiou proposes is thus not between thought and its corresponding object, or scientific physical laws and the object, but a purely phenomenological one (which in itself is an intersection of scientific, cognitive and yet unknown laws), which allows it to enter so strongly into poetry, and give poetic objects a legitimacy they had never acquired outside of poetry.

At this point, let us take a look at Neruda’s poem, ‘Bestiary’.⁶² The very title suggests a world – a compendium of animals or beasts, indexed or localized within a book, according to what one knows about them. However, in its very beginning

*If only I could speak with birds
With oysters and with small lizards,
With the foxes of Selva Oscura,
With representative penguins,
If the sheep would listen to me,
the languorous, woolly dogs,
the huge carriage-horses, if only
I could talk things over with the cats,
If the chickens could understand me!*

the poem suggests an inaccessibility - from the point of view of the subject, which is trying to bring together these objects in a world. And even though these beasts are conjured through various perspectives – scientific, poetic, pragmatic etc.,

*The spiders have always been slandered
In the idiotic pages
Of exasperating simplifiers*

60. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. By Toscano Alberto, Bloomsbury, 2013, Pg 197

61. The Place de la Republique is a square in Paris named after the French Republic, which includes a statue of the personification of France, Marianne in its centre. Badiou analyses the slow constitution of a protest rally/demonstration in the square to exemplify his idea of transcendental indexing of a phenomenon. Although the account doesn’t deliberately specify, the exact nature or historical specificity of the demonstration in order to free its phenomenology from any historical temporality, it includes distinct groups taking part in the demonstration, such as – groups of high school students, group of anarchists, group of Kurds, group of postmen etc.

62. Neruda Pablo, “Bestiary”, *Full Woman, Fleshly Apple, Hot Moon*, Trans. by Stephen Mitchell, Harper Perennial, 2009, Pg 179

*Who take the fly's point of view,
Who describe them as devouring,
Carnal, unfaithful, lascivious.
For me, that reputation
Discredits just those who concocted it:
The spider is an engineer,
A divine maker of watches,
For one fly more or less
Let the imbeciles detest them,
I want to have a talk with the spider,
I want her to weave me a star.*

...these various appearings of the spider are not merely a function of different subjective perspectives, rather as the poem suggests in the end, they have their own autonomy which forces the poet to bow down before them and desperately search for new ways of communication, new signs and languages to get closer to their world - as it is -

*The serenade of the frog
Rises in my dream and excites it,
Rises like a climbing vine
To the balconies of my childhood,
To the building nipples of my cousin,
To the astronomic jasmine
Of the black night of the South,
And now so much time has passed,
Don't ask me about the sky:
I feel that I haven't yet learned
The harsh voiced idiom of the frogs.*

*If this is so, how am I a poet?
What do I know of the multiplied
geography of the night?*

*In this world that rushes and grows calm
I want more communications,
Other languages, other signs,
To be intimate with this world.*

and the only answer that comes through is that the truth will be localized – which in no way suggests that every perspective holds a truth within it – it does not make the fly's or the poet's point of view contain separate truths about the spider – it only beseeches the need for a new language – a more universal language which can speak to the spiders and the frogs alike, and then discern the truth. The mathematical schemata proposed by Badiou could be one...

Coming back to the formal definition of the object, within this schema, it goes something like this:

“Given a world, we call object of the world, the couple formed by a multiple and a transcendental indexing of this multiple, under the condition that all the atoms of appearing

whose referent is the multiple in question are its real atoms.”⁶³ And Badiou defines real atoms as such: “Given a multiple *A* which appears in a world, every element ‘*a*’ of *A* defines an atom of appearing, via the function of *A* to *T* (Transcendental of this multiple) defined above by the degree of identity of every element *x* of *A* to the singular element ‘*a*’. Such an atom will be said to be real.”⁶⁴

To phenomenologically demonstrate what the above two definitions mean, it simply means that every material component of a multiple describes a certain unique condition of being, and there can only be one such element – for e.g a red apple in a bowl is an atomic element and if other red apples look exactly similar – i.e they adhere to the same conditions as prescribed by the first red apple – then they are to be counted as one or they are considered equal. Conversely, every atom has a materialist postulate in the context of a world – if the postulate is ‘being red and round’ – the materialist postulate forces us to search for the atomic component – the red and round apple – it is the real element of the apparent multiplicity – ‘red’ and ‘round’.

Hence an object is the conceptual couple (a multiple and a transcendental indexing) and a materialist prescription of the ‘one’. Hence the idea of the object is a moveable one, since its not purely “substantial” as its transcendental indexing can differ not just in different worlds but also within the same world, but it isn’t also a purely virtual one – as all of its atoms are real. Hence this object comprised or composed of material components indexed differently at different times and different situations is an entirely new ontological category in itself – which contains the ‘being’ and ‘being there’ in equal measure.

Formally, the object is denoted as (A, Id) – where *Id* is the transcendental indexing of every atom of *A*, again denoted by *Id* (*a*, *x*) (degree of identity of any element *x* belonging to *A* to the element *a*, also belonging to *A*).

THE VOID

In pure set theoretical terms, every set has an empty set. To prove that, we show that for *B* to be a subset of *A*, all the elements of *B* should belong to *A*. Thus for the empty set to be a subset for set *A*, all of it’s elements should belong to set *A*. But the empty set has no elements, hence it can belong to any set. This is the kind of proof which is often called vacuous proof and it doesn’t sound like much to lean on. However, if we were to think of a set built extensionally⁶⁵, (and in set theory, all sets are considered extensional) – i.e there was no coherent condition to put elements together in that set – they are a random selection of elements – and then if one

63. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. By Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury, 2013, Pg 220

64. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. By Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury, 2013, Pg 218

65. A fundamental distinction about sets is intension vs. extension. The intension of a set is its description or defining properties, i.e., what is true about the members of a set. The extension of a set is its members or contents. The intension of a set may appear to be more important than the extension. The extension of a set may change without changing its intension, and a given set of members may satisfy many intensions. But intensions are hard to pin down, so extensional definitions are often preferred. In mathematics, a set is its extension. For example: an intentional set is a collection of all even numbers below 15 which would be - {2,4,6,8,10,12}, whereas an extensional set could be a set of all the objects in a particular class room – hence they can be separated into subsets by many intensions – for eg – square objects, objects made of wood etc.

were to make subsets of them according to some principle – then there will always be elements within that set which will not belong to any of the subsets – and they will effectively form the void set. This idea, in set theoretical or mathematical terms is rooted in the Axiom of Foundation⁶⁶ (also sometimes termed as Axiom of regularity) in the Zermelo Frankel set theory⁶⁷, which states that that every non-empty set A contains an element that is disjoint from A or for every x that is not an empty set, there exists an element y which belongs to the set x, such that x intersection y is null.

$$\forall x \{x \neq \emptyset\} \Rightarrow \exists y \in x \{x \cap y = \emptyset\}$$

This axiom is a major philosophical milestone, which decides or makes a choice and sides with the idea of pure inconsistent multiplicity – founded on nothingness or no defining criterion as such – hence there is always something within a set which doesn't belong to any given situation – it's the excess, or the inexistent at a particular point – and which ultimately defines the other elements of the set or founds them. Phenomenologically, Badiou cites the example of the object, 'civic capacity of the Quebecois population'. This set admits as its proper inexistent, during 1918 and 1950, the Inuit which were integrated in 1950 and some Amerindians which were given the right in 1960. "It follows that, relative to the indexing of the object 'civic capacity of the populations', the 'Indians' have a degree of identity to every other element of the population, which is also nil. 'Indian' designates a being which is undoubtedly (ontologically) 'of the world', but which is not absolutely in the world according to the strict logic of appearing...the inexistent of an object is suspended between (ontological) being and a certain form of (logical) non being."⁶⁸

The most noteworthy point in this entire treatise about the void is that counterintuitively, instead of a nothingness or a blank, the void is always prescribed by something 'real' – it always has a ideologico-materialist prescription, something which Zizek describes succinctly as, "At its most elementary level, ideology exploits the minimal distance between a simple

66. Axiom of foundation(or regularity) – "If α is a non-empty set, then there is an element b of α , such that there are no sets that belong both to α and b ". This axiom explicitly outlaws the paradoxical situation of sets belonging to themselves. It ensures that, given a certain set, it is impossible to count down infinitely from the set to a member of that member. Eventually, we reach something that belongs to the set but that itself has no member: an "urelement" or the empty set, which is thus "foundational" of all the other sets. (Hallward Peter, *Badiou, a Subject to Truth*, University of Minnesota Press, 2003), (Jean-Louise Krivine, Introduction to Axiomatic Set theory)

67. Zermelo Fraenkel Set Theory - In mathematics, Zermelo–Fraenkel set theory, named after mathematicians Ernst Zermelo and Abraham Fraenkel, is one of several axiomatic systems that were proposed in the early twentieth century to formulate a theory of sets free of paradoxes such as Russell's paradox. Zermelo–Fraenkel set theory with the historically controversial axiom of choice included is commonly abbreviated ZFC, where C stands for choice. Many authors use ZF to refer to the axioms of Zermelo–Fraenkel set theory with the axiom of choice excluded. Today ZFC is the standard form of axiomatic set theory and as such is the most common foundation of mathematics. ZFC is intended to formalize a single primitive notion, that of a hereditary well-founded set, so that all entities in the universe of discourse are such sets. Thus the axioms of ZFC refer only to pure sets and prevent its models from containing urelements (elements of sets that are not themselves sets). Furthermore, proper classes (collections of mathematical objects defined by a property shared by their members which are too big to be sets) can only be treated indirectly. Specifically, ZFC does not allow for the existence of a universal set (a set containing all sets) nor for unrestricted comprehension, thereby avoiding Russell's paradox. (Wikipedia – Zermelo Fraenkel Set Theory). There are nine basic axioms in the ZF system and they include – 1)Axiom of extensionality 2)Null-set Axiom 3)Subset Axiom, or Power set Axiom, 4)Union axiom or sum set axiom, 5)Axiom of infinity, 6) Axiom of foundation (or regularity), 7)Replacement axiom, 8)Axiom of separation, 9) Axiom of choice

68. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. By Toscano Alberto, Bloomsbury, 2013

collection of elements and the different sets one can form out of this collection”⁶⁹. Or it is the surplus in any classification, with the potential of imagination itself, as Kierkegaard famously writes about a haphazard division of mankind, “A wit has said that one might divide mankind into officers, serving maids, and chimney sweeps. To my mind this remark is not only witty but profound, and it would require a great speculative talent to devise a better classification. When a classification does not ideally exhaust its object, a haphazard classification is altogether preferable, because it sets imagination in motion.”⁷⁰

Hence, “ ϕ is thus not properly the naming of inconsistency ‘in itself’, but the name of inconsistency according to a particular situation, that is, as it is presented in ontology.”⁷¹

And Neruda’s poetry too, specifically his political poetry, was founded on one such void – a sudden disappearance, the “embodied absence” of his friend and comrade Federico Garcia Lorca.⁷² And he writes in his *Memoirs*, while recalling the day he had convinced Lorca to watch a wrestling match with him. It was July of 19, 1936 and they were supposed to meet at the Circo Price Arena in Madrid. “Federico did not show up. He was at that hour already on his way to death. We never saw each other again: he had an appointment with another strangler. And so the Spanish war, which changed my poetry, began for me with a poet’s disappearance.”⁷³

Even though Badiou’s revelation or affirmation of the void starts with the sudden appearance of something that was previously hidden, in the above instance, something visible suddenly disappears and creates a void, which is now filled with strains of Neruda’s heavily charged political poetry, which remained inexistent until now – thus reconfirming the principle of the ever-existent void.

*You are going to ask: and where are the lilacs?
and the poppy-petalled metaphysics ?
and the rain repeatedly spattering
its words and drilling them full
of apertures and birds?’...*

*...from every house burning metal flows
instead of flowers,
from every socket of Spain
Spain emerges*

69. Zizek Slavoj, *Plague of fantasies*, Verso, 1997, Pg 82

70. Kierkegaard Soren, *Fear and Trembling and the sickness unto death*, Trans. By Walter Lowrie, Princeton University Press, 1941

71. Hallward Peter, *Badiou, a Subject to Truth*, University of Minnesota Press, 2003, Pg 101

72. Federico Garcia Lorca was an extremely important Spanish poet, playwright and a theatre director, known to have heralded the second Golden Age of Spanish Theatre. Although there are varying accounts of his assassination, it is generally believed that he was shot by Nationalist Firing Squad on 19 August 1936, which was just a few months into the Spanish Civil War. The author Ian Gibson in his book *The Assassination of García Lorca* narrates that he was shot with three others (Joaquín Arcollas Cabezas, Francisco Galadí Melgar and Dióscoro Galindo González) at a place known as the Fuente Grande ('Great Spring') near Granada. Despised by the nationalists for his liberal views and homosexuality, he was imprisoned without trial and was ultimately executed. The radio station Cadena SER had released some police reports in April 2015 which had concluded that Lorca was killed by fascist forces. The report, dated 9 July 1965, described the writer as a "socialist" and "freemason belonging to the Alhambra lodge", who engaged in "homosexual and abnormal practices".

73. Neruda Pablo, *Memoirs*, Trans. by Hardie St Martin, Rupa & Co, 2005, Pg 122

*and from every dead child a rifle with eyes,
and from every crime bullets are born
which will one day find
the bull's eye of your hearts.*

*And you will ask: why doesn't his poetry
speak of dreams and leaves
and the great volcanoes of his native land?*

*Come and see the blood in the streets.
Come and see
the blood in the streets.
Come and see the blood
in the streets!
(Explico algunas cosas)⁷⁴*

And this void always surfaces, when previous structures are destroyed and new structures are formed –and an object can become the site of this destruction and renewal – when a true event occurs.

THE EVENT

Badiou characterizes the 'event' as the "sublation" of the void, or the coming into a full intensity of existence of an entity, which was previously inexistent, or whose existence was unattested. "Among the numerous consequences of a jolt affecting an object of the world, such a sublation is in effect the signature of what we will call an event"⁷⁵

And this event, happens at a 'site' and the site is defined by Badiou as an object or multiple of a world, which defies all the laws (meaning the axioms of set theory) and appears transcendentally, self-referencing itself – or in set-theoretical terms, is a self-reflexive set – like the master catalogue of a library which lists itself as one of the books, or as Badiou cites the example of the object – the day of 18th march, in the world, Spring in Paris, 1871 – the beginning of the Paris commune – the day counts itself in the set of its effects⁷⁶– hence emerges as a potential site for an event.

74. Neruda Pablo, "Explico Algunas Cosas", *España en al Corazon, (Spain in our Hearts)*, New Directions, 2005

75. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. By Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury, 2013, Pg 343

76. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. By Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury, 2013, Pg 365 – Badiou justifies the day of the beginning of the Paris Commune, 18th of March as a self-reflexive set or a 'site' as such: "March 18 is a site because, besides everything that appears within it under the evasive transcendental of the world 'Paris in Spring 1871', it too appears, as the fulminant and entirely unpredictable beginning of a break with the very thing that regulates its appearance(although this break is still devoid of a concept). Note that 'March 18' is the title of one of the chapters of the magnificent 'History of the Paris Commune of 1871' published by the militant Lissagaray in 1876. In that chapter, as one would expect, he deals with 'the women of March 18' and the 'people of March 18', thereby attesting to the inclusion of 'March 18', now become a predicate, in the evaluation of what results from the varying vicissitudes that make up the day. Through the ups and downs of March 18, Lissagaray clearly sees that, impelled by being, an immanent overturning of the law of appearing takes place. The fact that working people of Paris, overcoming its fragmentary political formation, has thwarted a clear-cut, forcibly executed governmental act (the seizure of the cannons)

The axiom of regularity/foundation⁷⁷ states that a set must be disjoint/different from at least one element, i.e it prevents $A = \{A\}$, but as such it doesn't seem to prevent $A = \{A, \phi\}$, as it is disjoint by a ϕ . Hence, to compensate for this axiomatic impossibility of $A \in A$, there has to emerge a ϕ or a void, which stabilizes the structure temporarily. When translated in the material world, it means, the sudden appearance of something which was previously invisible or had been deliberately ignored or made invisible. This void which previously had a minimum level of intensity now gains the maximum value intensity of existence in the transcendental of the world. Or, $E\phi = \mu \rightarrow E\phi = M$, to be read as the Existence of the ϕ element which was minimum, after the event, the Existence of ϕ attains a degree of Maximum intensity. However, now, to restore the previous laws, there has to be a new inexistent, or something which was already visible has to be relegated to invisibility. Suppose that element is 'a' whose previous intensity of existence was p, now attains the intensity or the degree value of μ or the minimum. Or,

$$Ea = p \rightarrow Ea = \mu.$$

Thus after the occurrence of the event, the entire transcendental indexing of the object/world reconfigures and recalibrates itself, thus paving the way for a "new objectivation" of the site. This mathematical/Badiouan language, translated to Nerudian, reads this way-

With my hand I gather the emptiness,

Imponderable night, starry families,

A chorus quieter than silence,

A sound of the moon, some secret, a triangle,

A chalk trapezoid.

It is the oceanic night, the third solitude,

A quivering that opens doors, wings,

The profound population that isn't here

Throbs overflowing the names of the estuary

Night, name of the sea, fatherland, root, rose!

ultimately entails the demand that there appear an unknown capacity, an unprecedented power. This is how 'March 18' comes to appear, under the injunction of being, as an element of the object that it is."

77. One may raise the question whether there is a philosophical reason to accept or believe in the ZF axioms. Before paradoxes, the notion of a 'set' as just any collection of things could suffice. However, due to the contradictions raised by the paradoxes, the necessity of another notion of a 'set' becomes relevant. Thus one began with some non-set entities namely 'atoms', then formed all sets of these, then all sets whose elements are atoms or sets of atoms. This way, one could build more and more levels of sets, where a set at any level has elements only from earlier levels, the atoms constituting the lowest level. This iterative construction can go on and on. This 'cumulative hierarchy' became the new notion of sets, replacing older notions. 'The axiom of regularity' bodes well with this understanding of what a set is. By expressing the idea that the stages of the cumulative hierarchy come in a well-ordered sequence. (Without well-ordering, the instructions for each level, namely "form all sets whose elements are at earlier levels," would not be an inductive definition but a circularity.) Thus the axiom of regularity (aka Foundation) can be seen philosophically as an axiom of restriction. It is not necessarily saying "all the things you consider as sets must be well-founded". It can be read saying "for the purposes of this set theory, we restrict our universe of discourse to just the well-founded objects".

(Serenata)⁷⁸

E (emptiness, chorus quieter than silence, profound population that isn't here) = $\mu \rightarrow E$ (that isn't here throbs overflowing the names of the estuary, night, name of the sea, fatherland, root, rose) = M

THE BODY

As Badiou develops the concept of the 'Body', he seamlessly weaves other kinds of mathematical languages by introducing the more powerful tools of topology⁷⁹ and category theory⁸⁰, within the precincts of set theory. To start with - the fundamental idea or the concept of topology comes from the Greek work 'topos' which means a 'place'. And this particular place has certain special properties – If we consider a set of points called X, and if we were to equip it with a topology, say τ , then the topological set would be $\{X, \tau\}$. Now what is this τ ? τ is a particular subset of the power set of X, hence elements of τ are itself sets and this collection of sets follow specific rules – these are the axioms of a topological space –

- 1) τ should contain the empty set or ϕ , $\phi \in \tau$
- 2) The entire set X should also be a part of τ , $X \in \tau$
- 3) If we have two subsets of the power set of X in τ , then the conjunction of both these sets should also lie in τ , $\forall U_1, U_2 \in \tau, U_1 \cap U_2 \in \tau$
- 4) Similarly, Union of all the subsets of the topology should also lie within the subset τ .

Vaguely, these axioms, give a sense of the connectedness of the elements contained in the subset τ . We can say these elements are somehow seamlessly connected – like the points in the

78. Neruda Pablo, "Serenata", *Full Woman, Fleshly Apple, Hot Moon*, Trans. by Stephen Mitchell, Harper Perennial, 2009, Pg231

79. Topology is the mathematical study of the properties that are preserved through deformations, twisting, and stretching of objects. Tearing, however, is not allowed. A circle is topologically equivalent to an ellipse (into which it can be deformed by stretching) and a sphere is equivalent to an ellipsoid. Topology began with the study of curves, surfaces, and other objects in the plane and three-space. One of the central ideas in topology is that spatial objects like circles and spheres can be treated as objects in their own right, and knowledge of objects is independent of how they are "represented" or "embedded" in space. For example, the statement "if you remove a point from a circle, you get a line segment" applies just as well to the circle as to an ellipse, and even to tangled or knotted circles, since the statement involves only topological properties. Topology can be used to abstract the inherent connectivity of objects while ignoring their detailed form. The "objects" of topology are often formally defined as topological spaces. There is also a formal definition for a topology defined in terms of set operations. A set X along with a collection T of subsets of it is said to be a topology if the subsets in T obey the properties specified in the text referenced above. For a more detailed introduction to the concepts of topology, one can refer to *Topology without tears* by S. Morris or *Topology* by James R Munkres.

80. Category theory is a toolset for describing the general abstract structures in mathematics. As opposed to set theory, category theory focuses not on elements x, y, \dots – called objects – but on the relations between these objects: the (homeo)morphisms between them. For more details, refer: <https://ncatlab.org/nlab/show/category+theory#idea> or one can watch these series of video lectures <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P6DvlfTJhx8>.

set of real numbers – they are the closest possible to each other, unlike the discrete numbers from the set of natural numbers, which are separated from each other on the number line, by an ocean of all kinds of irrational, rational, “unnatural” numbers. Hence we can also say that the set of real numbers has a topology, unlike the set of set of natural numbers.

If we were to translate this idea to Badiou’s theory of the object, we will find, that the transcendental set, which is composed of degrees of identity between two elements of an object instead of discrete elements, also follows the rules of a topological space, once an event occurs. (Refer above to the notes on World and Object where their structures have been defined as sets composed of their various elements, alongside their transcendental subset, which indexes each element to its degree of identity with all the other elements contained within the set, and after the event occurs, the void and the set, make themselves appear within the transcendental). Until now, the notion of the elements/degrees of this transcendental set, had been strictly ontological. From this point on, Badiou infuses them with the notion of being functions, once they belong to the ‘Body’ of the topological space, or the ‘Topos’⁸¹. (Here he uses the language of category theory which mainly deals with two kinds of objects – the source object, the terminal object and the morphism/relation between them. This trio is what is called a category.) This Body is the central object, C, contained within the Transcendental, ‘T’ which acts as the classifier of the object elements. Every ‘point’ in the body acts as a function, which connects the elements of the transcendental to just two elements – 0 or 1, or minimum (μ) and maximum (M) of the minimal Transcendental set T_0 which only contains two elements 0 and 1. Here these degrees are the source objects and 0,1 are the target objects and the points of the Body are the morphisms. Hence what we are looking at essentially is a structure within a structure – The purely ontological world with its elements, within which is contained the transcendental which takes a topological turn once an event occurs, within which now arises the categorical ‘body’ or the ‘subject’ which carries out the truth procedure or the rearrangement/classification of all the elements into 0 or 1.

Hence the Body acts as “the immanent agent of the production of the consequences (of a truth), or the possible agents of their denial, or that which renders their occultation possible (that which aims to erase a truth)”⁸², or a more formal definition of the body is – “A multiple being

81. There are various different perspectives on the notion of topos. One is that a topos is a category that looks like a category of spaces that sit by local homeomorphisms over a given base space: all spaces that are locally modeled on a given base space. What makes the notion of topos powerful is the following fact: even though the general topos contains objects that are considerably different from and possibly considerably richer than plain sets and even richer than étale spaces over a topological space, the general abstract category theoretic properties of every topos are essentially the same as those of Set. For instance in every topos all small limits and colimits exist and it is cartesian closed (even locally). This means that a large number of constructions in Set have immediate analogs internal to every topos, and the analogs of the statements about these constructions that are true in a Set are true in every topos. On the one hand this may be thought of as saying that toposes are very nice categories of spaces in that whatever construction on spaces one thinks of – for instance formation of quotients or of fiber products or of mapping spaces – the resulting space with the expected general abstract properties will exist in the topos. In this sense toposes are convenient categories for geometry – as in: convenient category of topological spaces, but even more convenient than that. On the other hand, by de-emphasizing the geometric interpretation of their objects and just using their good abstract properties, this means that toposes are contexts with a powerful internal logic. The internal logic of toposes is intuitionistic higher order logic. This means that, while the law of excluded middle and the axiom of choice may fail, apart from that, every logical statement not depending on these does hold internal to every topos. For this reason toposes are often studied as abstract contexts “in which one can do mathematics”, independently of their interpretation as categories of spaces. These two points of views on toposes, as being about geometry and about logic at the same time, is part of the richness of topos theory. (<https://ncatlab.org/nlab/show/topos#Idea>)

82. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. By Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury, 2013, Pg 453

which bears the subjective formalism and thereby makes it appear in a world receives the name of 'body' – without ascribing to body any organic status"⁸³

Badiou develops the concept of the body further into much greater details, whereby he describes and defines the "efficacious"⁸⁴ part of the body as $C_{\varepsilon\phi}$ - as composed of those elements which affirm the 'point' function (ϕ) or as a collection of all x in the body C_{ε} , such that $\phi(x) = 1$ and so on and so forth. However, for the purpose of this study it would suffice and is also perhaps crucial to stop here and step away for a bit from the mathematical language and distil the essence of the idea of the 'body'. So, recapitulating and using the tools described and defined above, we may say, that in a given world, once an event occurs which brings to the fore, the previously inexistent, a reconfiguration of the elements of the world occur, and this reconfiguration, may or may not give rise to a body – if it does, the body is finally able to make a choice/or a choice is made through it, regarding the fate of the world.

Amidst this frenzy of building this entire sequential edifice from varied mathematical structures, it is important to note that -1) there can be worlds, which are so complex, that their elements cannot simply be mapped onto a simple logic of 0 and 1, that is, their binary treatment is not possible – or there are no 'points' or ϕ functions in this world – these world have been termed 'atonic' by Badiou and 2) there can also be worlds where no event occurs and such worlds have been termed as 'stable' and 3) if the worlds are not atonic or stable, and an event does occur, enough elements or 'x's from the world should be incorporated or reconfigured, apart from just the previously inexistent ε , to form a coherent body C_{ε} , because if there is just the appearance of the inexistent and nothing else happens, there is an "instantaneous withering away of the consequences of the event". Such worlds are 'inconsequential' and 4) the efficacious part of body, i.e the elements which would affirm ϕ as 1, should not be empty – else the world remains 'inactive' etc. Hence as such, "the creation of truth" is a rarity. And most importantly, even if the truth appears, it appears only locally, because "In the multiplicity of the worlds, there cannot be any naturalness of the place. Everything that is there may find itself de-localized by another worldly power."⁸⁵

At this point if we once again, enter the Nerudian world – we can study it from two distinct pairs of dialectical perspectives using the Badiouan tools. '1-2' and '3-4' – 1) each poem as a pre-evental purely ontological world – a mere collection of elements gathered extensionally within the world of a poetry – the event then occurs/does not occur within the poem, the body forms or does not form and so on and so forth - or 2) each poem as a post-evental-topological world, where the event was that of the writing of the poetry itself, and now its consequences remain to be analysed. And, 3) the being qua being of an ontological object as it appears and reappears in different poems and 4) the being there of a topological object as it appears and reappears in different poems.

From the first pair – 1-2, this study would hope to answer certain core questions regarding the poetic process, and maybe, identify few of the Nerudian axioms, which when applied to the latter pair 3-4, can give us some concrete answers regarding the idea of the Nerudian or simply a poetic materialism. This perhaps brings back and reinforces the image of the *Prohodna* with the two eyes and the two entrances. From here on, one can only dream of pools of light spilled over cool, dark surfaces or of luminous balloons dipping and drifting at the two ends of a dark cave.

83. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. By Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury, 2013, Pg 453

84. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. By Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury, 2013, Pg 488

85. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury, 2013

CHAPTER 3

PERSPECTIVES 1-2 – THE PRE-EVENTAL ONTO-LOGICAL POEM AND THE POST-EVENTAL TOPOLOGICAL POEM

Case Study 1 – Horses

Let us look at two poems in quick succession – ‘Caballos’⁸⁶ (Horses) from Neruda’s collection titled *Extravagaria*, published in 1958 and ‘Oda al Caballo’⁸⁷ (Ode to the Horse) from his collection of Odes, published somewhere between 1933 and 1962. In Badiouan terms, the first poem, ‘Caballos’ forms the purely ontological pre-evental world of a day in the winter of Berlin populated by the poet’s gaze and ten horses. The poem begins via the operations of de-objectification and the diagonal (refer above – Chapter 1- proofs 5 & 7), whereby, Neruda creates the void by immediately destroying the image that forms, once a signifier is mentioned. “That there could be a light without light, or that one could navigate without ever having left: such are the acts by which the poem, naming a disappearance, suspends the game of sense and makes a diagonal of being and its annulment”⁸⁸. Thus begins ‘Caballos’, with these lines, “*I was in Berlin, in winter/ The light was without light, the sky without sky/ The air white like wet bread/ And from my window a vacant arena/ bitten by the teeth of winter/ Suddenly, led by a man/ ten horses stepped out into the mist*” And from this void of the light without light, and the sky without sky, Neruda draws the world of the horses.

*Hardly had they surged forth, like flame,
than to my eyes they filled the whole world,
empty till then. Perfect, ablaze,
they were like ten gods with wide pure hoofs,
with manes like a dream of salt...*

To establish this world formally, in Badiouan terms, we have to establish its transcendental or its “being-there” in relation to others in the world –“the exposition of the transcendental will thus proceed through three successive moments. The first forces upon thought the existence, in the transcendental of a minimum. The second fixes the laws relative to the conjunctions of two beings-there. Finally, the third posits the existence of an envelope for every region of the world.”⁸⁹.

Let the world in this poem be m.

86. Neruda Pablo, “Caballos”, *Full Woman, Fleshly Apple, Hot Moon*, Trans. by Stephen Mitchell, Harper Perennial, 2009, Pg 159

87. Neruda Pablo, “Oda al Caballo”, *All the Odes*, Ed., Trans. By Ilan Stavans, Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, New York, 2013, Pg 33

88. Badiou Alain, *The Age of the Poets : And Other Writings on Twentieth-Century Poetry and Prose*, Trans. By Bosteels Bruno, Verso, 2014

89. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. By Toscano Alberto, Bloomsbury, 2013, Pg 103

Let the ten horses be elements represented by the symbols ‘ $a_1, a_2 \dots a_{10}$.’

Let some of the other elements - darkness, winter, the man leading the horses be b, c, d etc

Let the poet’s gaze be g.

The identity degree of the horses with each other is Maximum or M, as represented in these lines where the poets speaks of them as identical to each other –

Their rumps were worlds and oranges

Their color was honey, amber, fire.

Their necks were towers

Cut from the stone of pride,

And behind their transparent eyes

Energy, raged, like a prisoner

Or $\text{Id}(a_1 a_2) = \text{Id}(a_1 a_3) = \text{Id}(a_1 a_4) \dots = M$ (To be read as identity between the elements a_1 and a_2 equals the identity between a_2 and a_3 which are all maximum).

Here, each of the horses in this world has been grasped by its maximum identity evaluation with the rest of the horses and is thus indexed onto the transcendental set by the Maximum degree M. Their relation or their degree of identity with the poet’s gaze is also similar and can be denoted by the degree p, where $p < M$. There are various degrees of identities between the poet’s gaze and the winter light (q), the horses and the winter (r), the poet’s gaze and the window(s) so on and so forth. Here, we can say, $s < q < r < p < M$, in the Transcendental, and the “sky without the sky” and the “light without the light correspond” to the minimum degree μ of existence. Thus, we can establish the structure of the transcendental with - 1) the minimum degree, the maximum degree and various other degrees in between, populating its transcendental, ($\mu < s < q < r < p < M$) -2) The conjunction between two degrees, say p & q presents a greatest degree which is simultaneously less than or equal to both p & q – the degree of identity between the poet’s gaze and the horses (p) and the degree of identity between the poet’s gaze and the winter light (q), has the poet’s gaze through the window (s) as the common apparent between them – or $p \cap q = s$ (intercalary conjunction) and 3) If B is the set of degrees p, q, r, s in the transcendental. Then $B \subseteq T$ (B is a subset of T). There exists an envelope of this world, which is the smallest of all the degrees that are greater than or equal to all the elements of B, or $\Sigma B = p \cup q \cup r \cup s$ (to be read as the envelope of the region B is the union of all the intensities of appearance within B) In other words, the horse, the poet’s gaze through the window, their respective relations with each other and with the winter day of Berlin are all localized or limited by their envelope – to get a sense of this world, or this region of the world, we do not need to summon anything further than these elements, like the rest of Berlin on that day, or things that are not visible to the poet’s gaze. Alternately, the poet’s gaze could be the envelope of this world.

Thus we have established the transcendental of this world through the successive operations of the minimum, the conjunction and the envelope. This world is still onto-logical, with its beings connected to each other within the greater logic of appearing in relation to others in the same world.

Within this poem the event occurs in the last stanza,

I looked, I looked and was reborn, without knowing it,

There, was the fountain, the dance of gold, the sky,

The fire that revived in beauty

*I have forgotten that dark Berlin winter
I will not forget the light of the horses*

Event (E) – the long gaze of the poet

Appearance of the previously inexistent (ϵ) – two elements which were indexed to the minimum degree of existence, the sky (in the lines – the sky without sky) and the light (in the lines – the light without light) reappear with a maximal degree of existence and another element, ‘the dark Berlin’ winter takes its place as the minimal element now, thus restoring the configuration of the Transcendental and leaving in its wake, the consequence of an indelible memory with the poet and the choice that is made between light and darkness.

Now we enter the precincts of the second poem – ‘Oda al caballo’. This poem begins with the event, and writes itself as the consequence of the event. If we were to look at the two poems as seamlessly connected to each other in a singular world, we can add another element, that corresponded to the minimal degree μ of existence in the Transcendental of the previous poem – the lone horse, tied to a farm in the poet’s homeland, whose sudden appearance in the world, marks the beginning of the second poem.

*That horse, lonesome and tied
To a humble farm
in my homeland
that poor horse
is a memory,
and now
when all the horses convene
in the lightning flash,
the sudden light of my ode,
the forgotten one comes,
the beaten one,
the one carrying the mountain firewood,
the cruel
stones of quarry and coast,
he isn’t galloping
with fire-raising mane
waving in the wind,
doesn’t come
the croup untouched like a snow apple,
no,
he doesn’t come like this.
He comes grumbling, his four
Hooves barely moving
And his immobile head
Is a tower
Of sadness,
And so
He comes to my ode,
The horse comes so I can turn him into song.*

In the above lines, Neruda posits a complete disjunction between the horses of the first poem and the horse of the second – ‘*Hardly had they surged forth, like flame, than to my eyes they filled the whole world, empty till then. Perfect, ablaze...in complete opposition to he isn’t galloping with fire-raising mane waving in the wind...,or, Their necks were towers, Cut from the stone of pride in complete opposition to his immobile head is a tower of sadness.*

As this horse appears into this poem – sad, immobile, grumbly, a point begins to emerge, a function that starts to map, each of the previous relations/degrees/elements of the world onto a primary transcendental. This point, emerges as the function of the reverse gaze – now from the horse to the poet –

*Then they looked at me with the proof
Of an extended, a wide suffering,
A grave suffering like Asia’s
Walking with thirst and with sand...*

*Since then his gaze peered
Inside me, against so many sorrows
Endured by men and horses...*

and everything else, converges around this point and fuses with the poet’s body, to form the coherent body C_e which treats the point of the world and answers the horse’s gaze with the song that sings the new truth.

*I now grant the horse’s glory
The fresh laurel crown of suffering,
The light I conquered
For the lives,
For he bore the weight, rain and blows
Hunger and remote loneliness and cold
And doesn’t know, no, why he lives,
But walks and walks and carries the burden,
Like us, man beaten,
Who don’t have gods but land,
Land to plow, to walk, and when
It’s been plowed and walked enough
It opens up for the horse’s bones
And our bones.*

*Ay, poor man’s walking horse,
Let us walk
Together in this hard space
And though you don’t know nor will
Know if my reason
Is useful for love, poor brother,
My heart for this ode,
My hands to touch your tender muzzle.*

Elements of the poem now split into a binary – on one end is the “*form of the winged and elastic horse, the pure processional steed, pride of the parade, bullet of the race...* and on the other is this poor man’s walking horse, and the poet positivates this end, by indexing its

elements to the 1 of T_0 (Primary transcendental with just two values – 0 and 1) through these lines – *but my ode won't fly with the wind, run with the war or delights: my poetry was made step by step, trotting through the world, devouring stony roads, eating with the indigent in the glacial inn of poverty, and I owe myself to those stones from the road, to thirst, to the wanderer's punishment...*

In the above exercise of looking at the two poems on horses, separately and then together, one can make a few observations – 1) As separate poems not aware of each other, they point towards the multiplicity of worlds – each with its own version of truth about the horses – distinct from one another in separate contexts – just as the panel of horses drawn in the Chauvet cave⁹⁰ and the ones drawn by Picasso⁹¹ – separated from each other by 30,000 years, about whom Badiou observes, “The objectivity of the animal signifies very little with respect to the complete modification of the context”⁹². However, as soon as we read both the poems, they seamlessly converge into one world, and the topo-logical context overrides the onto-logical one, the glorious arabesque of the horses from the first poem reappear in the second, only to disappear in the shadows of the comradely wretchedness of the latter. Unlike the first instance, where the image of the horses dominates the poem, and the poem remains subsumed under its spell, in the second, the poem rises above the image and behaves like a matheme to deduce and distil a politics from mere sensation – perhaps pointing towards a singular truth, at least in the context of a world, which we may nominate as ‘Nerudian’.

2) If we consider the poet as the subjective element, in the first instance, it is his gaze towards the horses, that generates the concluding lines of the poem - *I looked, I looked and was reborn, without knowing it, there, was the fountain, the dance of gold, the sky, the fire that revived in beauty, I have forgotten that dark Berlin winter, I will not forget the light of the horses*. In the second instance, it is the gaze of the object towards the poet-subject that changes the direction of the poem, or the poems – perhaps pointing towards the idea of a subject-less unfolding of the truth, or towards the power of the object to shift and recalibrate the logics of worlds – the poet merely “partaking in the transport of the True”. In that case, the ‘Nerudian’ world, is not a world driven by the logic of the subject – rather, it is driven by the materialist logic of objects that happen to ‘be there’, as Neruda writes in his ‘Oda a la Critic’ (Ode to criticism)⁹³ – *I wrote five poems: one was green/another a round wheaten loaf/the third was a house being built, the fourth was a ring, and the fifth was brief as a lightning flash/and as I wrote it/it branded my reason*.

90. The Chauvet Cave is one of the most famous prehistoric rock art sites in the world. Located in the Ardeche region of southern France, along the bank of the river Ardeche near the Pont-d'Arc, this cave was only discovered as recently as 1994, happened upon by a small team of cavers led by Jean-Marie Chauvet. Chauvet Cave's importance is based on two factors: firstly, the aesthetic quality of these Palaeolithic cave paintings, and secondly, their great age. With one exception, all of the cave art paintings have been dated between 30,000 & 33,000 years ago. The panel of four horses occupy a small recess in the Chauvet Cave. They bare similar artistic attributes. The artist used fingers to mix and spread a charcoal paste and applied it in order to emphasize the main outlines and give relief and shading to the heads.

91. Badiou refers to two paintings of horses by Picasso in his preface to *Logics of Worlds* while comparing them to the ones found in the Chauvet cave. “...Two scenes by Picasso (1929 and 1939), the first drawn in grey, in which two horses drag a third dead horse, the second in which a human silhouette masters two horses, one of them held by its bridle.”

92. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. By Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury, 2013, Pg 17

93. Neruda Pablo, “Oda a la Critica”, *All the Odes*, Ed., Trans. By Ilan Stavans, Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, New York, 2013, Pg 181

Case Study -2 – The Moon

In the poem, ‘Oda a la luna del mar’ (Ode to the moon of the sea)⁹⁴, the moon appears in two distinct worlds – over the city and over the sea. The moon over the city appears tired, dark, yellowed, tarnished, teary eyed from the smoke, blood and tobacco of cities that never sleep. It appears in a high degree of identity with the other elements of its world, its tired light labouring through the night alongside the factories and bakeries. The moon over the sea, appears differently – white, moist, cool, youthful as a pearl, diaphanous. Here too, the moon appears in compatible relations with the other elements of the sea-world: the clear sky, the sea wind, the rhythmic tides...Separated by geographies and economies, there appear two moons, each in its own light. Both these worlds, within the bounds of the poem are atonic, lacking points, with their transcendental values, somewhere between maximum and minimum, “there is nothing, but bodies and languages”⁹⁵ – nothing really happens.

Let us now examine the world of another poem – ‘Oda a la luna’(Ode to the moon)⁹⁶. Here, while the members or residents of the earth share a high intensity of identity amongst themselves, the moon appears indexed to the minimum, relative to the elements of the earth –

*...gentle
dead,
you slide
through the night
without us knowing
who your men are,
if you have butterflies
if in the morning
you sell sweet bread,
white-star milk,
if you are
made of glass,
of orange cork,
if you breathe...*

And in this poem, just as prescribed by Badiou’s theory of the site – ‘the reflexive set’ or in this case, the ode itself appears within its own purview, in these lines –

94. Neruda Pablo, “Oda a la luna del mar”, *All the Odes*, Ed., Trans. By Ilan Stavans, Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, New York, 2013, Pg 432

95. Badiou makes this statement – “There are only bodies and languages” in the very beginning of *Logics of Worlds* and calls it out as the “axiom of contemporary conviction” or that of ‘democratic materialism’, or post-modernism, whereby existence is equated to the individual’s body, and its democratic right is preserved in the tolerance and protection of the multiplicity of languages/cultures and subcultures. But this tolerance is not extended to a language which seeks to regulate this diversity. Hence there is never a need for a structural change, since all languages are legitimized in such atonal worlds, which don’t feel the need to make choices. Badiou seeks to confront this post-modernist, everything goes current wisdom with what he anoints as the “materialist dialectic” and its statement – “There are only bodies and languages, except that there are truths”. “Yes, there are only bodies and languages. Nothing exists by way of a separable soul, life, spiritual principle, etc. But in another sense, the materialist dialectic – centred on the exception that truths inflict on what there is through the interpolation of a ‘there is what there is not’ – differs entirely from democratic materialism”.

96. Neruda Pablo, “Oda a la luna”, *All the Odes*, Ed., Trans. By Ilan Stavans, Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, New York, 2013, Pg 427

*I promise,
In the name
Of all poets
Who loved you
Uselessly,*

And now through this site, emerges the previously inexistent – the moon – within which one can recognize, instead of the trace of a vanished event, the fragments of an event, yet to be,

*We shall open
Your peace of pallid stone,
We shall enter
Into your subterranean light,
Fire
Will light up
Your dead eyes...*

And the moon now gains a maximum degree of existence with the beings on earth

*And then
You will mark
The hours of men,
In the heights
Of the sky:
You will be
Ours..*

The elements of the poem form an “efficacious” body $C_{\epsilon\phi}$ with enough elements affirming the point function and laying them onto 1 of T_0 . The point asks the question which is the ϕ function here – will the moon remain a passive observer/commodity of passive consumption or can it be an active “socialist object”⁹⁷, a true comrade and co-worker, actively connected to everyday human practices?

And these post-evental lines/elements positivate the ϕ as such –

*You will not be
A useless nocturnal watch
Magnolia,
Of the tree of night.
But only
Legume,
Only cheese,*

97. ‘Socialist object’ was mentioned by the Russian constructivist art historian and critic Boris Arvatov in his essay, ‘Everyday life and the culture of the thing’, where he reimagines the idea of the objects of everyday consumption, and speaks of the transformative ability of socialism to convert passive capitalist commodities into active socialist objects – also rendering art as utilitarian in its true purpose. Christiana Kiaer in her essay on Arvatov observes, “What makes Arvatov’s theory of modernity so unusual for his time and so strangely familiar today, is his conviction that the subject is formed as much through the process of using objects in everyday life as by making them in the sphere of production.”

*Celestial cow,
 Spilt udder
 Spring of milk,
 Useful
 Like the head of corn
 Boundless,
 Reigning
 And necessary.*

In the above study of the moon, once again, we see the two separate worlds of the first poem and the third world of the second poem, seamlessly combine - the eventless atonic worlds of the first poem (Oda a la luna del mar), overridden by the act of the post-evental poem (Oda al la luna) – one after the other all the elements of the two poems are taken to the imperative of decision or choice of positive or negative, or 0 or 1 – (pallid stone, subterranean light, dead eyes, useless nocturnal watch, magnolia of the tree of night = 0, legume, cheese, celestial cow, spilt udder, spring of milk, head of corn = 1).

Here, in the first two cases (the moon over the city and the moon over the sea), the moon gazes down and merely reflects what lies underneath, in the third scenario – which becomes the envelope of the three situations here, the moon reflects the evental gaze/dream of the poet, which is once again reflected in the poet's gaze. In this scenario, the poet acts as the truly subjectivized body – capable of imagination and hope, the harbinger of the event – who makes an active choice. In the first case study of the horses, the aesthetic existence of the subject is taken over by the ethical demands of the object to recalibrate the subject; in the second case study of the moon, the aesthetic demands of the object is taken over by the ethical dream of the subject. Both the cases, seem to exemplify the Kierkegaardian theory of stages⁹⁸ - from aesthetics to ethics to religion, which, according to Badiou, “never presents itself as such to the existent who chooses his existence. Every choice proposes an alternative, an either/or. Either aesthetics (for example the seduction of women through language) or ethics (the serious commitment to marriage). Either ethics (action detached from any resistance by immediate desires) or the religious (holding fast to faith in the face of the absurd). We could say that what for us takes the form of a reduction of the infinite nuances of the transcendental of a world to the rigidity of the Two is referred back by Kierkegaard to its simplest expression: the Three presents itself as Two.”⁹⁹ And in each case, it is the choice or the point, which reveals the

98. According to Søren Kierkegaard, there are three teleologically distinct life-views or stages of life: the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious. In Kierkegaard's pseudonymous works, his pseudonyms discuss and embody these three views: *Either/Or* focuses on the contrast between the aesthetic and the ethical; *Fear and Trembling* emphasizes the contrast between the ethical and the religious; and *Stages on Life's Way* and *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* treat all three stages. Most of Kierkegaard's signed works—including his several series of “upbuilding discourses,” *Works of Love*, and *Christian Discourses*—relate to the religious life. Kierkegaard discusses these stages or spheres of life in his journals and papers as well. The aesthetic life-view is characterized by subjectivism, hedonism, and nihilism. It seeks personal pleasure, but lacks any integrating narrative or ultimate meaning. The ethical life-view finds its value in social morality—Hegel's *Sittlichkeit*. Institutions such as the State and the Church provide a context which enables moral striving and personal development. Participation in vocational, familial, and marital relationships, and the like, and satisfying the duties attendant to each, constitute life's meaning. The religious life-view relativizes both subjective and cultural values; a relationship to God is the ultimate ground of moral duty and existential purpose. Within this life-view we can distinguish between the natural religiousness of ancient Greek paganism, and the paradoxical religiousness of the Christian faith.

99. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. By Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury, 2013, Pg 431

subjective energy and affirms “decision as absolute existence”. Thus, even though each of these objects appear differently in different localized worlds, they are finally dealt with, in a greater/global world, once a decision is made about them, through a ‘topos’.

CHAPTER 4

PERSPECTIVES 3-4 – THE ‘BEING QUA BEING’ OF AN ONTOLOGICAL OBJECT AND THE ‘BEING THERE’ OF A TOPOLOGICAL OBJECT – AN EXPLORATION OF ‘NERUDIAN EQUIPMENTAL SPACE’

Martin Heidegger

When it comes to a study of ‘equipment’¹⁰⁰, before we enter into the Badiouan fold, Heidegger should be the point of departure to look into Neruda’s encounter with ‘equipment’, - since many a studies have likened Badiou’s discourse to a quasi-mathematical demonstration of Heidegger’s metaphysical account¹⁰¹.

In Heidegger’s existential analytic, he devises mainly three phenomenological categories of our encounters with other entities or ‘equipment’¹⁰² –

- 1) Readiness-to-hand
- 2) Presence-at-hand
- 3) Un readiness-to-hand

The first category speaks of encounters that are so transparent, that the subject and object melt into each other into merely an ‘experience’ – the carpenter’s hand extending into the hammer’s arm, both so engrossed in the act of driving nails into the wood, they become completely unaware of each other. Instead of subject and object, they become an inseparable system, a whole. Heidegger writes, “The less we just stare at the hammer-thing, and the more we seize hold of it and use it, the more primordial does our relationship to it become, and the more unveiled-ly it is encountered as that which it is—as equipment. The hammering itself uncovers the specific ‘manipulability’ of the hammer. The kind of Being which equipment possesses—in which it manifests itself in its own right—we call ‘readiness-to-hand’.”¹⁰³

100. Equipment (Heideggerian terminology)

a. (German: das Zeug)

b. An object in the world with which we have meaningful dealings. A nearly un-translatable term, Heidegger's equipment can be thought of as a collective noun, so that it is never appropriate to call something 'an equipment'. Instead, its use often reflects it to mean a tool, or as an "in-order-to" for Dasein. Tools, in this collective sense, and in being ready-to-hand, always exist in a network of other tools and organizations, e.g., the paper is on a desk in a room at a university. It is inappropriate usually to see such equipment on its own or as something present-at-hand. Another, less prosaic, way of thinking of 'equipment' is as 'stuff we can work with' around us, along with its context. "The paper we can do things with, from the desk, in the university, in the city, on the world, in the universe." 'Equipment' refers to the thing, and its usefulness possibilities, and its context. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heideggerian_terminology#Equipment)

101. For one such paper, refer to Hunter Ian, “Heideggerian Mathematics: Badiou’s Being and Event”, *Representations*, 2016

102. Wheeler Michael, "Martin Heidegger", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), forthcoming URL = [<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2018/entries/heidegger/>](https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2018/entries/heidegger/).

103. Heidegger Martin, John Macquarrie, and Edward Robinson. *Being and Time*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1962, Pg 98

Neruda's 'Oda al edificio'¹⁰⁴ (Ode to the building) is filled with such encounters,

*The rock fragmented its riches,
Steel became slim, copper managed
To mix its health with wood
And this, just arrived from the forests
Hardened its pregnant fragrance
Cement, dark brother,
Your paste unites them,
Your spilled sand
Tightens, curls up, ascends
Winning level after level.
The very tiny man drills,
Up and down.
Where is the individual?
It is a hammer, a hit
Of steel on steel,
A point in the system
And its reason is added
To the growing realm...*

In the realm of the growing building, everything – man, cement, bricks, rock, copper, drill, hammer are one – “the collective rose”¹⁰⁵. The transcendental of this world is populated with high degrees of identities between man and hammer, man and drill, cement and brick, steel and column, voice and stone, fragments and space and so on.

In 'Oda al serrucho'¹⁰⁶ (Ode to the Saw), the hammer, the sickle, the chisel, the shovel and the saw appear with the second Heideggerian phenomenological signature, the 'Presence-at-hand', as a 'thing' that has been looked at by the poet-subject, as an aesthetic, independent object of physical, determinate properties –

Among the noble

Tools,

104. Neruda Pablo, "Oda al edificio", *All the Odes*, Ed., Trans. By Ilan Stavans, Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, New York, 2013, Pg 118

105. Refer to Neruda Pablo, "Oda al edificio", *All the Odes*, Ed., Trans. By Ilan Stavans, Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, New York, 2013, Pg 118

106. Neruda Pablo, "Oda al serrucho", *All the Odes*, , Ed. By Ilan Stavans, Trans. By George D. Schade, Farrar, Strauss, Giroux, New York, Pg 590

The slender
Hammer,
The sickle just sliced from the moon,
The bevelled strong
Chisel, the generous
Shovel,
You are, saw,
Fish, malignant
Fish, the shark with fatal dentures...
...you don't assume a jauntiness
Like the incredible hammer,
Its head of steel
Decorated with two rooster feathers,
But
Like a fish
From the profound submarine plenitude,
After your natatorial task,
You are immobilized and disappear
As in the dark bed of the ocean...

The third phenomenological category of 'un-readiness to hand', best exemplified by broken objects in Heidegger's account – is a complex, intermediate realm – of a varied spectrum of engagements between the Dasein¹⁰⁷ and the object. This kind of encounter is not completely devoid of its context – the brokenness of an object suddenly makes one aware of its utility and as the missing link, it exposes the entire network it was a part of. Unlike the very first scenario, a minimum subject-object dichotomy is preserved here.

Even though all three phenomenological encounters are present in both the philosophical discourse of Badiou and in the poetics of Neruda, as seen above, the Badiouan and Nerudian worlds and the un-veiling of truth within them, differ from the Heideggerian in certain essential ways. The un-concealing¹⁰⁸ of the truth, which occurs in Heidegger whilst the object is ready to hand, in the context of its involvement (however un-conconscious it might be) with a certain Dasein, to reveal the true nature of its world, the Badiouan subject-less (more precisely –

107. In German, Dasein is the vernacular term for "existence", as in "I am pleased with my existence" (Ich bin mit meinem Dasein zufrieden). The term has been used by several philosophers before Heidegger, most notably Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, with the meaning of human "existence" or "presence". It is derived from da-sein, which literally means being-there/there-being—though Heidegger was adamant that this was an inappropriate translation of Dasein. Dasein for Heidegger can be a way of being involved with and caring for the immediate world in which one lives, while always remaining aware of the contingent element of that involvement, of the priority of the world to the self, and of the evolving nature of the self itself. (Wikipedia contributors. (2018, October 17). Dasein. In Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. Retrieved 09:12, November 10, 2018, from <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Dasein&oldid=864481802>)

108. Heidegger Martin, Macquarrie, J., & Robinson, E. S., *Being and time*, Malden, MA, Blackwel, 1962, One can also refer to: Koskela Jani, 'Truth as unconcealment in Heidegger's Being and Time', *Minerva - An Internet Journal of Philosophy* 16 (2012): 116-128

Dasein less) unfolding of the truth, supersedes Heidegger’s discourse and is closer to Neruda’s concept of a world and the un-veiling of truth within it. While the Heideggerian ontology is a Dasein-centred totality of involvements, the Nerudian worlds, much more like the Badiouan, are not necessarily so – these are worlds, where a forgotten abandoned house is ontologically equal in all ways to a house “dwelled”¹⁰⁹ in by Dasein. Even though, most interpretations of Badiou, find him to be a subject-centric philosopher, it would be fair to say, that they have Badiou’s first part of *Being and Event* as their point of reference, where previously existing subjects (usually people) channel the change. However his later works, especially *Logics of Worlds*, is a discourse on ‘subjectivizable bodies’¹¹⁰, a theory of pure multiples - a far more equalizing enterprise, within which the subjectivized body appears after the revolution/event has already occurred, as a part of its effects.

Hence, while Heidegger makes meaning of the existential spatiality of Dasein by what he calls ‘de-severance’, “ ‘De-severing’ amounts to making the farness vanish—that is, making the remoteness of something disappear, bringing it close”¹¹¹; in Neruda, the very act of ‘severing’ gives rise to a new existential space –

*Now
We close
Your windows
And an oppressive
Premature night
Takes possession
Of every room*

*Darkened,
You stay alive...*

*Only the shadows
Know the secrets
Of locked houses,
Only
The thwarted wind
And, on the roof, the blossoming moon...*

***Oda a la casa abandonada*¹¹² (Ode to an Abandoned House)**

109. Heidegger sometimes uses the term dwelling to capture the distinctive manner in which Dasein is in the world. To dwell in a house is not merely to be inside it spatially in the sense just canvassed. Rather, it is to belong there, to have a familiar place there. It is in this sense that Dasein is (essentially) in the world.

110. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. By Toscano Alberto, Bloomsbury, 2013, Pg 455-487

111. Heidegger Martin, John Macquarrie, and Edward Robinson. *Being and Time*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1962, Pg 139

112. Neruda Pablo, “Oda a la casa abandonada”, *All the Odes*, Ed. By Ilan Stavans, Trans. By Margaret Sayers Peden, Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, New York, 2013, Pg 11

In Neruda, the Heideggerian notion of ‘Being-with’ is overturned. The idea that it is Dasein, for whose sake, all equipment is, or in Dasein’s essential co-existence with the equipment, the truth of the entire network is revealed to us – (“The boat anchored at the shore is assigned in its Being-in-itself to an acquaintance who undertakes voyages with it; but even if it is a ‘boat which is strange to us’, it still is indicative of Others. The Others who are thus ‘encountered’ in a ready-to-hand, environmental context of equipment, are not somehow added on in thought to some Thing which is proximally just present-at-hand; such ‘Things’ are encountered from out of a world in which they are ready-to-hand for Others—a world which is always mine too in advance.”)¹¹³ is challenged by turning the equipment into the Dasein, for whose sake, everything else exists – the Nerudian anchor¹¹⁴, who proudly crossed the hills on a bus, without penetrating the rivers, and lay in the poet’s garden, a terrestrial creature, dreaming of carnations, or the Nerudian scissors¹¹⁵- explorers of the world which cut our bridal garments and our funeral shrouds with the same un-sentimental indifference, turning our entire lives into mere cloth to be cut – thus pointing towards a more equalizing, mathematical ontology, rather than a Dasein centred one.

The essentially Heideggerian encounter with things or equipment that break down is again, an encounter, which turns Dasein into a practical problem solver who still looks at the object as something which has caused an interruption in its skilled activity.

“The presence-at-hand of something that cannot be used is still not devoid of all readiness-to-hand whatsoever; equipment which is present-at-hand in this way is still not just a Thing which occurs somewhere. The damage to the equipment is still not a mere alteration of a Thing—not a change of properties which just occurs in something present-at-hand.”¹¹⁶

The break-down as an event in Heidegger might illuminate the Dasein centred network of things, or in Badiouan terms, their transcendental indexing, but doesn’t go further than that.

However, an encounter with broken things in the Nerudian world is essentially different. Here the breaking down of things or equipment can potentially be a true Badiouan event, capable of generating a truth. It is “purely haphazard, and cannot be inferred from the situation”.¹¹⁷

Things get broken

At home

As if seized by the whim

Of invisible havoc:

Not by my hands,

Or yours,

Or the girls

113. Heidegger Martin, John Macquarrie, and Edward Robinson. *Being and Time*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1962, Pg 154

114. Refer to Neruda Pablo, “Oda al ancla”, *All the Odes*, Ed. By Ilan Stavans, Trans. By Ilan Stavans, Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, New York, 2013, Pg 14

115. Refer to Neruda Pablo, “Oda a las Tijeras”, *All the Odes*, Ed. By Ilan Stavans, Trans. By Ilan Stavans, Farrar, Strauss, Giroux, New York, 2013, Pg 485

116. Heidegger, Martin, John Macquarrie, and Edward Robinson. *Being and Time*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1962, Pg 103

117. Badiou Alain, *Being and Event*, Trans. by Oliver Feltham, Bloomsbury, 2013, Pg 215

*With obstinate nails
Or the course of planets:
Not by someone or something,
Not by the summer,
Not the meridian ocher
Or the earthly darkness,
Not the nose or the elbow,
Not the expanding hip,
The ankle
Or the gust of wind...*

Oda a las cosas rotas¹¹⁸ (*Ode to Broken things*)

This encounter, instead of being directed towards restoring the disrupted pragmatic everyday activity, transforms into a true Badiouan event – bringing to the fore, a sound that was previously drowned in the clicking of the clocks, the clattering of the plates, the tinkling of the glass – a more primordial sound, a pure sound relegated to the void comes forth – transforming and reconstructing the transcendental.

Heidegger in *Being and Time* writes, “What we ‘first’ hear is never noises or complexes of sounds, but the creaking waggon, the motor-cycle. We hear the column on the march, the north wind, the woodpecker tapping, the fire crackling... It requires a very artificial and complicated frame of mind to ‘hear’ a ‘pure noise’. The fact that motor-cycles and waggons are what we proximally hear is the phenomenal evidence that in every case Dasein, as Being-in-the-world, already dwells alongside what is ready-to-hand within-the-world; it certainly does not dwell proximally alongside ‘sensations’; nor would it first have to give shape to the swirl of sensations to provide a springboard from which the subject leaps off and finally arrives at a ‘world’. Dasein, as essentially understanding, is proximally alongside what is understood.”¹¹⁹

What Heidegger terms as an ‘artificial and complicated frame of mind’, emerges as a true evental site in Neruda, in the end lines of the same poem where things are allowed to be de-contextualized, to sound like the river...

*Let us collect everything once and for all,
Clocks,
Plates, cups carved in cold,
Into a poke and let’s give
All our belongings to the sea:
Let our possessions be undone
In one single alarming destruction,
Allowing things to sound
Like a river
And let the sea
With its arduous labour of tides*

118. Neruda Pablo, “Oda a las cosas rotas”, *All the Odes*, Ed. By Ilan Stavans, Trans. By Ilan Stavans, Farrar, Strauss, Giroux, New York, 2013, Pg 115

119. Heidegger, Martin, John Macquarrie, and Edward Robinson. *Being and Time*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1962, Pg 207

*Reconstruct the many useless things
That no hand ever breaks
But just keep breaking.*

But when the things are eventually reconstructed, when they rise again from the sea, they are once again tools, but in a reconstructed transcendental of the world, they rise like the truth – the very specific, yet universal truth of the Nerudian world.

*And so the coming
Of the new life
That,
Fighting and singing,
We preach
Will be a coming of soup-bowls,
A perfect panoply of spoons.
An ocean of steam rising from pots
In a world
Without hunger,
And a total mobilization of spoons,
Will shed light where once was darkness,
Shining on plates spread all over the table
Like contented flowers.*

***Oda a la cuchara*¹²⁰ (Ode to the spoon)**

In Heidegger, the notion of ‘worldhood’ gets variously re-interpreted, until “its deep structure gets played out in terms of temporality”, whereas, the deep structures of the Nerudian and the Badiouan worlds get played out in terms of the ‘event’. The Heideggerian ready to hand notion of truth could point towards the ‘being-qua-being’ or the ontological object. But, through the ‘ode’ as the event which names itself in its transcendental, emerges the topological object – which combines the ‘being’ and ‘being there’ in the radically new Badiouan ontological category, into which the Nerudian objects fall. Thus, as the Heideggerian ‘poem’ itself gets named in the ode, it transforms into the Badiouan ‘matheme’.

The ‘phenomenon’ of the Nerudian Hammer in Badiouan terms

The phenomenon of the hammer with respect to the three above mentioned multiples/poems it appears in (‘Oda al edificio’, ‘Oda al serrucho’ and ‘Oda a las cosas rotas’) can be presented in a formal Badiouan exposition as follows:

- a) Badiou defines ‘phenomenon’¹²¹ as – “Given a fixed element of A , let’s say $a \in A$, we call ‘phenomenon of ‘a’ relative to A (in the world m in question) the set of values of the function of appearing $Id(a,x)$ for all the x ’s which co-appear with a in the set A . In other words, for $x_1 \in A$, $x_2 \in A, \dots, x_a \in A, \dots$, we have the transcendental values of the identity of a to $x_1, x_2, \dots, x_a, \dots$, defined by $Id(a,x_1), Id(a,x_2), \dots, Id(a,x_a), \dots$. The set formed

120. Neruda Pablo, “Oda a la cuchara”, *All the Odes*, Ed. By Ilan Stavans, Trans. By Ken Krabbenhoft, Farrar, Strauss, Giroux, New York, 2013, Pg 14

121. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. By Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury, 2013, Pg 245

by ‘a’ and all the transcendental degrees constitutes the phenomenon of ‘a’ (relative to A). We will write this as follows:

$$\Phi(a/A) = \{a, [(a,x_1), Id(a,x_2)\dots Id(a,x_a)\dots]/x_a \in A\}$$

- b) Badiou defines degree of existence¹²² of x in the set A , and thus in the world \mathbf{m} , “the value taken by the function $Id(x,x)$ in the transcendental of this world. Accordingly, for a given multiple, existence is the degree according to which it is identical to itself to the extent that it appears in the world...existence is relative to a world and that its concept is that of a measure, or a degree”.
- c) Badiou defines phenomenal component¹²³ as –“Take a set A which appears in a world \mathbf{m} whose transcendental is T . A ‘phenomenal component’ of A is a function that associates a transcendental degree p to every element x of A ”

The world in question ‘ \mathbf{m} ’ is the set comprised of three multiples A (Oda al Edificio), B (Oda al serrucho) and C (Oda a las cosas rotas)

$\mathbf{m} - \{A, B, C\}$

Let the hammer be the component a

Thus **phenomenon of a relative to A(‘ODA AL EDIFICIO’)**

Other elements of the multiple A :

Men/Dasein - x_1 , Steel - x_2 , Stones - x_3 , Walls - x_4 , Cement - $x_5 \dots x_a$

Phenomenal component : their role in building the structure (Readiness at hand)

The identity of the hammer (a) with Man (x_1) is of a high degree where the identity of the man disappears into the hammer, transforming into simply the act of hitting steel on steel (*Where is the individual?/It is a hammer, a hit of steel on steel*), however in the subsequent lines, the hammer is shown to be distinct to man (*He should have dispensed with its petty prides/ and raise a cupola with men,/to erect/order among all/and share the metallic simplicity of inexorable structures...*)

Hence, $Id(a,x_1) = q$ (intermediate degree)

The identity of the hammer with the steel, stones, wall, cement etc is of a higher intensity, each working as an equal point in the system, but adding its own reasoning to the structure being built (*...implanted a system/ for the building to be erected,/will continue to build/the collective rose...*)

Hence, $Id(a,x_2) = Id(a,x_3) = Id(a,x_4) \dots = p$ (where $p > q$)

122. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. By Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury, 2013, Pg 246

123. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. By Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury, 2013, Pg 247

Also the existence of a , Ea , in the multiple A is $\text{Id}(a,a) = r$ (where $r > p > q$)

Hence the phenomenon of a relative to A in terms of the phenomenal component (their role in building the structure) is

$$\Phi(a/A) = \{a, [r,p,q\dots]\}$$

Phenomenon of a relative to B ('Oda al serrucho')¹²⁴

Other elements of B: x_1 - saw, x_2 - sickle, x_3 - chisel, x_4 - fish

Phenomenal component – determinate properties of being a hammer (Presence at hand)

The identity of the hammer to the saw is of an intermediate degree of lesser intensity – even though it shares the function and the nobility of a tool with the saw, it's appearance is in no manner similar to the saw...*(you don't assume a jauntiness/like the incredible hammer,/its head of steel/decorated with two rooster feathers/but like a fish from the profound submarine plenitude...)*

$$\text{Hence } \text{Id}(a,x_1) = p$$

$$\text{Id}(a,x_2) = \text{Id}(a,x_3) = q \text{ (where } q > p\text{)}$$

$$\text{Id}(a,x_4) = \mu \text{ (minimum)}$$

$$Ea = \text{Id}(a,a) = M \text{ (maximum)}$$

Hence the phenomenon of a relative to B in terms of the phenomenal component (determinate properties of the hammer) is

$$\Phi(a/B) = \{a, [\mu,\dots q,p,\dots M]\}$$

Similarly, the phenomenon of a relative to C ('Oda a las cosas rotas')

Other elements of C: x_1 - clock, x_2 - flowerpot x_3 -plate, x_4 - lamp...

Phenomenal component – property of being a tool in working condition (Un-readiness at hand)

Here, Ea or existence of a or it's identity to itself as a tool in working condition is indexed to the minimum. $\text{Id}(a,a) = \mu$

$\text{Id}(a,x_1) = \text{Id}(a,x_2) = \text{Id}(a,x_3) = M$ (The hammer, unnamed here, becomes one with the other broken things...loses its form – *Life grinds/on the glass, wears out the clothing/shattering/pounding/the forms/and what survives with time is like/an island or an ocean ship...*)

124. Neruda Pablo, "Oda al serrucho", *All the Odes*, Ed. By Ilan Stavans, Trans. By Ken Krabbenhoft, Farrar, Strauss, Giroux, New York, Pg 163

Thus $\Phi(a/C) = \{a, [\mu, M]\}$

The transcendental of this multiple with just two degrees, points to the presence of a 'subjectivizable body', an agent of truth, which indexes all its elements to either μ or M , which points to the possibility of an event that might have occurred. The following lines written by Badiou on the 'Body of the poem'¹²⁵ : "...the 'body' noticeably gathers together disparate elements, all of them drawn from the storm rising over the sea: the wind's reviving', the 'salt-breathing potency', 'the wave'....In fact, concentrated in the figure of the body, we have a part of the marine site – the one which, counter to the 'quiet roof' and the 'sure treasure' is consistent with the inversion in the value of consciousness, which passes from mortal inertia to affirmative life."¹²⁶ In an exact parallel, the final stanza of 'Oda a las cosas rotas' transforms into this life affirming marine site, transfiguring and reconstructing the transcendental. Here, one must re-quote the lines from above in the context of the above formal exposition.

*Let us collect everything once and for all,
Clocks,
Plates, cups carved in cold,
Into a poke and let's give
All our belongings to the sea:
Let our possessions be undone
In one single alarming destruction,
Allowing things to sound
Like a river
And let the sea
With its arduous labour of tides
Reconstruct the many useless things
That no hand ever breaks
But just keep breaking.*

What is evident from all of the above is that Heidegger's phenomenology merely speaks of different encounters in a given world, where as Badiou's ontology unites these encounters or logics of smaller worlds into the greater logic of a larger world – the Nerudian world, where the 'ode' named itself within its transcendental and the void emerged.

The hand as equipment and the problem of worldhood

At this stage, one last exposition will perhaps lay bare the true extent of the fundamental difference between Heideggerian and Nerudian/Badiouan phenomenology/ontology. In trying to ontologically define a 'world', Heidegger starts with identifying the 'entities' in the world. "Should we then first attach ourselves to those entities with which Dasein proximally and for the most part dwells – Things 'invested with value'? Do not these 'really' show us the world in which we live?"¹²⁷ He then navigates the idea of every Dasein having its own subjective world, and a common world shared by all Dasein to arrive at the idea of 'worldhood of the

125. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Badiou Alain, Trans. By Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury, 2013, Pg 466

126. Refer to Valery Paul, "The Graveyard by the Sea", *Charms*, Trans. by Peter Dale, Anvil Press Poetry, 2007

127. Heidegger Martin, John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. *Being and Time*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1962, Pg 92

world'. He starts by attaching three significations to the phenomenon of the world – the first being a purely ontical concept, which encompasses all the substantial or 'present-at-hand' entities present. The second signification posits an ontological meaning to the idea of the world, whereby, the beings of these entities present within the world are taken into consideration. The third signification, which he holds onto is, "World" can be understood in another ontical sense – not, however, as those entities which Dasein essentially is not and which can be encountered within-the-world, but rather as that 'wherein' a factual Dasein as such can be said to 'live'.¹²⁸ Thus, according to him, he breaks from traditional ontology to make Dasein his point of access to the world. "The theme of our analytic is to be Being-in-the-world, and accordingly the very world itself; and these are to be considered within the horizon of average everyday-ness – the kind of Being which is closest to Dasein. We must make a study of everyday Being-in-the-world; with the phenomenal support which this gives us, something like the world must come into view."¹²⁹

Our own hands, to which one could indisputably bestow the Heideggerian characteristic of being a 'ready-to-hand equipment', ("entities which we encounter in concern")¹³⁰ that, with which we or the Dasein dwells, with which we have everyday dealings with, along with whose being, our own beings are lit up – our hands are a manipulable part of our world, which we use 'in order to' do many things. Even if this hand is severed, or damaged and rendered unusable, it still is an equipmental part of our world. "In a peculiar and obvious manner, the 'Things' which are closest to us are 'in themselves' in the concern which makes use of them without noticing them explicitly – the concern which can come up against something unusable. When equipment cannot be used, this implies that the constitutive assignment of the "in-order-to" to a "towards-this" has been disturbed. The assignments themselves are not observed; they are rather 'there' when we concernfully submit ourselves to them. But when an assignment has been disturbed – when something is unusable for some purpose – then the assignment becomes explicit".¹³¹ In either case, the hand, is a being of the 'world', the 'world' which is "something 'wherein' Dasein as an entity already was"¹³². Thus 'Being-in-the world' according to Heidegger amounts to a "non-thematic circumspective absorption in references or assignments constitutive for the readiness-to-hand of a totality of equipment"¹³³. In other words, we understand it authentically when we are using it 'in order to' do something, or it breaks down and prevents us from doing something that we intended to do and in its totality, we discover, not just our most intimate domestic environment, namely our own bodies, but also the public world, to which the work produced by the hand is in some way or other accessible.

These discoveries, or "lit-up phenomena" while using ready-to-hand equipment, or missing the un-ready-to-hand, according to Heidegger, allow the world to come to the fore, and the Being

128. Heidegger Martin, John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, *Being and Time*, Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1962, Pg 93

129. Heidegger Martin, John Macquarrie, and Edward Robinson. *Being and Time*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1962, Pg 94

130. Heidegger Martin, John Macquarrie, and Edward Robinson. *Being and Time*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1962, Pg 97

131. Heidegger Martin, John Macquarrie, and Edward Robinson. *Being and Time*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1962, Pg 105

132. Heidegger Martin, John Macquarrie, and Edward Robinson. *Being and Time*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1962, Pg 106

133. Heidegger Martin, John Macquarrie, and Edward Robinson. *Being and Time*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1962, Pg 107

of the ready-to-hand equipment “has the structure of assignment or reference”¹³⁴ pertaining to the world, or its ‘involvement’ in the world. “But the totality of involvements itself goes back ultimately to a “towards which” in which there is no further involvement...This primary “towards which” is not just another “towards this” as something in which an involvement is possible. The primary ‘towards which’ is a “for the sake of which”. But the ‘for the sake of’ always pertains to the Being of Dasein...”¹³⁵. The hammer is involved in hammering in order to make something fast, which is involved in making something fast for the purpose of sitting/eating/ etc, all for the sake of Dasein. This ready-to-hand equipment, apart from its functionality, also has a spatiality, which makes it possible to belong to the world. Heidegger, names it as the “region”. “ ‘In the region of’ means not only ‘in the direction of’ but also within the range of something that lies in that direction”¹³⁶. And any equipment, that belongs to this ‘region’, has an *a priori* and given familiarity with Dasein, something that’s unconscious and inconspicuous. And if Dasein has any spatiality, it is to be conceived by its being alongside these other equipmental entities with ‘concern’. Here, Heidegger uses the term ‘de-severance’, an act through which Dasein brings these other kinds of entities closer to itself. In such a context, if one were to look at our own ‘hands’ as an equipment, it is perhaps the most ready-to-hand entity that we deal with every single day. My hands, as they slide over the keyboard or the pages of Heidegger’s ‘Being and Time’ are the closest entities to me, which I was seemingly unaware of, until right now, when I am to theoretically and academically examine their ‘presence-at-hand’ in the given context. This Heideggerian idea of ‘de-severing’, forged out of a deep familiarity and involvement between Dasein and equipment, an essential act for the formation of a ‘world’ gets turned on its head in Nerudian thematics, wherein new worlds are forged out of extreme acts of ‘severing’ or making them remote, whereby the hands, still attached to the Dasein, still functioning ‘in order to’¹³⁷ and ‘towards’ an assignment - still forges a new world, unfamiliar to the Dasein, a world where Dasein never was/is – and yet it is a legitimate world in Nerudian and Badiouan terms.

Let us look at the poem ‘Oda a una lavandera nocturna’¹³⁸ (Ode to a nocturnal washerwoman), wherein, in the following lines, the washerwoman while in the act of washing the clothes with her two hands, suddenly disappears into the darkness of the night. She becomes the night sky, and only her hands are visible in the light of a candle still washing the clothes. This sudden and literal disappearance of Dasein from the scene or the region, forces Neruda to call this circle of light, a planet in its own right.

134. Heidegger Martin, John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, *Being and Time*, Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1962, Pg 111

135. Heidegger Martin, John Macquarrie, and Edward Robinson. *Being and Time*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1962, Pg 117

136. Heidegger Martin, John Macquarrie, and Edward Robinson. *Being and Time*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1962, Pg 136

137. Heidegger Martin, John Macquarrie, and Edward Robinson. *Being and Time*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1962, Pg 105

138. Neruda Pablo, “Oda a una lavandera nocturna”, *All the Odes*, Ed. By Ilan Stavans, Trans. By Ken Krabbenhoft, Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, New York, 2013, Pg 458

...the shadow
Blurred
Her head
And the washerwoman
Is the night, the night sky,
And her candle
A tiny
Planet
Lighting
Her hands
That raise
And scrub
The clothes,
Rising and falling,
Brandishing
Air, water,
Glowing soap,
Magnetic suds...

The world consisting of the hands – rising and falling in the candle light, brandishing air and water, has the spatiality of that visual circle marked by the glow of the candle, floating alone in the darkness. Even while fulfilling the daily chore of the nocturnal washerwoman, even in their every-nightness, these hands in Neruda’s poems, have a chemistry, a dynamic with the air, water, soap and suds, far removed from the laundry woman herself.

Similarly in ‘Oda a tus manos’¹³⁹, (‘Ode to your hands’), the hands are two white birds, feathers from heaven, bread and water...their beings, completely independent from the body they are attached to. They come and go, work or rest on their own accord, while they work, they sound like they are far away, and when they put themselves on the poet’s heart while he is asleep, he considers it a miracle...

Your hands, when working,
Come and go,
Far away, they sound
Like tuning forks,
Make fire and suddenly splash about

139. Neruda Pablo, “Oda a tus manos”, *All the Odes*, Ed. By Ilan Stavans, Trans. By Ken Krabbenhoft, Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, New York, 2013, Pg 819

In the black
Kitchen water,
Peck the typing machine clearing out
The thicket of my calligraphy,
Nail on the wall,
Wash clothes
And return again to their whiteness.

For some reason,
It was deemed necessary on earth
That this miracle
Would sleep and fly
Over my heart.

Thus the independent, self-serving hands work, come or go, walking or flying, as though inhabiting a different world than the body it is attached to, shedding the Heideggerian ontologico-categorical attribute of ‘equipment’ as ‘equipment’.

Badiouan worlds

Thus while Heidegger puts a Dasein-centric condition to the existence of equipment or other entities which are not Dasein, “Dasein, in its familiarity with significance, is the ontical condition for the possibility of discovering entities which are encountered in a world with involvement (readiness-to-hand) as their kind of Being, and which can thus make themselves known as they are in themselves.”¹⁴⁰ Badiou instead requires only a “minimal phenomenology of abstract appearing” for any multiple to constitute a world. This phenomenology requires only three operations,

“a. A minimum of appearance is given.

b. The possibility of conjoining the values of appearance of two multiples (and therefore of any finite number of multiples)

c. The possibility of globally synthesizing the values of appearance of any number of multiples, even if there is an infinity of them.”¹⁴¹

We have dealt with the formal exposition of these three operations of the minimum, the conjunction and the envelope much earlier in the thesis, here, it would suffice to say, that we can call any given situation, a world closed in itself as long as the multiples situated within it, can be identified on the basis of other beings within that situation, irrespective of the presence/absence of Dasein. Here, it is important to note the point that Badiou makes about the possibility of thinking, in a world, what does not appear in the world...thus making the pure absence of Dasein a logical count of a given world. “For appearing to be consistent requires

140. Heidegger Martin, John Macquarrie, and Edward Robinson. *Being and Time*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1962, Pg 120

141. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury, 2013, Pg 103

the existence of a transcendental marking of non-appearing, or a logical mark of non-appearance. The thinkability of non-appearance rests on this marking, which is the intra-worldly index of the not-there of a multiple.”¹⁴²

Therefore in Badiouan terms, just based on the logical operator/phenomenal component of visibility - the hands, the water, the clothes, the soap suds, all encircled by the light of the candle, constitute a world **m**. Each of these elements, based on their visibility, relate to each other with a high degree of identity. The rest of the body of the laundry woman, which is invisible forms the minimum (μ) component of the transcendental of this world. The two hands which relate to each other with a high degree of identity in this world, have a minimum relation to the rest of the laundry woman, while they appear in this world **m**. Similarly in the second poem, the hands, in their independent flight, away from the body have high degrees of identity with other detached migratory hands, to birds, feather, fish, bread, water, wheat, until they return to the body in the night to sleep. This world, that the hands inhabit during the day is once again marked by the absence of the body/Dasein, which appears as the μ component of the Transcendental of their world.

In a third scenario, in the Nerudian world of the poem ‘Oda a la jardinera’¹⁴³ (‘Ode to a woman gardening’), the hands appear once more, this time, attached to the entire corporeal self of the woman,

When

I saw you digging, digging,

Removing rocks

and coping with roots,

I knew at once,

My little farmer,

That

Not only

Your hands

But your heart

Were of the earth...

That there you were

Working your wonders...

The hands thus appear, in three different worlds, indexed differently to the transcendentals of each world, with three distinct onto-logical signatures – a) completely detached, b) free spirited and independent and c) attached – each equally important, of equal stature. In spite of being proximal and ready-to-hand, their closeness does not regulate itself “in terms of circumspectively ‘calculative’ manipulating and using”¹⁴⁴, their directionality is not dictated

142. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury, 2013, Pg 122

143. Neruda Pablo, “Oda a la jardinera”, *All the Odes*, Ed. By Ilan Stavans, Trans. By Ken Krabbenhoft, Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, New York, 2013, Pg 807

144. Heidegger Martin, John Macquarrie, and Edward Robinson. *Being and Time*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1962, Pg 135

by some Dasein centred activity, and their spatiality can be random, and not defined by their context as Heideggerian equipment. (“Anything constantly ready-to-hand of which circumspective Being-in-the-world takes account beforehand, has its place. The “where” of its readiness-to-hand is put to account as a matter for concern, and oriented towards the rest of what is ready-to-hand. Thus, the sun, whose light and warmth are in everyday use, has its own places – sunrise, midday, sunset, midnight; these are discovered in circumspection and treated distinctively in terms of changes in the usability of what the sun bestows”¹⁴⁵) And thus, the hands, the most proximal equipment, thrives in the floating glow of candle light against the night sky, thrives in the blue skies, flying alongside other hands, thrives alongside our heart and the earth, in its splendid and independent numerology.

145. Heidegger Martin, John Macquarrie, and Edward Robinson. *Being and Time*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1962, Pg 137

CHAPTER 5

EXISTENCE UNDER THE OPERATION OF THE PHENOMENAL COMPONENT

So far, in this thesis we have managed to establish a certain efficacy of Badiouan methodologies to analyse and understand the ontology of Nerudian objects, and by the study of the Nerudian equipmental objects in the preceding chapter, we have managed to establish, that the objects that appear in Nerudian worlds are not directed by a Dasein centered force of ideas. Rather, their behaviour is dictated and can be evaluated by the transcendental logic of the structure of a world, as proposed by Badiou. At this point, a question may arise that the world itself is forged by the poet or driven by his ideas. However, before we can effectively establish the independence of the poetic world from the poet later in the thesis, at this juncture, it should suffice by the act of nominating a poem by Neruda as a 'Nerudian world' or by axiomatizing it as a world, we can safely consider a Nerudian poem as an independent situation / world constituted by the 'Greater logic' of 'being there' (Transcendental logic) akin to Badiou's own treatment of works of art such as Robert Hubert's painting (The Bathing Pool) or Paul Valery's poem, (La Cimetière Marin). "For the phenomenologist, the real is in the final analysis of consciousness. For me – consciousness is at best a distant effect of real assemblages and their eventual caesura".¹⁴⁶ Our point of access to this world should therefore not be through the poet's consciousness, rather the key to this world/structure lies in the onto-logical 'theory of the situations of being' and the operations it dictates – "This structure has properties that vary according to the situation. But it also has general invariant properties, without which it could not operate. There is a general mathematics of the transcendental"¹⁴⁷

With this, we could state our very first postulate about Nerudian objects -

The Being of Nerudian objects is independent of Dasein as subject. These objects appear in worlds, whose logic is purely transcendental (dependent only upon other 'multiple beings' present within that situation) and as such, mathematical per se.

However, this ontology is far from complete and one needs to delve further into different categories of objects and their appearing to derive their complete ontological signature. But before we move further, once again (we have illustrated this point amply in Chapter 3), it should be emphasized here, that idealists would always have a fundamental difference with this methodology, arguing that our access to these objects is primarily by way of thinking (primarily the poet's and secondarily the researcher's), however, each time the object topples the subjective expectations, even taking the poet by surprise, whereby he is only reduced to a passive observer and recorder of circumstances as they unfold, only reacting and emoting as per his own subjectivity, one is forced to rethink this entire problem of knowing and

146. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury, 2013, Pg 174

147. Badiou Alain, *Mathematics of the Transcendental*, Trans. by A.J Bartlett and Alex Ling, Bloomsbury, 2014, Pg 168

understanding reality. We are still calling it a Nerudian ontology, in so far as creating an osmotic membrane, allowing spontaneous movement of knowledge across it, depending on which side has a higher concentration by the end.

Prologue: The Invisible Man

At the very beginning of *Odas Elementales*, there is a prologue in the form of a poem, ‘Prologo: El hombre invisible’¹⁴⁸, which sets the stage for all the odes to follow. The poem starts off by mocking the old subjective poet, who can never get rid of the ‘I’ from all his beautifully and intricately woven narratives of love, pain and beauty. *“I laugh/I smile/at the old poets,/I adore all written poetry,/all the dew,/moon, diamond, drop/of submerged silver/by which my bygone brother/decorated the rose,/but/I smile,/they always say “I”,/each time/something happens to them,/it is always “I”/... It mocks the poet who walks alone with his/her lover on empty streets where no one else passes by, neither the fishermen, nor the brick makers, nor the booksellers. His world is empty, unpopulated, except for his feelings, which seem to be latched onto invisible, far away, remote ideas...because his feelings/belong to the sea,/he loves remote ports, for their names,/and writes about oceans/he doesn’t know,/... This poet’s very existence is moored to a darkness, an undefined nothingness, which he considers ‘different’ and ‘interesting’, but in Neruda’s world, these are empty words, lacking any substantial basis, and as such Neruda negates this kind of an existence. Then he goes on to say, I’m not superior to my brother/but I smile,/because I walk on the streets/ and only I don’t exist,/life goes on/like all the rivers,/I’m the only one/who is invisible,/...*

At this point, it is essential to see what Badiou writes about the category of ‘existence’. “Given a world and a function of appearing whose values lie in the transcendental of this world, we will call ‘existence’ of a being x which appears in this world the transcendental degree assigned to the self-identity of x .”¹⁴⁹. Once again, the world here, can be any situation or locality constituted of multiple beings, who appear with each other and are counted as elements of a singular set, like fruits in a fruit basket comprise a world, or in Badiou’s demonstration, the painting, ‘The Bathing Pool’¹⁵⁰ by Hubert Robert is a world in itself, comprised of multiple elements – the columns of the temple, the nude women, the statues etc. The way these elements relate to each other via certain properties, the redness and roundness of the apples or the distinctiveness of the temple columns, forms the transcendental field or the topological set within the main set. The apples via their colour and shape have a degree of high identity with each other. Similarly, the columns in the painting which are in the foreground appear bright and gilded and have a higher degree of identity to each other as compared to the columns which appear in the background and are bluish-black in colour. These identity functions have nothing to do with the gaze of the observer. A different set of rules govern their transcendental field – these are the rules of *symmetry* and *transitivity*. It does not matter how we approach the painting or the fruit bowl, whether we examine the pillars first or the nude women, whether we pick the apple first or the mango, their transcendental evaluation remain the same. So, within this rule governed transcendental indexing of elements of a multiple, what does Badiou mean by ‘self-identity’? It is clear that this category of ‘existence’ or ‘self-identity’ has more to do with the ‘appearance’ of this being in the transcendental schemata, rather than it’s being-qua-being or

148. Neruda Pablo, “Prologo: El hombre Invisible”, *All the Odes*, Ed. By Ilan Stavans, Trans. By Ken Krabbenhoft, Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, New York, 2013, Pg 3

149. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury, 2013, Pg 208

150. Robert Hubert, *The Bathing Pool*, 1733-1808, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

its ontic being. As such, even ‘self-identity’ or ‘existence’ is relative to the world in question – it is about the intensity of appearance of this being in a particular world, which regulates its degree of ‘existence’ or ‘self-identity’. “If one tries, in Hubert Robert’s painting, to count as one the central ensemble comprising the Venus of the temple, the connected column and the clothed women, one comes up against a dissemination of appearing, a self-relation whose intensity is weak. As a being-there in the painting-world, this multiple exists weakly (unlike, for example the group formed by the two nude bathers and the fountain that their clothes are thrown upon) This proves that it is not spatial separation that matters here, but rather existence, as transcendently constituted by the pictorial logic.”¹⁵¹

Thus, when Neruda says, “When I walk on the streets, only I don’t exist, life goes on, like all the rivers, I’m the only one who is invisible”...in Badiouan, it would translate as, “If the existence of x takes the minimal value in the transcendental, it is because x inexists absolutely in the world in question.”¹⁵² Thus by denying his own existence, while he speaks about himself walking down the street, Neruda is not essentially denying his ontological existence as the poet/observer, but is denying his logical appearance as purely himself in the scheme of things unfolding on the streets. In the lines that follow, this ‘inexistence’ is articulated further –

*...I am the only one
 who is invisible,
 no mysterious shadows,
 no gloom and darkness,
 everyone speaks to me,
 everyone wants to tell me things,
 to talk about their relatives,
 their misery and
 their joy,
 everyone passes by, and everyone
 tells me something,
 look at all the things they do!
 They cut wood,
 string electric lines,
 bake bread late into the night...*

But the nature of this ‘inexistence’ is still unclear. Is it the “essential absent”, the way a living male is, from Hubert Robert’s painting about which Badiou writes, “the masculine sex inexists for the painting because it is the eye whose gaze the painting awaits; but were this eye to be included, a different world would be at stake, another regime of appearing than the one enclosed by the edges of the canvas.”¹⁵³. This ‘essential absence’ and possible ‘inclusion’ – are both present simultaneously in Neruda’s poem, whereby he is absent yet present in a way that everyone speaks to him, wants to tell him things, wants to share their misery and their joys with him. Is he the ever-present, ever included, yet hidden void that promises a potential change

151. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury, 2013, Pg 209

152. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury, 2013, Pg 209

153. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury, 2013, Pg 209

of regime/transcendental schemata or is he merely the exterior, outward gaze, which does not prescribe the inner regime of the poem or the street, which follows its own fixed rules of appearance?

First, let us see, what qualifies this inexistence and invisibility?

What is this function which renders him invisible in the current schemata of the street-world? The ‘function’ here can be intuitively understood as the criteria of classification, that which associates different degrees of appearance to the elements of a set. For e.g. the function, that in a fruit bowl, accords maximum value of appearance to the apples which are red and round, an intermediate value to greener apples etc. Or in Badiou’s analysis of the Hubert Robert painting, “the function associates to the columns of the temple, the maximal value if they are very clearly outlined and golden or orange, the minimal value if they are black, and an intermediate value if they are not obviously either the one or the other, dissipating their light into the sylvan blue...”¹⁵⁴. Badiou terms this function as the ‘phenomenal component’ and defines it as, “We will call ‘phenomenal component’ a function of a being-there-in-a-world on the transcendental of this world. If the function has degree p , as its value for an element of the being-there under consideration, this means that the element belongs ‘to the p degree’ to the component defined by the function. The elements that ‘absolutely’ compose the phenomenal component are those to which the function assigns the maximal transcendental degree.”¹⁵⁵

Let us then formally consider the two worlds within the poem, *El hombre invisible*, and try to identify the phenomenal components that accords the first kind of poet’s existence in the first half of the poem, a degree of maximal value or \mathbf{M} and in the second, a degree of minimal value or μ to Neruda’s own existence in the poem. But before we reconstruct the two halves of the poem in mathematical/Badiouan terminology, it is important to set in place the formal exposition of the concepts of ‘existence’, ‘phenomenal component’ and ‘atom of appearing’ which would then act as the key or a kind of glossary for the analysis to follow.

‘Existence’, ‘Phenomenal component’ and ‘Atom of appearing’

“Existence is relative to a world, and that its concept is that of a measure”¹⁵⁶

“Given a world \mathbf{m} , and a multiple A that belongs to it, the measure of the identity of any element x that belongs to A , to itself is called its degree of existence or $Id(x,x) = Ex$ (read as Existence of x). The power of this degree of existence is dependent upon the function of the phenomenal component that’s operating on it, and as such is relative. If we call this function or operator as π , this function operating on the element x , to accord to it, its degree of existence, is written as $\pi(x)$. The value of $\pi(x)$ can be μ or M or any degree p depending upon the logic of appearing. “If for a given $x \in A$ (read as x , which is an element of the multiple A or belongs to A), we have $\pi(x) = M$ (the maximum), we can say that x belongs ‘absolutely’ to the component constructed by the function π . If $\pi(x) = \mu$, (the minimum), we will say that x does belong to the component in the least. If $\pi(x) = p$, we will say that x p -belongs to it.”¹⁵⁷

154. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury, 2013, Pg 213

155. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury, 2013, Pg 213

156. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury, Pg 246

157. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury, Pg 247

For example, in the world \mathbf{m} of a dining table, to which belongs the fruit bowl or multiple \mathbf{A} , we can consider the red apple as an element x that belongs to the multiple \mathbf{A} . Suppose the phenomenal component or function π here, accords the maximum value to the characteristics of being a) a fruit and b) being red, then we can write, $\pi(x) = M$, and the value of existence of all red apples (say, there are three apples a, b and c) is equal, or $Ea = Eb = Ec = M$. Consider a banana as another element y that belongs to \mathbf{A} or the fruit bowl, we can write $\pi(y) = p$, by the virtue of the banana being a fruit, but not being red. Hence, it belongs to an intermediate degree to the multiple \mathbf{A} and hence the world \mathbf{m} , whilst the phenomenal component π is working on it. But, if we were to suppose a phenomenal component in this world, which ascribed values to say, being a vegetable, in that case, not a single element in the multiple \mathbf{A} , would be said to belong to the multiple or the world. Hence, one needs to define a minimal component for the multiple \mathbf{A} , to which at least one of the elements of \mathbf{A} belongs to. This is the minimal component which supports a phenomenon in the given world, below which none can appear within this world. Badiou term this phenomenal component as the *atomic-object-component* or *atom*. This is not to be misunderstood, as only that phenomenal component to which only one ontologically distinct element belongs, but any such component, to which even if two or more ontologically distinct elements belong absolutely, they are considered to be equal. Hence every phenomenal prescription to which at least one or more elements of a given set belong to absolutely, is termed as an atomic component or $\mathbf{a}(x)$. Conversely, one could say that every ontological element, a , that belongs to the set, prescribes a phenomenon, and as such is an atom. Every element that is exactly similar or has the same degree of existence as a is considered to be the same atom and not two distinct atoms, as atom here is a category of appearance and not a purely ontic category. Thus an atomic function can be defined as the function that posits the identity between any element x of \mathbf{A} to a fixed element a of \mathbf{A} . One could thus say that every atomic prescription is derived from an element that is real and material. This is what Badiou terms as the postulate of materialism. “If a given atom, defined by the function $\mathbf{a}(x)$, is identical to a single atom of the type $\mathbf{a}(x)$ – in other words, if there exists a single $a \in \mathbf{A}$ such that for every $x \in \mathbf{A}$ we have $\mathbf{a}(x) = a(x) = Id(a,x)$ we will say that the atom $\mathbf{a}(x)$ is real.”¹⁵⁸

Having now formally established the concept of the ‘atom’, Badiou derives the formal concept and definition of the object – “By ‘object’ we understand the couple formed by a multiple \mathbf{A} , and a transcendental indexing \mathbf{Id} , a couple which is written $(\mathbf{A}, \mathbf{Id})$, under the condition that every atom of which \mathbf{A} is the support be real; in other words, that every atomic component of the appearing of \mathbf{A} be equivalent to a real atom $\mathbf{Id}(a,x)$ prescribed by an element a of \mathbf{A} .”¹⁵⁹

Having the above formalism in place, we can now go about deconstructing ‘The invisible man’ into two distinct halves or two distinct worlds and start to identify the phenomenal component and fundamental atoms in each of them.

World I – First Half of the Poem

Let us relook at the lines,

They always say “I”,

158. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury, 2013 Pg 250

159. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury, 2013, Pg 251

*Each time
Something happens to them,
It is always 'I',
Through the streets
Only they walk
And the sweetheart they love,
No one else,
Fishermen don't pass by,
Nor do booksellers,
Brickmakers don't pass by...
...no one is alive
Except him alone...*

In these lines, the phenomenal component that is operating is the function that accords only the 'I, a completely self-enclosed entity, the maximum degree of existence, and renders everything and everyone else on the street as invisible. Hence, in this world **m**, if we consider the 'I' of the poet an element a of **A**, and π as the phenomenal component which accords maximum degree of existence to only the self-enclosed cogito of the poet, then we can write, $\pi(a)=M$ (maximum degree of existence), or $Ea=Id(a,a)=M$ (to be read as existence of a which is equal to its identity with itself is Maximum, under the operation of the phenomenal component π).

Let us consider some of the other elements that appear in this half of the poem – the fishermen(b), the booksellers(c), the brickmakers(d) that don't pass by and in these lines,

*No one is thrown into the street
With beds and with chairs
And in factories
Nothing happens either,
Nothing happens,
Umbrellas are manufactured, goblets,
Weapons, locomotives,
Minerals are extracted
By digging in hell,
There's a strike,
Soldiers come,
Fire,
Shoot against the people,
That is,
Against poetry,*

*And my brother
 The poet
 Was in love,
 Or suffered
 Because his feelings
 Belong to the sea,
 He loves remote
 Ports, for their names
 And writes about oceans he doesn't know,
 Next to life, full
 Of an ear of corn,
 He passes by without knowing
 How to harvest it,
 Goes up and down
 Without ever touching land...
 ...everyday he eats bread
 But he has never seen a baker
 Nor has he gone to a meeting
 Of the baker's union*

the beds(e), the chairs(f), the factories(g), umbrellas(h), goblets(i), locomotives(j), and all other elements x – under the aegis of π , their existence is nil.

$$\pi(b) = \pi(c) = \pi(d) = \pi(e) \dots = \pi(x) = \mu \text{ (minimum)}$$

And since $\pi(a) = M$,

Hence from the above, one can derive, $Id(a,b) = Id(a,c) = Id(a,d) \dots = Id(a,x) = \mu$

There is no materialist basis for this poet's connection to the sea, the remote ports or the oceans. Hence, the only objective component in this world is the poet himself and as such the weight that he carries, is a pseudo weight, his emotions and his darkness belong within his own confines and he keeps getting tangled and disentangled within himself, and in this otherwise completely empty regime, ruled by $\pi(a)$ or $a(a)$ there is no possibility of a reconfiguration or a transformation.

World II – Second half of the poem

In the second half of the poem, let us look at these lines..

*Life goes on
 Like all the rivers,
 I'm the only one
 Who is invisible...*

*...everyone tells me something,
 And the many things they do!
 They cut wood,
 Haul electrical wire,
 Bake the bread
 Of everyday, till late at night
 With an iron spear
 They pierce the guts
 Of the earth
 And turn iron
 Into locks...*

Here the phenomenal component in operation accords the maximum degree of existence to elements that have achieved an organic unity with the things they do or their labour. Thus all object components forged by the act of labour – men/women who catch fish, who bake their bread, haul electrical wires, turn iron into locks, manufacture umbrellas – each one of them appear in this world with a high intensity of existence.

Thus the transcendental regime under the phenomenal operator of labour (l) accords maximum visibility to object components, conjoined by labour. So, even though ontologically distinct, the person and the fruit of his/her labour form a single object component – the ‘fisher-man’(a), the ‘bread-baker’(b), the iron-smith (c), and so on and so forth.

Here, $l(a) = l(b) = l(c) \dots = l(x) = M$ or $E_a = E_b = E_c = \dots = E_x = M$

Let us now consider the degree of existence of the poet, in this half of the poem in these lines,

*...because I walk on the streets
 And only I don't exist,
 Life goes on
 Like all the rivers,
 I'm the only one
 Who is invisible...*

Here, under the operation of the function of labour, until this point, the existence of the poet has been rendered a minimum value. Just the way, in Badiou's example of Quebec, the Inuit population, even while being ontologically present, is rendered inexistent in the period from 1918-1950, under the aegis of the phenomenal component, ‘civic capacity of the Quebecois population’. With no right to vote, the Inuit population had no civic agency. The population's inexistence therefore was “suspended between (ontological) being and a certain form of (logical) non-being.” Similarly, in his analysis of the Hubert Robert's painting, under the evaluation forced by the function, which accorded to maximal value to those pillars of the painting which had a clear outline and were golden or orange in appearance and a minimal value to those which appeared black, and intermediate values to the ones that were neither – rendered the columns on the left of the painting inexistent or excluded.



In similar vein, the logic of the poetry, evaluated under the function, which accords maximum value to elements that are forged by the act of labour (baker who bakes the bread, fisherman who catches fish etc) and minimal value to elements that are not, renders the poet, who appears as mere passerby within the second half as inexistent or invisible. Hence, if we consider Neruda's being in this half of the poem as 'n', under the evaluation of the phenomenal component labour (l), we can write $l(n) = \mu$.

At this juncture in the poem, it is important to once again articulate the proper nature of this 'in-existent' element, since from this point onwards, there are conundrums which would require a different conceptual solution to the problem. However, until now, Badiou's concept of the 'Inexistent' perfectly serves the purpose of identifying the poet's existence/appearance in this quarter of the second half of the poem. Badiou writes on the signification of this "phantom-like element", "It's existence is guaranteed in every object, because the minimum μ exists in every transcendental, and so too does in every multiple A of the world (ontologically conceived), the real atom prescribed by \emptyset_A . However since its degree of existence is nil and since its identity to every other element of A is also nil, it is with good reason that it is called the proper inexistent of A."¹⁶⁰

Hence we can say, in the object-component 'A' structured under the phenomenal functor of 'labour', the poet 'l(n)' is the 'proper inexistent' or \emptyset_A . "We will also note that it can be said of \emptyset_A both that it is (in the ontological sense) – since it belongs to the multiple A – and that it is not (in the logical sense), since its degree of existence in the world is nil."¹⁶¹ This statement thus subscribes to Badiou's postulate of materialism, which prescribes a real atom for every degree of existence, even nil. Or, in other words, the poet's ontological existence in the poem is undeniable, however, his logical existence in the object component 'constituted by labour' is nil as his relations with the other elements which appear logically in the component is also nil.

160. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury 2013, Pg 342

161. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury, Pg 342

Formally, in the above situation, if we designate ‘A’ as the object component and \emptyset_A as its proper inexistent, then for every $x \in A$, $\text{Id}(\emptyset_A, x) = \mu$. \emptyset_A is an atomic element whose materialist clause is satisfied by the physical/ontological presence of the poet ‘I’ in the above lines.

All of these elements in the poem in question that we have so identified and passed through the filter of the said phenomenal component can be designated as ‘object-elements’, since they have two dimensions – one of being and one of appearing, and as such they belong to the ‘object’ as defined above and not just a multiple being. Each of these object-elements are also atomic elements, since each of them prescribes an atom of being. Hence even though the object-component, ‘forged by labour’ sounds like something qualitative, rather than materialistic, similar to ‘that which defines the vertical axis’ in Hubert Robert’s painting - they are both prescribed by something real in the multiple in question, namely “They who cut wood” or a vertical column of the temple respectively. These object elements which oscillate between different registers of appearing, according to the phenomenal operation in question – do they undergo changes in their ontological or pure multiple beings as a result? Is their ability to appear in different world/components somehow altered whilst they are being subject to the dynamics of a certain operation? That is the question, which in a way lies at the heart of Badiou’s theory and also this thesis, as we try to move further in order to obtain a complete ontological signature of Nerudian objects. This question appears with renewed force as we try to analyse the next lines of ‘The Invisible Man’, and try to understand what happens to the intrinsic multiple organization of a fisher-man, once he has appeared in the world that has grasped his identity as fused to his labour? What happens to his miseries, happiness and other such elements. As the lines progress, things get more interesting as the qualification of the poet’s invisibility becomes ambiguous or unclear, as he is now visible to the other elements of the poem, as their confidante–

*Everyone talks to me,
Wants to tell me things,
Talks about their relatives,
Of their miseries
And happiness,
Everyone passes by and everyone
Tells me something
And the many things they do!*

We have to tread very slowly, carefully and step by step here, to identify the true nature of the poet’s existence from now on.

Firstly, we can say, until now, the identities between the other elements (a,b,c) and the poet (n) is still nil as the phenomenal functor ‘I’ operates.

We can write, $\text{Id}(a,n) = \text{Id}(b,n) = \text{Id}(c,n) \dots = \text{Id}(x,n) = \mu$

Or we could also say, under the functor ‘I’, the phenomenon of ‘n’ is nil.

Here, before proceeding further, one should also note, that there are certain other elements present in the poem, apart from the poet, which, according to the structuring component ‘labour’ have also been rendered inexistent, and these elements are ‘things’, ‘talks about relatives’, ‘miseries’, ‘happiness’...all of these elements present themselves as the excess of a

situation, unclassifiable by the current phenomenal operation. As such, one way to look at the above, is to treat the ‘inexistence’ of the poet as the present, yet hidden void of the situation, into which all of its excesses fall. Or, if we look at the lines “Everyone talks to me” onwards, we can see the presence of a new phenomenal functor which is now dictating the degrees of appearance in the poem. This functor now accords maximal value to elements which occupy either side of a shared relation of empathy. As such, under the operation of this new phenomenal functor, the poet’s absolute existence is ensured.

As we proceed with any analysis under the operation of the phenomenal component, it becomes more and more clear that we are undertaking a manner of analytic decomposition, which at some point threatens to undo the unity of the larger, more global world in question, which in this case is the poem in its entirety, parts of which have now been isolated or walled from its other parts due to a particular kind of transcendental indexing. Similarly in the case of Hubert Robert’s painting, when one only considers the temple as a set, under the operation of the ‘most visible column’, one fails to consider the painting’s unity as a whole. As each ontologically present element in the world/multiple in question prescribes a unique phenomenal component and its own nebula of transcendental indexing, this whole exercise might seem to turn out to be a case of “over-mining”, whereby objects-elements have been treated merely according to particular laws of appearance, in a completely localized manner, not doing full justice to the collective phenomenality of the poem or any world in question.

The proponents of Object Oriented Ontology¹⁶², especially Graham Harman, in his essay on the subject of undermining and overmining, explains this approach of overmining as, “Instead of saying objects are too shallow to be real, it might be said that they are too deep to be real. This approach became more common in the modern era and might be called, “overmining” to coin a new term. One such case would be outright idealism which claims that there is nothing hiding beneath that which appears to the mind. We also find overmining in the various philosophies of social constructionism, for which there is no independent reality outside the system of language, discourse or power. Philosophies that hold that there are only events, not objects also adopt an overmining strategy. So too does a philosophy such as that of Alfred North Whitehead, who says that the reality of things is exhausted by their relations with other things. We should note that the view that reality is exhaustively mathematizable is also an overmining position, since objects are thereby made interchangeable with what can be known about them.”¹⁶³. Badiou’s approach here is more nuanced which considers, not just the appearance of an object-element in a given multiple, but also, looks at its being-qua-being, still remaining within the boundaries of the said world and not descending into an infinite regress. However, at this point, the boundaries of the given world seem to be collapsing into individual fragments under the growing domination of each unique phenomenal component and Badiou tries to rescue the situation by trying to define the relations which are present within the different objects/object elements that appear within a larger multiple or a world.

Atomic Logic - Localization, Compatibility and Order

“We call ‘atomic logic’ the theory of the relations which are thinkable between the elements of an object.”¹⁶⁴. In other words, if we consider the poetry ‘The Invisible Man’ in its entirety

162. Refer to Harman Graham, *Object Oriented Ontology: A new theory of everything*, Pelican Books, 2018

163. Harman, Graham (2013), *Undermining, Overmining, and Duomining: A Critique*. In Jenna Sutela (ed.), *ADD Metaphysics*. Aalto University Design Research Laboratory.

164. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury 2013, Pg 221

as an object, we must be able to think of relations between atoms or object elements identified by two different phenomenal operators. For e.g between an element forged by labour and element identified by the component ‘elements on either side of a shared relation of empathy’.

Badiou illustrates this by analysing the components of Robert’s painting, “Given a world, let us arbitrarily choose a transcendental degree. We can then ask what an atom of appearing is relative to this degree. Consider the atom prescribed by ‘marking the vertical axis of the painting’, relative to a weak degree of pictorial intensity – for e.g the one that corresponds to the presence of the colour, ‘bright blue’ which is merely evoked , at the feet of the fountain on the left, by the piece of the draped woman’s dress. What is the transcendental measure of this assignation of the atom to a particular degree (a localization)?”¹⁶⁵

What Badiou consequently tries to do here is to use the set theoretical function of the conjunction to derive what is common between any two given elements, or in the above case an atom – which by its definition has been accorded the maximum degree of existence and a weaker degree corresponding to another phenomenal component. In this case, according to the rules of set theory, we know that if ‘p’ & ‘q’ are two transcendental degrees and $p > q$, then $p \cap q = q$. This operation has been termed as ‘localization’ by Badiou, and he illustrates it thus, “The value of the atom ‘marking the vertical axis’ has the maximum value for the column of the temple which is on the right foreground. The degree associated to the appearing of the bright blue is very close to the minimum. What appears in common to the two, localizing the atom according to this degree is obviously the conjunction of the two values. Now, the conjunction of the maximum and of any other degree is equal to the latter. We will thus say, in this particular case, that, for the being ‘column in front on the right’, the assignation of the atom to the localization ‘place of the bright blue in the painting world’ is equal to this localization’...It appears then that every assignation of an atom to a degree – every localization – is itself an atom.”¹⁶⁶. Till this point this may seem like a mere tautological exercise of saying, only in set theoretical terms, that every element that appears together in a given world is somehow related and are present relative to each other. Or say, if the element which is prescribed by the vertical axis is ‘a’ and the element prescribed by the place of the bright blue is ‘b’, it can also be said that as ‘b’ is a localization of ‘a’. “Thus through the mediation of the transcendental, we define a relation that is immanent to the multiple.”¹⁶⁷ However, if we look deeper, the ultimate consequence of this exercise is to understand the effects of appearance over the being of an element. This is simply because localization is after all about the relations between the elements of an object, and as such gives us information about the organizational structure of the object. This kind of language might throw us off unless we immediately ground it in reality, and in the context of the poem. If we localize the atomic component identified by ‘forged by labour’ - say a baker, over the degree identified by ‘elements that have something to say’, which turns out to be a degree of maximum intensity, then the ‘baker’ himself is one of the elements it identifies. Hence the conjunction between these two maximum degrees gives us the maximum. Now what this means is that the baker affects the things that it has to say by the virtue of what he does, and vice versa, i.e what the baker has to say also affects what he does. Thus what this exercise in localization does, is that it gives at least a minimum amount of consistency or basis for an ontological whole to stand up on its parts – a certain kind of

165. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury 2013, Pg 223

166. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury 2013, Pg 224

167. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury 2013, Pg 225

minimum synthesis to say the least. This is a kind of global or a larger relationship which is somehow dependent on both the ontological and the various transcendental structures of given region/world/object. Badiou terms this relation as the ‘transcendental functor’. “Given two real elements of the appearing-world, we can localize the one on the existence of the other. We thereby obtain an atom which, by virtue of the postulate of materialism, is necessarily real.”¹⁶⁸

Consider these lines in the poem once again,

*Everyone talks to me,
Wants to tell me things
talks about their relatives,
of their miseries
and happiness, everyone passes by and everyone
tells me something,
and the many things they do!
They cut wood,
Haul electrical wire,
Bake the bread...*

*Life is a box
Full of songs..*

The stanza in the beginning localizes the existence of two atoms on each other – ‘the ones that are forged by labour’ and ‘the ones that share a relation of empathy’ to create a new atom, which is ‘life as a box full of songs’. It is an atomic component, because life appears as an independent element in the poetic schemata. Also worth noting is that the localization of the first atom on the second or its reverse, seems symmetrical, giving way to the same atom of ‘life as a box’. Such components are termed as compatible by Badiou. “Given an object that appears in a world, we will say that two (real) elements of this object are ‘compatible’ if the localization of the one on the existence of the other is equal to the localization of the latter on the existence of the former.”¹⁶⁹

Let us consider the localization of the first kind of poet that appears in the first half of the poem with that of the baker in these lines –

*Everyday he eats bread
But has never seen a baker
Nor has he gone to a meeting
Of the baker’s union*

Here if we try to express what is there in common between the poet who eats his bread without having seen a baker and the baker himself, what we get is that element which acts as the ‘envelope’ of this new objective region – ‘an operator of synthesis’ or a ‘function of unity’ – which in this case happens to be the product of the labour – the bread – which measures the consistency of this region of appearing. This common element also ensures the compatibility of these two other atomic components of the poem – the first kind of poet and the baker.

168. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury 2013, Pg 227

169. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury 2013, Pg 227

Now we have a new transcendental zone grasped by the element – ‘product of labour’ – which induces a certain order in the zone, since the intensity of appearance of the baker is higher than that of the poet, in terms of their engagement with the bread. Thus, the bread, sustains the unity of this region, in spite of the inequalities in the degrees of appearing of these two seemingly disparate elements. “Under precise conditions – namely those of compatibility – we are thus constructing here a unity of being for the object, or at least for certain objective zones. The key point of the retroaction of appearing on being is that it is possible in this way to reunify the multiple composition of a being”¹⁷⁰ – In this case, in a way we re-united the two halves of the poem, which we were previously considering as two separate worlds. This entire exercise, before we undertake the journey of understanding the true nature of the poet’s ‘inexistence’ in the second half, is essential to furnish ourselves with new tools in order to have a higher vantage point of the complete relational structure of an object and to bring us closer to the essence of ‘existence’ under the influence of different phenomenal components. It also exposes the vulnerabilities and the potential of an entire structure to recalibrations that may result in radical or not so radical changes in their very beings. Badiou continues to build upon his theory of relations between objects/worlds/regions that appear within a larger world, as an armour against the post-modern ideals of relativism to arrive at a logical possibility of a universalism, which Neruda’s poetry sings about so simply-

*Give me the sorrow
Of the entire world,
I will turn it
Into hope.
Give me
All the joys,
Even the most secret
Because otherwise
How will they be known?
I must tell about them,
Give me
the struggles
of everyday
Because they are my song,
And so we’ll walk together
Elbow to elbow,
All the men,
My song unites them:
The song of the invisible man
Who sings with all men.*

while Badiou continues to tackle the problem by meticulously building his theory of relations, “The transcendental is not subjective, nor is it as such universal (there are multiple worlds, multiple transcendentals). As for terminating the universal in favour of the democratic parity of language-games, it’s out of question.”¹⁷¹ Then what is the solution that Badiou proposes in order to ground his worlds on a certain universal? If we can recall, in the very beginning, we had started out by proving that there cannot be a world of worlds, as the idea has inherent

170. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury 2013, Pg 228

171. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury 2013, Pg 302

contradictions, which collapses upon itself, hence this universality which we are seeking has to be of a world within which certain objects in question appear. One would ideally want to expand the world as much as possible, or gain as high a vantage point as possible, in order to extract the universal or the one idea that governs it – but at the same time there has to be a closure to this world. What would be the formal conditions of this closure? Should we look at ‘The invisible man’ as two different worlds separated by the points of view of two different kinds of poets, or should we look at the poem in its entirety with all the objects that appear within it, from the beginning of its title until the last word, just before the title of the next poem in the book starts, or should we look at this poem as an object in the world of the book, *Odas Elementales* and so on and so forth?

This area has all the characteristics of a treacherous quicksand with all kinds of deadlocks, and one doesn’t hope to escape from it so soon, at least until this thesis comes to an end. Right now, the aim is to somehow keep our head above the quagmire and remain afloat. Badiou continues to throw some sticks and branches at us for help. Badiou writes, “There is a way out: to extract the formal conditions that must be obeyed by a relation in order for it to be considered as universally established in a determinate world. Metaphorically speaking, what this requires is the existence of a privileged point of the world from which this relation is observable, a point that is itself observable, to the extent that it makes visible the relation of every other supposed point from which one could observe this relation. In other words, a relation is universal if its intra-worldly visibility is itself visible. It is then effectively impossible to cast doubt on its existence. Within the full extension of the world, it is a relation for all.”¹⁷² While, this “full extension of the world” remains ambiguous, Book IV of *Logics of worlds* takes up this problem, and we would have to gather an understanding of these universal relations operating within a world, before we can complete our analysis of ‘The Invisible Man’. We might have to go back and revise our first postulate of Nerudian ontology, which was stated at the beginning of this chapter as,

The Being of Nerudian objects is independent of Dasein as subject. These objects appear in worlds, whose logic is purely transcendental (dependent only upon other ‘multiple beings’ present within that situation, and as such, mathematical per se

since we have just now properly stepped into the realm of determining the true nature of the logic of worlds.

Logical Completeness of Worlds

Badiou tries to describe or illustrate or justify this process of ‘worlding’ – a group of objects becoming a world in itself, by citing the example of Quebec. Right from its historical, territorial beginning as an isolated area, first identified by the Breton explorer Jacques Cartier, who had symbolically planted a cross in the small town of Gaspé’, at the far east of Quebec till it identified itself as a closed Francophone and Catholic space, fighting for its own sovereignty. Even though, it fails to get the status of a separate state, and continues to remain within the coordinates of the Canadian federation with an Anglophone majority, the undercurrent of tension never really dies. The Anglo-French clashes continue to be a consistent factor, constantly threatening the other Quebec from the larger world of Canada. Thus Badiou continues to

172. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury 2013, Pg 302

identify such geographical, political, cultural, and economic causes which may justify the ‘worlding’ of Quebec. Say we provisionally accord Quebec the status of a ‘world’, and try to determine its constituents. The cities that comprise its particular geographical area, which is a finite number, the people which reside in these cities, which is again a finite number, but is larger than the set of the number of cities, then again if one were to differentiate these people according to say their right to vote, or other such phenomenal operators, these numbers would continue to expand. Similarly, in the entire oeuvre of Neruda, all of his publications form a finite number which belong to this world, the number of poems in these books are again a larger number, the number of words even larger – and even though these numbers are finite, their regrouping according to various phenomenological operators renders them a certain infinity which remains inaccessible to us. “When you pass from a multiple to its parts, you augment the number. And if you remain in the same world, this obviously means that no being of this world has a maximal number of elements. Ultimately, this forbids the world itself from being finite.”¹⁷³ The purely mathematical counterpart of this notion is to be found in Cantor’s theory of infinite sets, which states that for any given set A, the set of all its sets that is its ‘power set’ has a strictly greater cardinality than A itself. For eg, if A is a set of all even numbers from 1-10, its cardinality is five, i.e it consists of five numbers (2,4,6, 8, 10), however the cardinality of its power set is 2^5 as we continue to form its subsets (\emptyset , (2), (2,4),(2,4,6),(2,4,6,8).....)¹⁷⁴ However, one crucial observation about the nature of this infinity that Badiou makes is, “It is an infinite of the inaccessible type, in the following sense: you cannot construct its concept through any of the operations of ontology, such as these may be redeployed in the world. In other words, this infinite results neither from dissemination nor from the totalization of parts of a lesser quantity; since their results remain immanent to the world, the operations that concern the beneath (disseminated elementary matter) and the above (state of subsets) cannot attain or construct the degree of infinity of this world. The extension of a world remains inaccessible to the operations that open up its multiple-being and allow it to radiate.”¹⁷⁵ This kind of operational impossibility, then assures the closure of worlds. Even though it is conceptually difficult to grasp the mathematical contours of this proposition, an extremely practical analogy of the idea would have to be an instinctive understanding of our own awareness of the potential widening of our worlds from our bodies, to our homes to our cities to our nations etc, but simultaneously being aware of the frameworks of each of these boundaries in a subconscious way. “This paradoxical property of the ontology of worlds – their operational closure and immanent opening – is the proper concept of their infinity.”¹⁷⁶ Another

173. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury 2013, Pg 309

174. One may refer to, Cantor’s Theory of Infinite Sets COMPSCI 230 — *Discrete Math* February 7, 2017, for a slightly more detailed explanation of Cantor’s illustration.

175. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury 2013, Pg 309

176. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury 2013, Pg 310

way of understanding this inaccessibility and hence a closure, is to understand and accept our inability to completely comprehend the workings of our self-consciousness, our inability to step outside of it. This kind of acceptance of inaccessibility to our consciousness, is also an a-priori condition to support or sustain any world in which we appear, and as far as the philosophical question is considered, the world beyond our consciousness is irrelevant.

Having gained this sense of the closure of a world, we could consider ‘The Invisible Man’ in its entirety as a world, separated from the next poem in the book or we could divide the poetry into worlds – the first half whose protagonist is the individualist poet, and the second half, whose protagonist is the ‘Invisible Man’. However it is clear, that there are visible traces of each of these worlds into each other, and there isn’t a definite operational closure as there are triangular relations between the objects present in both the worlds – i.e, both kinds of poet display a distinctive relationship to, say the baker – one consumes the product of his labour and the other listens to his stories. In the Badiouan sense, this ‘relation’ between the objects doesn’t give us any information about the intensity of existence (their transcendental indexing) of any of these objects. It only gives us a sense of their orientation towards each other. “A relation is an oriented connection from one object towards another, on condition that the existential value of an element of the first object is never inferior to the value which, through this connection, corresponds to it in the second object, and that to the transcendental measure of an identity in the one there corresponds in the other a transcendental measure which also cannot be inferior”¹⁷⁷

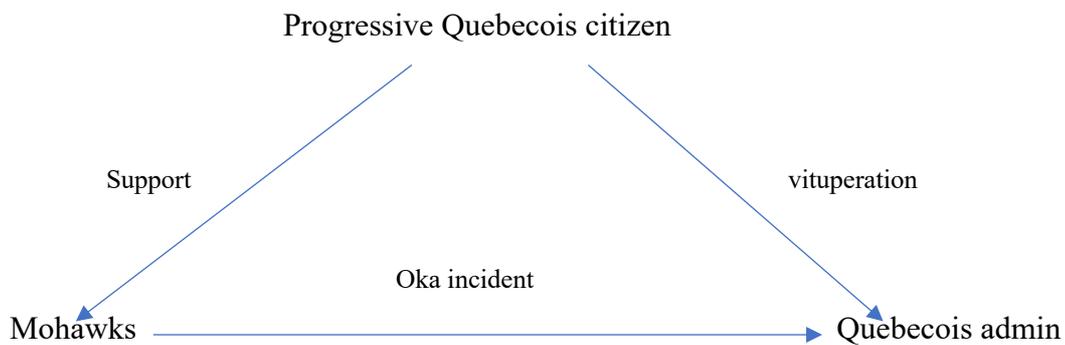
In other words, the relation conserves the internal structure of the world – its indexing et al. This also gives us an alternative definition or a condition in terms of relations about the closure of worlds which is, we can also say that in worlds, whose objects entertain a certain relationship with each other, if their transcendental indexing does not alter, they continue to remain in a similar operational network or a world. Badiou then puts forth the question, “What becomes of the relationship between relations and the world?” Only if one could think of a relationship between the relations, it can ensure a certain logical completeness to the world. In *Logics of Worlds*, Badiou illustrates the concept by citing the example of the Oka crisis in Quebec in 1990¹⁷⁸, whereby the Indian community or the Mohawks of Quebec, revolt against the government administration – the municipality of Oka, to protest encroachment of their land. This further divides the rest of the Quebecois citizens into people who support the Mohawks and people who support the administration. At this point it would be safe to say, that these orientations towards each other, are created by the internal transcendental indexing of the already there objects (the Quebecois citizens, Mohawks, administration etc) and these newly visible relations precipitated by the Oka crisis, only conserve the previously present transcendental indexing. “We will therefore maintain that the Mohawk revolt, rigorously conceived as the relation between the object ‘the Mohawks’ and the object ‘Quebecois administration’, only elicits the appearance of objective existences that are already there, even if – and this is one of the reasons for the revolt – this existence is minimized or belittled by its official counterparts.”¹⁷⁹ Coming back to the ‘Relation between relations of the world’, the particular relation – the Oka crisis, between the Mohawks and the administration, enjoys an

177. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury 2013, Pg 312

178. Refer to Marshall, Tabitha. "Oka Crisis". *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, 28 January 2019, Historica Canada. <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/oka-crisis>.

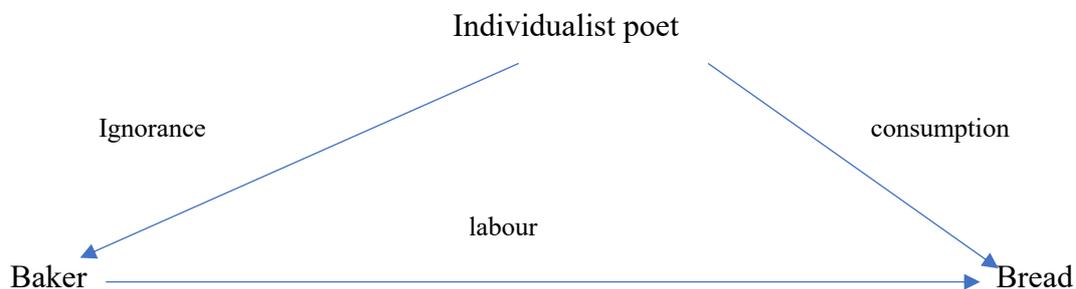
179. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury 2013, Pg 311

objective status in the Quebec world, this relation then creates a complex network of relations to itself, which is manifest in the rest of the Quebecois citizens taking sides. Thus, “If we consider these two Quebecois in turn as objects of the world, we see that they each entertain a relation to each of the objects linked together by the ‘Oka incident’ (the Indians and the cops, for instance), and by the same token, a relation to the link itself, that is a relation to the relation.” Badiou constructs a triangular relational diagram to illustrate this - “two initial objects, the relation that links them and then the relation of the third object to the first two”

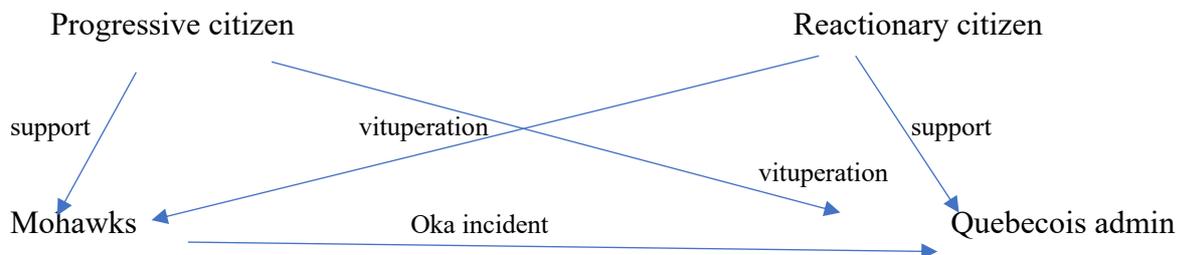


He calls this triangle, a diagram of the world.

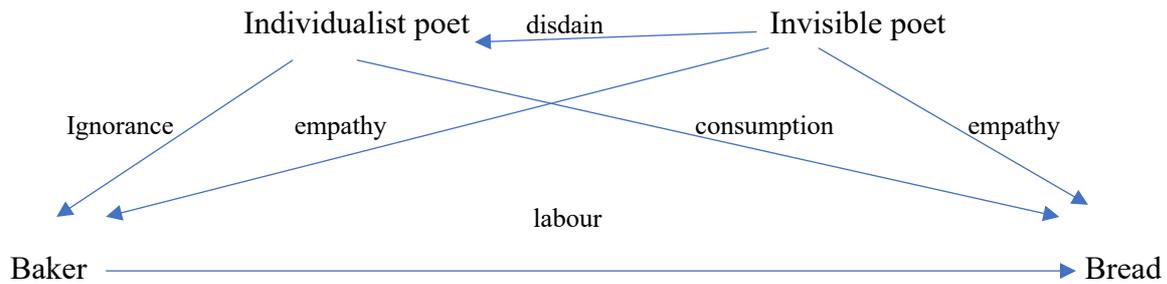
Similarly, if we consider the first half of the ‘Invisible Man’ as a singular world, the baker and the bread enjoy a relationship that is defined by labour and the individualist poet’s relational diagram of the world would look like,



As soon as the Reactionary citizen comes into consideration, this triangulation becomes more complex and looks like this



On similar lines, once the ‘invisible poet’ comes into the world of the poem, a Badiouan relational diagram would look somewhat like –



Badiou then goes on to complete the second diagram by stating, “This diagram can be immediately completed, following the simplest laws of the world. For the progressive citizen will begin to vituperate the reactionary one, and vice versa. And this reciprocal vituperation will certainly be a relation, in that the existential intensities – the subjective political violence – will be conserved, together with the entire atomic logic of the two camps.”¹⁸⁰ The important thing about both the diagrams is they are both ‘commutative’ in nature, which in mathematics means, that two quantities, connected by an operation give the same result, no matter what their order is in the operation, which means $a \times b = b \times a$ or $(a + b) + c = a + (b + c)$. As such the two triangles representing the Quebecois world present commutative properties, i.e for the first diagram “As long as the Oka revolt lasts, whether we move from the citizen to the administration via the Mohawks or do so directly, we are always dealing with the same hostile subjective intensity” and for the second, more complex diagram, “the reactionary citizen’s support for the police is intensified by having to vituperate the progressive citizen’s vituperation of the selfsame police. Similarly when he vituperates the reactionary citizen’s support for the police, the progressive citizen proportionately increases his own direct vituperation of the police.”¹⁸¹

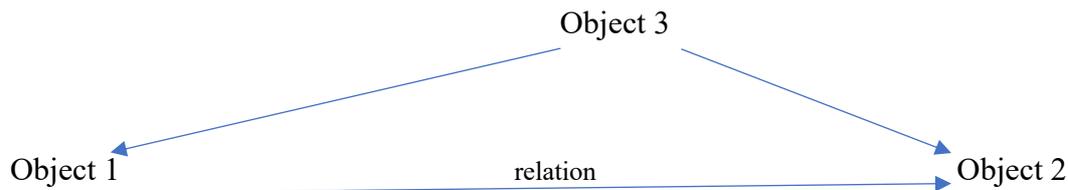
On exactly similar lines, the two diagrams depicting the world of the poem, both represent commutative triangles, in so far as the ‘ignorance + labour’ determines the intensity of the relation, crass unthinking consumption. As long as the relation of labour lasts, whether we move from the individualist poet to the bread via the baker, or move directly to the bread, we are always dealing with crass consumerism. In the second diagram when the second poet comes in, the triangle continues to remain commutative: the invisible poet’s empathy for the baker is intensified by holding in disdain the individualist poet. Similarly when the individualist poet disdains the invisible poet’s empathy for the baker, he proportionately increases his own direct ignorance of the baker. If the diagram is to remain commutative, in the context of labour, which remains our primary relation, the derivative relation between the individualist poet and the invisible poet can only be that of disdain. In effect, if the invisible poet shows empathy for the individualist poet, who in turn disdains the baker, there follows a flagrant contradiction with the direct relation of empathy which the invisible poet entertains with the baker. The diagram no longer remains commutative. So there exists only one possible relation between the two kinds of poets, who engage themselves, according to distinct relations, in the primitive relation – that of labour.

180. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury 2013, Pg 315

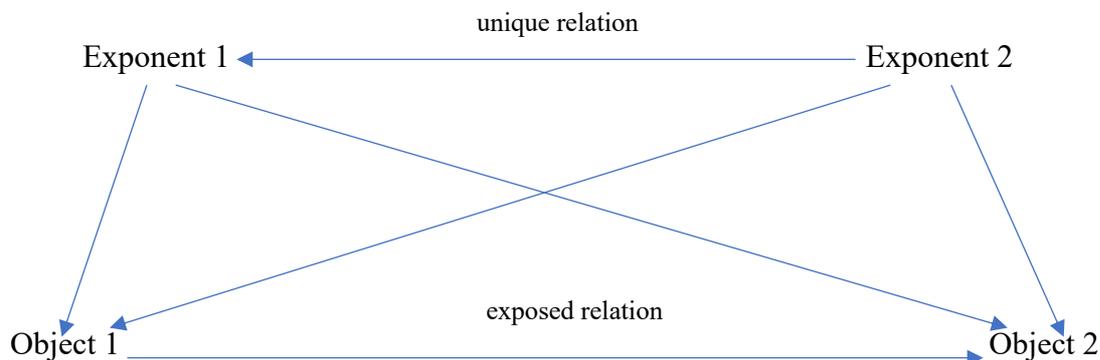
181. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury 2013, Pg 311

In the entire two paragraphs above, I have simply substituted the objects and relations of Badiou’s verbatim analysis of the Quebecois world, to that of the poetic terrain of ‘Invisible Man’. Not a single word in the narration has been moved otherwise, and the entire exercise seemed like working on an algebraic formulation, where only the values have been substituted on the same operation.

Badiou then constructs the concept of the logical completeness of the world as – “Given a relation between two objects of a world, we say that this relation is ‘exposed’ if there exists an object of the world such that it composes a commutative triangular diagram with the two initial objects:



This diagram will be called an exposition of the relation, and object 3 will be called its exponent. Thus the progressive citizen, just like the reactionary citizen, is the exponent of the relation ‘Oka incident’. We will then say that the relation is ‘universally exposed’ if, given two distinct expositions of the same relation, there exists between the two exponents one and only one relation such that the diagram remains commutative.

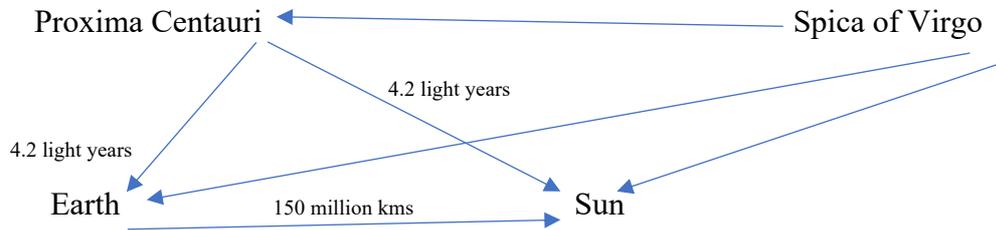


In sum, a universal exposition combines the intra-worldly grasp of a relation and a law of uniqueness.”

Going by all of the above, we have the ‘individualist poet’ and the ‘invisible poet’ as the two exponents of the relation ‘labour’ which is ‘universally exposed’.

The conditions which are thus required to be fulfilled in order for a world to be logically complete require that every relation within this world should be universally exposed, meaning “that this relation is always, at a point of the world (for an object of the world), ‘given to see’, such that this given-to-see is itself visible for every other givenness-to-the-visible of the relation. An exposition is universal if it is itself exposed.” (Logics of Worlds, Pg 318). To illustrate his point, Badiou cites a rather grand cosmological example – that of the earth-sun relationship,(their distance) which is exposed by the privileged exponent – the star Proxima Centauri, from which both the planetary bodies are visible, and the distance between them is also discernible. But for this relationship to be universally exposed, it is also required that from

every other point/object of the universe, from where the earth-sun distance is discernible, Proxima Centauri should also be visible from that point. This other object could be the star ‘Spica of Virgo’. If one were to draw a diagram to illustrate this exposition it would look like this



If one were to compare this diagram to the previous diagrams, one would immediately notice their congruence. Hence one could say, the relationship between the baker and the bread is universally exposed by the ‘Invisible poet’, which can discern the relationship on its own, and can also see the individualist poet which is the first exponent, to which this relationship is visible. This relationship is however not visible to the character that appears in the next poem of the book, in the current exposition. Hence, this physical/ontological (another page, another title, another poem) closure, also ensures a logical closure of the world. As such each local relation in the world keeps getting universally exposed – the denser the world, that is, more the number of objects that there are within it, the relational network keeps expanding. “The history of a world is nothing but the temporal figure of the universality of its exposition.”¹⁸²

This entire previous discourse that has been so rigorously created in order to understand, first the dissemination and then the synthesis and unity of worlds - sometimes its very rigor makes the exercise way too mathematical and mechanical for comfort. It calls for a certain interjection, of another kind of language perhaps, to put things back into perspective.

Zizek, Quantum theory and the spectre of the invisible

Let us then reconstitute this world using the power of abstraction – to build a notion about it’s logical completeness – in spite of the enormous wealth of empirical data at hand. It can only be done by either acknowledging our inability to access and understand it all and declare the inconsistency of our notion from the very onset or to declare that this tension between empirical reality and our understanding of it, is inbuilt in the very nature of reality itself. Slavoj Zizek in his book *Disparities*¹⁸³ writes about this tension between epistemology and ontology, “How does a notion emerge out of the confused network of impressions we have of an object? Through the power of ‘abstraction’, of blinding oneself to most of the features of the object, reducing the object to its constitutive key features. The greatest power of our mind is not to see more, but to see less in a correct way, to reduce reality to its notional determinations – only such ‘blindness’ generates the insight into what things effectively are.”¹⁸⁴ This power of abstraction is not to be mistaken as a mere subjective phenomenon, but as immanent to the thing itself. Zizek cites the example of Marx’s analysis of capital’s mad self-proliferation to illustrate this point

182. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury 2013, Pg 321

183. Zizek Slavoj, *Disparities*, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016

184. Zizek Slavoj, *Disparities*, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016, Pg 46

“Marx deployed how abstraction rules the reality of capitalism: when he describes capital’s mad self enhancing circulation, which reaches its apogee in today’s meta-reflexive speculations on futures, it is far too simplistic to claim that the spectre of this self-engendering monster pursuing its interests with no regard for human or environmental concerns is an ideological abstraction, and that behind this abstraction, there are real people and natural objects on whose productive capacities and resources capital’s circulation is based and on which it feeds like a gigantic parasite. The problem is that this ‘abstraction’ is not only characteristic of our (the financial speculator’s) misperception of social reality, but that is ‘real’ in the precise sense of determining the structure of material social processes themselves: the fate of whole swathes of the population and sometimes of whole countries can be decided by the ‘solipsistic’ dance of Capital, which pursues its goal of profitability with blessed indifference to how its movements will affect social reality. Therein lies the fundamental systemic violence of capitalism, much more uncanny than the direct precapitalist socio-ideological violence: it is no longer attributable to concrete individuals and their ‘evil’ intentions, but is purely ‘objective’, systemic, anonymous.”¹⁸⁵

Thus as capital continues to be the universal exponent in a continuously expanding relational network, it keeps encircling an over-abundant world within the magical arcs of its own logic. Whatever lies beyond this circle will already have been accounted for in a way a time traveller travels to the future and comes back to the present with a knowledge that isn’t still a part of the present, just as in quantum mechanics, with each observation a new retroactive past is created for the particles with each observation. Thus, this abstraction, with which we continue to draw circles around worlds, rather than being some random, subjective and incomplete exercise, happens to be a complete process which takes count of all the contingencies within its fold. Thus Badiou’s idea of overabundant ontological inaccessibility could also be interpreted as an overabundance of possibilities, and with each observation one possibility remains temporally while others collapse. However, the traces of these possibilities still lie within the system. Here Žižek’s use of quantum mechanics to explain such a world and Badiou’s conclusions are interestingly similar. Žižek notes the similarities between the symbolic order and the quantum order as, “Within the symbolic order, possibility as such possesses an actuality of its own, that is it produces real effects: say father’s authority is fundamentally virtual, a threat of violence. In a similar way, in the quantum universe, the actual trajectory of a particle can only be explained if one takes into account all of its possible trajectories within its wave function. In both cases, the actualization doesn’t simply abolish the previous panoply of possibilities: what might have happened continues to echo in what happens as its virtual background.”¹⁸⁶ Badiou’s account ends in a similar vein, “The argument culminates in the identification, in every object, of an elementary trace of the contingency of being-there. This is the theory of the proper inexistence of any object: there is an element of the multiple underlying every object whose value of existence in the world is nil. Its link to foregoing discussion is that every relation between objects links together the inexistence of the one to the inexistence of the other. Relations, which conserve existence also conserve inexistence.”¹⁸⁷ This constant presence of the inexistence or the invisible is the core essence of the very structure of what Badiou calls a world - an idea, which even while drawing lines encompasses, a geometrical abstract, difficult to visualize, but nevertheless can be spoken of in terms of language.

185. Žižek Slavoj, *Disparities*, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016, Pg 47

186. Žižek Slavoj, *Disparities*, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016, Pg 47

187. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury 2013, Pg 302

However, in spite of the above interpretations one still seems to grapple with the concept of ‘Ontological inaccessibility’ which continues to confound – if these are possibilities, in what sense are they inaccessible? Badiou of course draws his terminology from a set theoretical dimension where ‘inaccessible cardinals’ are a thing, but even within the purely mathematical domain of set theory, this ‘inaccessible’ is quite ambiguous and can mean different things.¹⁸⁸ An interesting spin to this inaccessibility was given again by Zizek, by replacing this ‘inaccessibility’ by the possibility of ‘incompleteness’. He says, in a recorded lecture,

“What fascinates me in quantum physics is this idea of an ontologically incomplete universe and I try to elaborate the consequences of it. What do you mean by this? It is not a simple idea which is usually misread as we cannot even know or understand nature fully. Every idiot knows that quantum physics is much more radical and that is also the difference between Heisenberg and Neils Bohr. Heisenberg discovered the so called ‘Uncertainty principle’ which says, that you cannot measure the position and velocity of a particle at the same time. There is a very interesting polemics here between Heisenberg and Neils Bohr. Bohr reproached him by saying that he is not so naïve. Heisenberg basically reduces the answer to principle the limitation of our knowledge, i.e we cannot measure both. You have to choose one. While Bohr’s point is, the particle in themselves don’t have both position and movement, it is not our limitation. It is the unfinished character of reality itself. And now my joke – the universe of video games. The world within a video game is not perfectly programmed. For e.g, in the back, you see a forest, but it is not part of the game for you to be there. So its meaningless to ask that I want to see the trees in the background in details, as it is not written in the program. They exist only as the blurred, incomplete background. The idea is this – in creating our world, God was a lazy programmer. He underestimated us. He thought humans are too stupid to go beyond atoms, so why should I create anymore? But we were smarter and we caught God with his pants down.”¹⁸⁹

Well, this leaves us with two differing views of inaccessibility or closure. One speaks of an extraordinary largeness and the other of an abrupt incompleteness. Its just not easy but its invariable to feel a loss to determine the common ground between the rigors of each of these conditions, in order to well establish the contours of a logical world. However, this little hitch should not deter us from moving on. The idea of a well behaved logical world, with a plethora of possibilities contingent within its folds is still intact, and if nothing else helps, the most logical and reassuring next step should be to look into Neruda’s version of worlds, not the ‘Badiouan worlds’ that we have inferred and constructed from his poems so far, but what Neruda himself describes as ‘world’. The opening paragraphs of his *Memoirs* start with the description of the self-contained world of the Chilean forest,

“Under the volcanoes, beside the snow-capped mountains, among the huge lakes, the fragrant, the silent, the tangled Chilean forest...The wild scent of the laurel, the dark scent of the boldo herb, enter my nostrils and flood my whole being...The cypress of the Guaitecas blocks my way...This is a vertical world: a nation of birds, a plenitude of leaves...Farther along, each tree stands away from its fellows...They soar up over the carpet of the secretive forest, and the foliage of each has its own style, linear, bristling, ramulose, lanceolate, as if cut by shears moving in infinite ways...Close by, innumerable calceolarias and their little yellow heads in

188. Wikipedia contributors. "Inaccessible cardinal." Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 8 Oct. 2019. Web. 21 Oct. 2019.

189. Zizek Slavoj, Slavoj Zizek – Video Games & Quantum Mechanics, The Radical Revolution, Nov 29, 2018 Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xv3qRcYII3U>

greeting...A fox cuts through the silence like a flash, sending a shiver through the leaves, but silence is the law of the plant kingdom...The barely audible cry of some bewildered animal far off...the piercing interruption of a hidden bird...the vegetable world keeps up its low rustle until a storm churns up all the music of the earth. Anyone who hasn't been in the Chilean forest doesn't know this planet. I have come out of this landscape, that mud, that silence, to roam, to go singing through the world." ¹⁹⁰

This image of a secretive world of over abundant leaves and calceolarias, whose laws of silence are broken by the piercing cries of a hidden bird or some bewildered animal is then a logically complete world and the poet becomes its universal exponent as he emerges from it to go singing in the world, giving rise to the universal exposition of its relations.

At the end of this chapter, we can safely re-instate the first postulate about Nerudian object, with just a slight change

The Being of Nerudian objects is independent of Dasein as subject. These objects appear in worlds, which eternally try to return to their constitutive mathematical logic.

190. Neruda Pablo, *Memoirs*, Trans. by Hardie St Martin, Rupa & Co, 2005, Pg 5

CHAPTER 6

POETRY AS THE ‘SITE’

After grappling with the concept of multiple worlds and their logical completeness or self-sufficiency, the next logical step or the point of the entire previous exercise is to grapple with the question of ‘change’. Until now, we have established an anatomy of worlds separated into their ontological and transcendental selves. Ontological meaning, as a collection of pure multiples – five individuals of a family unit; transcendental meaning, the rule governed appearance of these multiples or the relations between these individuals as parents, partners and siblings. This world can only expand via the universal exposition of its relations, as was described in the previous chapters. Until now, each Nerudian poem was treated as a distinctive world, anatomically defined by its ontology and transcendental logic. The poem ‘Caballo’ as discussed in Chapter 3 consisted of multiple horses - its ontological content. Their appearance on a winter day in Berlin against the twilight sky was the basis of the poem’s transcendental logic. The horses appeared again in another poem, ‘Oda al caballo’. This time in another transcendental – tied in a farm in the poet’s homeland. The two distinctive worlds had merged into one when the two exponents of the poems – the glorious horse in Berlin and the weak, debilitated horse in the farm, exposed the universal relations of beauty and labour. Similarly the two poems on the moon had merged into one (Refer to Ch. 3) or the broken things which exposed the universal relation of passage of time, brought together the two worlds of ‘Oda a la casa abandonada’ and ‘Oda a las cosas rotas’ (Refer to Ch. 4). The previous chapters also dealt with the concepts of event and change in these worlds. But it was limited within the domains of the poems and merely acted out a theoretical simulation of the Badiouan concepts. However, this chapter onwards, the thesis changes its direction and perspective to make definite inroads into the universe of concrete reality, the actual domain of both Neruda’s and Badiou’s works to explore the possibilities and procedure of real change.

“A world is the set of its modifications”

The world, as we understand until now, is supported ontologically by its multiple beings and the various intensities of their existence according to the existential components within the world, set its transcendental logic. This variety or change of appearances at different points, is absorbed by the transcendental of the particular world and does not really count as a real change. “As long as the transcendental regulation remains identical, it is certainly possible to witness considerable variations affecting the ‘same’ element”.¹⁹¹ Badiou’s own exposition of the pillar appearing differently within the world of Hubert Robert’s painting or similar expositions in this thesis, of Nerudian objects or elements appearing differently (shoes, horses, moon, hammer etc), if not validate, but describe well this phenomenon of possible changes in their appearances within the transcendental ambit. Even though we demonstrated Badiouan ‘change’ within these poems, in reality they still remain within the ambit of the poem, and now, in a more concrete way come to represent mere modifications, if looked at from outside the perimeters of the poem. Once we transcend the borders of the poem, and are unable to locate that change within the world in which the poem itself appears, it is not real change. And this understanding of real change is not dependent upon the physicality or the material nature of the world, but is dependent upon the process by which the change happens.

191. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury 2013, Pg 359

“Neither the thinking of being nor that of appearing bear witness to change, insofar as change would affect being-there, either in its being or its ‘there’, in a different way than the rule which composes being there as multiple and localizes it as object”¹⁹²

This is an essential statement which was previously perhaps taken for granted but had to be made at this juncture so as to make a real and concrete distinction between modification and real change, at least according to the Badiouan vocabulary. This means that whatever changes in appearance occur within the rules of the transcendental, or the changes which the transcendental can absorb within its folds does not account for real change. Something has to happen outside the rules or axioms of ontology and transcendental logic (which according to Badiou, would be something against the axioms of set-theoretical ontology, something similar to the Russell’s paradox) to bring about real change.

What then is the source of the real change?

“The general outline of the solution to this problem is the following. A change, if it is a singularity, and not a simple consequence (modification), comes about neither according to the mathematical order that grounds the thinking of the multiple nor according to the transcendental regulation that governs the coherence of appearing. Of course, there is only the being-there of multiples. But it can happen that multiple being, which is ordinarily the support for objects, rises ‘in person’ to the surface of objectivity. A mixture of pure being and appearing may take place. For this to happen, it is enough that a multiple lays claim to appearing in such a way that it refers to itself, to its own transcendental indexing”¹⁹³.

One may recall here, the idea of the reflexive set – a set which appears as an element of itself. For example, a set of all sets is itself a set, hence belongs to itself or is a member of itself, just as the master catalogue of a library should also contain itself as one of the books that feature in the library. This phenomenon if allowed, gives rise to a logical paradox, famously known as the Russell’s Zermelo paradox, as discussed earlier in the first chapter. Whenever this happens, it’s an anomaly that defies logic, and forces a restructuring to overcome it. This is the fissure which Badiou identifies as the chiasma or the ‘site’ for real change.

The whole idea, is in itself vague and obscure, difficult to comprehend yet in real situations. If we look again at the statement quoted in the paragraph above, Badiou qualifies this ‘change’ by qualifying it as a ‘singularity’ as opposed to a ‘simple consequence or modification’. It is important to take a pause here and try to decipher what exactly does he mean by a ‘singularity’? It is a word, which seems to be trending nowadays, and we mostly understand it as some kind of a technological Armageddon, wherein some superhuman artificial intelligence would overtake and surpass us, causing our extinction. The term was popularised by Vernor Vinge, an American science fiction author, who wrote an essay called ‘The coming technological singularity’ wherein he foresees the rise of artificial intelligence as an event whose nearest analogy could only be described as the rise of human beings within the animal kingdom. An unsettling event which could change the very paradigm of what it means to be alive. In that sense ‘singularity’ could be the start of an era “where questions like, ‘what is the meaning of

192. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury 2013, Pg 360

193. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury 2013, Pg 360

life' are practical engineering questions.”¹⁹⁴ In mathematics, the concept signifies a mathematical entity or object which does not behave well, according to the established rules of mathematics and leads to undefinable results such as the function $f(x) = 1/x$, becomes a singularity when $x = 0$. In natural sciences, it was James Clerk Maxwell, who used the term to identify unstable and dynamic systems, in which very slight changes lead to major changes in the overall outcomes. These are phenomena which defy determinism or in which the cause and effect relationships are not very apparent. Such is the expectation from this very loaded phenomenon to unleash a storm, to cause a sudden upheaval which no one saw coming, defying every previous event which lead up to that point. Very interestingly, Neruda, while writing about the poetic vocation in the last chapter of his *Memoirs*, titled 'Poetry is an occupation' describes the reader's ideal relation to poetry as an encounter, which is sudden, surprising and unexpected, not something where one poet writes for another poet who he has carefully cultivated as a reader over the years, expecting him to understand and appreciate the tiniest tides of his poems.

*“Well, this thing, where one poet publishes for other poets, doesn't tempt me, doesn't lure me, only drives me to bury myself deep in nature's woods, before a rock or a wave, far from the publishing houses, from the printed page...Poetry has lost its ties with the reader, he's out of reach...it has to get him back...it has to walk in the darkness and encounter the heart of man, the eyes of woman, the strangers in the streets, those who at twilight or in the middle of the starry night feel the need for at least one line of poetry...This visit to the unexpected is worth all the distance covered, everything read, everything learned...We have to disappear into the midst of those we don't know, so they will suddenly pick up something of ours from the street, from the sand, from the leaves that have fallen for a thousand years in the same forest...and will take up gently the object we made...Only then will we truly be poets...In that object, poetry will live...”*¹⁹⁵

This sudden change or upheaval, whenever and wherever it occurs, is what Badiou terms as the 'site' – “A multiple which is an object of this world – whose elements are indexed on the transcendental of the world – is a 'site' if it happens to count itself in the referential field of its own indexing. A site supports the possibility of a singularity, because it summons its being in the appearing of its own multiple composition.”¹⁹⁶ Let us once again consider the world which counted among its elements the horses on a winter day in Berlin. The poet's presence in this world recreated this world in the poem 'Caballos'. In that act, the world in its poetic form arose to count itself among its elements and thus poetry became a 'site' – a site for potential to achieve 'singularity' or a radical transformation. By such logic each work of art that truly represents the world it belongs to, is a 'reflexive set' or a 'site', with a great potential for bringing huge, unpredicted upheavals in that very world. Neruda's treatise on 'The power of poetry', thus begins with, “It has been a privilege of our time – with its wars, revolutions, and tremendous social upheavals – to cultivate more ground for poetry than anyone had ever

194. Vinge Vernor, “The Coming Technological Singularity: How to Survive in the Post-Human Era”, Department of Mathematical Sciences, San Diego State University, The original version of this article was presented at the VISION-21 Symposium sponsored by NASA Lewis Research Center and the Ohio Aerospace Institute, March 30-31, 1993. A slightly changed version appeared in the Winter 1993 issue of Whole Earth Review.

195. Neruda Pablo, *Memoirs*, Trans. by Hardie St Martin, Rupa & Co, 2005, Pg 260

196. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury 2013, Pg 363

imagined. The common man has had to confront it, attacking or attacked, in solitude or with an enormous mass of people at public rallies.”¹⁹⁷ This ‘ground’ which is entrenched deeply in the transcendental of the contextual world transforms into a ‘site’, when it reflects itself through poetry. The question which arises then is whether every ‘site’ culminates into a real change?

Logic of the site

Badiou characterises the ontological edifice of the site by essentializing it with the following three properties:

“1. A site is a reflexive multiplicity, which belongs to itself and thereby transgresses the laws of being.

2. Because it carries out a transitory cancellation of the gap between being and being-there, a site is the instantaneous revelation of the void that haunts multiplicities.

3. A site is an ontological figure of the instant: it appears only to disappear.”¹⁹⁸

While the first property speaks about the origin or the cause of the site to appear, the second and the third properties speak about the essential consequences of such an appearing. If one may recall the concept of the void or the empty set from the previous chapters, one would understand that any set or situation posits the existence of an empty set. This set may not be ontologically empty, but according to the contextual criterion of classification, can register as logically nil. Any set, which is originally an extensional set, or a randomly put together collection of elements, when divided into subsets according to certain conditions, groups all those elements together which do not adhere to those conditions into the empty set or the void of the situation. These elements which do exist, but have somehow been rendered invisible - lurk in the darkness, ready to surface whenever they are summoned by the force of an ‘event’. Thus each time, when the paradoxical figure of the ‘site’ emerges, bending the laws of the being/being there of the situation, the void is revealed. Since it is a paradox, it needs to be resolved instantaneously. The void has to remain intact. Therefore, either what was revealed has to go back into the darkness, or something that was previously visible needs to be rendered invisible. As such, the entire configuration of the transcendental would have to be revised, or in other words the, relations between the elements of the transcendental which was previously marked by certain intensities of existence and were ordered as such, would now be redistributed to establish a different order. These are the consequences of the appearance of the site. “Since the site is a figure of the instant, since it only appears to disappear, true duration can only be that of consequences.”¹⁹⁹

Thus when poetry becomes a site, it’s ontological presence cannot be denied, but what remains to be determined, is the effectiveness of its transcendental presence, the intensity of its existence and its relations with the objects of the world it has come to represent. That would determine the strength and duration of its consequences. In the context of poetic works, would it essentially then be a comment on their literary quality or their transcendental efficacy? A

197. Neruda Pablo, *Memoirs*, Trans. by Hardie St Martin, Rupa & Co, 2005, Pg 253

198. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury 2013, Pg 369

199. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury 2013, Pg 369

hunch at this juncture points at the latter, which in a way then undermines the ‘art pour l’art’ slogan and posits a more socialist-Marxist premise for the entire enterprise. But we have two aspects here – one is the cause of the birth of poetry, and the other, its effects or consequences. Whilst Neruda maintains that poetry that brings about any lasting change is born out of a prior social commitment – that of the poet’s, where as Badiou’s view of the ‘event’ which signals the birth of poetry with maximal consequences is something which happens out of nowhere, an effect, which retroactively determines its causes like a poem which only after causing a transformation, suddenly enlightens its own historico-literary significance, previously indiscernible. There seems to be somewhat of a disconnect or a chasm here, which needs to be delved further into, but one might have jumped ahead here. It is better to retrace and move step by step to truly recognize a Badiouan site and juxtapose it with Neruda’s after.

Badiouan classification of the ‘Site’

“We have called ‘modification’ the simple becoming a world, seen from the standpoint of an object of that world. Since it is internal to the established transcendental correlations, modification does not call for a site.

We will call ‘fact’ a site whose intensity of existence is not maximal.

We will call ‘singularity’ a site whose intensity of existence is maximal.

We now have at our disposal, three distinct degrees of change: modification which is ontologically neutral and transcendently regular, the fact, which is ontologically supernumerary but existentially (and thus logically) weak; singularity, which is ontologically supernumerary and whose value of appearance (or of existence) is maximal.”²⁰⁰

Badiou illustrates the first category of ‘modification’ by citing the example of the manifesto released by the communards in Paris on 23rd May, 1871, when everything else was collapsing around them.²⁰¹ Under vicious attack from the Versailles army and without a central leadership, the crumbling Central Committee, in a last ditch effort, published a fatally optimistic proclamation, foolishly and futilely demanding the dissolution of the Assembly at Versailles, the army’s pull out from Paris and ‘mutual amnesty’. Badiou recognizes this proclamation or manifesto as a site, as its ideas seemed to signal a certain departure and a new political beginning. However, the circumstances it appears in, or the value of its existence, in the transcendental is so low that it is rendered ineffective. “The Central Committee’s Manifesto is undoubtedly ontologically situated in what the eventual syntagm ‘Paris Commune’ holds together, but since in its own right it is only a sign of decomposition of powerlessness, it leads the singularity back to the edges of the pure and simple ‘normal’ modification of the world.”²⁰² Badiou goes on to illustrate these concepts further, by citing the way the events took place during the Paris Commune - the propaganda carried out by the troops in Versailles that constantly worked at undermining the potential of the Commune, thereby reducing its stature from potential event to mere facts and ultimately just a modification, well absorbed by the world. He uses the word ‘regulate’ to justify this play between the three states of change – if singularity is treated or regulated as mere fact, it can be toned down to the order of modification. Badiou in one of his seminars on Plato writes, “The goal of all enemy propaganda

200. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury 2013, Pg 372

201. Refer to <https://www.marxists.org/history/france/paris-commune/documents/index.htm>. This archive contains most documents related to the Paris Commune, including the one released on 23rd May, 1971

202. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury 2013, Pg 372

is not to annihilate an existing force (this function is generally left to police forces), but rather to annihilate an ‘unnoticed possibility of the situation’. This possibility is also unnoticed by those who conduct this propaganda, since its features are to be simultaneously immanent to the situation and not to appear in it.”²⁰³

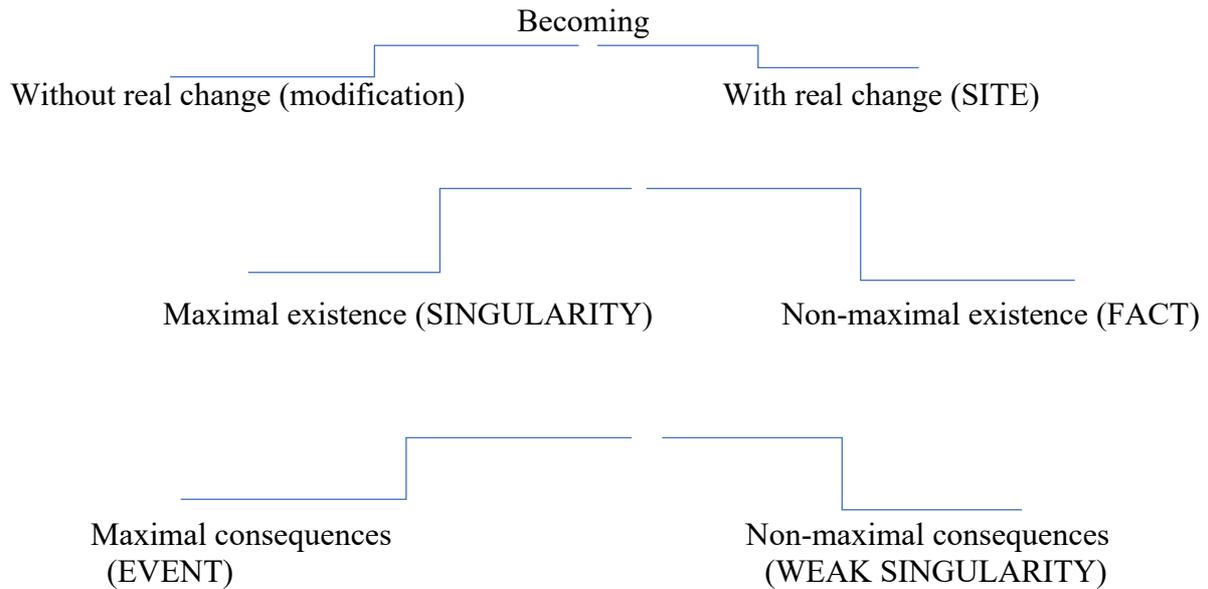
By that logic, if all it requires is ‘regulation’, then all that remains is a perennial co-option, rendering all possibilities of real change impotent. It seems to hold true for the giant, flexible universe of the capital, which regulates and co-opts every instance of a possible rupture – every protest, every organised movement, every disagreement into its caecilian folds. This seems an essentially anti-ideological prescription of a world or organism so bereft of meaning or a set so devoid of a strong transcendental logic, that it keeps reconfiguring itself with every situation in a way which doesn’t aim to better or transfigure the situation, but in a way that one accepts the fundamental flaws or inconsistencies of this system. Zizek, also writes about this regulatory mechanism or ‘enemy propaganda’ saying, “Enemy propaganda against radical, emancipatory politics is by definition cynical – not in the simple sense of not believing its own words, but at a much more basic level: it is cynical precisely insofar as it does believe its own words, since its message is a resigned conviction that the world we live in, even if not the best of all possible worlds, is the least bad, such that any radical change will only make things worse.”²⁰⁴

So how does one beat this shapeless and ambiguous morally crushing force, in order to convert a ‘fact’ into a ‘singularity’? “If it happens to a world, by dint of a site coming to be within it, to be finally situated and to arrange itself between singularity and fact, it is then up to the network of consequences to decide”²⁰⁵ In set-theoretic terms, once a void or a previously hidden entity of the set appears, it changes the configuration of the set to restore its status, such that some other entity is effectively rendered invisible. These are the consequences of the appearance of the site. However, the strength, or the effective duration of these consequences, determines the power of such a singularity to bring about a real change. At this juncture we find ourselves at a precipice where we, forever trapped in the grey melancholia of unchanging circumstances long to know the answer. It’s important to take a pause here and recapitulate the Badiouan logarithm/flowchart of change to delve deeper and move further. The following table appears as such in *Logics of worlds*.

203. Badiou Alain, ‘Seminar on Plato’, ENS, February 13, 2008

204. Zizek Slavoj, *First as Tragedy, then as Farce*, Verso, 2009, Pg 28

205. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury 2013, Pg 374



Before this, Badiou had used the example of 18th March 1871 – its strong intensity of existence heralding a new order, but the eventual collapse of the new order owing to its inherent political weaknesses to illustrate the idea of the ‘site’, which appears only to disappear. After he lays out this typology, he reanalyses the ‘day’ in terms of its long term consequences to characterise it as a ‘strong singularity’. “The commune, by proposing to thinking a rule for emancipation, relayed by October 1917 and also by the summer of 1967 in China or the French May’68 is a strong singularity. For what counts is not only the exceptional intensity of its surging up – the fact that we are dealing with a violent episode that creates appearing – but the glorious and uncertain consequences that this upsurge, despite its vanishing, sets out.”²⁰⁶ However, he questions if the duration and the longevity of these consequences are what maximises them? Is the establishment of a new, albeit stable and lasting world order is what it takes for a strong singularity to be qualified as an event? “Must we only take into account what is ‘solid’? That which imposes upon a world the serene force of its transcendental intensity?” In this instance, he cites Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s novel, *The New Heloise*²⁰⁷ – a tragic tale of love between Julie d’Etanges and Saint-Preux. The separation of the two lovers and Julie’s forced marriage to Monsieur Wolmar, by her father is an interruption which breaks down the idyllic universe of the couple and signals the beginning of a new order, “...the very order that Julie describes as the ‘immutable and constant attachment between two honest and reasonable people, who destined to spend the rest of their lives together, are happy with their fate and try to make it pleasant for one another’. Love is instead what makes truth of disorder, which is why it is the bearer of that which is indelible in the event. As Julie will confess at death’s door, “Tried as I did to stifle the first sentiment that gave me life, it concentrated itself in my heart’. ...To judge if an aleatory adjunction to the world deserves to be taken, not just as singularity beyond modifications and facts, but as an event, we must look to that portion of it which endures in the concentration, beyond itself, of its intensity.”²⁰⁸

206. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury 2013, Pg 375

207. Rousseau Jean Jacques, *Julie, or the New Heloise*, Trans & Ed by Stewart Philip, Vache Jean, Dartmouth College Press, October 1997

208. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury 2013, Pg 376

This is an essential break in terms of our understanding of consequences. Their qualification is no longer measured by their newness or their difference from what existed previously, but rather their ‘Truth’ or ‘authenticity’. We once again land at the feet of a second conundrum. The first one was – How does something appear in such a way that it counts itself in the referential field of its own indexing? And the second one – How does something exist and endure beyond itself?

When the previously inexistent entity of the working class emerges during the events of 18th March, by the force of its being, it subverts the order of appearing. From then on, till the time of the collapse of the commune, their existence is absolute or maximal. However, in order for them to appear, in keeping with the logical laws of the world, something must have disappeared. “The worldly order is not subverted to the point of being able to demand that a logical law of worlds be abolished. Every object has one proper inexistent. And if the latter sublimates itself – as the trace whence a subject proceeds – in absolute existence, another element of the site must cease to exist, in order for the law to be safeguarded and for the coherence of appearing to be ultimately preserved.”²⁰⁹ So, in the event of the Paris Commune, as the previously inexistent working class emerged as the *tour de force*, what was rendered inexistent? Was it the destruction of the dominant group of rulers and politicians? The answer to that is definitely a negative, as that class of bourgeoisie has continued to thrive. However, Badiou observes, what was destroyed was the idea of the ‘subjective incapacity’ of the working class. From 18th March onwards, the workers were no longer unsure of their political capacity. “What we can say is that there where an inexistent lay, the destruction of what legitimated the inexistence came to be. At the beginning of the twentieth century, what occupies the place of the dead is no longer proletarian political consciousness but – even though it doesn’t know it yet – the prejudice about the natural character of classes and the millennia-old vocation of property owners and the wealthy to wield state and social power. It is this destruction that the Paris Commune carries out for the future, even in the apparent putting to death of its own over-existence.”²¹⁰ With the unfolding of this completely new regime, a subject emerges as its effect, which maintains its fidelity to the event and drives things forward in keeping with the eventual truth. This subject thus, instead of being the cause, emerges as the effect. One will have to explore this whole idea of the ‘subjectivised body’ further as we progress into the thesis. But at this point, we must shift our focus to the ‘site’s’ Nerudian counterpart. ***The question to be asked is, whether, the poet acts as the ‘site’ giving rise to ‘poetry’ which then acts as the subject, or is it ‘poetry’ which is the event, whose retroactive effect is the poet, who then acts as the subjectivized body?***

Nerudian Site

One must consider this luminous passage²¹¹ from Neruda’s *Memoirs*, very carefully, because what is to follow is an elegiac account of the destruction of an old regime and the essential birth of a new order – the Nerudian typology of the ‘site’. This passage appears in the *Memoirs* at the end of the chapter titled, ‘I went out to look for the fallen’. The chapter narrates the time

209. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury 2013, Pg 379

210. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury 2013, Pg 379

211. Neruda Pablo, *Memoirs*, Trans. by Hardie St Martin, Rupa & Co, 2005, Pg 182

when Neruda was sent to France by Chile's Popular Front Government, as the consul-in-charge of immigration. This was the time during the Spanish civil war, somewhere between 1936-39, when approximately, 4,65000 Spaniards had fled to France and were held in French internment camps. Neruda had been sent to France to release those prisoners and bring them to Chile. After much struggle and diplomatic ups and downs, Neruda had finally managed to put the Spaniards aboard the 'Winnipeg'. Right after, while he was still in Paris, the Second World War broke out. To this backdrop, Neruda attributes the following passage, which we shall navigate now, breaking it down, going up and down it's geography to locate in it, the Nerudian Site.

The revelation of the void

“At the end of this era, I am alone once more in newly discovered lands, as if this whole long voyage had been a waste. I go into an agony, into a second solitude, just as in the throes of birth, in the alarming beginning, filled with the metaphysical terror from which the spring of my early poems flowed, in the new twilight my own creation has provoked. Where am I to go? Which way should I return, aim for, which way to silence or a breathing space? I turn the light and the darkness upside down and inside out, and I find nothing but the emptiness my hands built with such deadly care.”

This is the beginning of the passage, and if one may recall the Badiouan description of the ontology of the site, this is exactly how it comes into being, 'in the land of chimeras', where the void is first revealed. The passage also answers the first conundrum about how something appears in a way, that it counts itself in the field of it's own indexing... This may happen, "in the throes of birth", where all that exists, is the 'being' without any 'being there', or the only 'being there' is merely 'being' – what Badiou terms as "pure self-coincidence, the paradoxical self-belonging which gives the site its worth". This ontology is what cannot be maintained, it's a passage, an essential point of transition, where one can't rest. It is a space which doesn't let you breathe, from where one desperately searches a way out – "Where am I to go? Which way should I return or aim for, which way to silence or a breathing space" These Nerudian "newly discovered lands" imbibe the first two properties of the Badiouan site- 1) It is a reflexive multiplicity, a paradox defying laws 2) As it cancels the gap between 'being and being there', it reveals the void. The third ontological property of the Badiouan site is "A site is an ontological figure of the instant: it appears only to disappear". Let us look at the passage once again. The second stanza, right after the 'revelation of the void' reads,

“And yet what has always been closest to me, the most fundamental, the most extensive, the completely unexpected, would appear in my path for the first time now. I had thought hard about all the world, but not about man. Cruelly and painfully, I had probed man's heart; without a thought for mankind, I had seen cities but empty cities; I had seen factories whose very presence was a tragedy, but I had not really seen the suffering under those roofs, on the street, at every way station, in the cities and the countryside.”

What is this that appears in Neruda's path, right after the void is revealed?

Badiou says, "Nothing, in the ontology of the site, prescribes its value of existence". How, then do we determine the value of existence of this particular Nerudian site? What is it that unfolds right after, that would enable us to classify this site as a mere 'fact' or a potential 'singularity'?

The thing that appears in front of Neruda for the first time, right after the revelation of the void, "the closest, the most fundamental, the most extensive, the completely unexpected" appears to work like the Freudian unconscious, the 'unknown known', something that Jacques Lacan put

as, “knowledge which doesn’t know itself”²¹², which Žižek describes as, “symbolically articulated knowledge ignored by the subject” or the “transcendental horizon” or the “frame”. The appearance of this unconscious, is therefore not the appearance of something new, but the revelation of something that was already there, but unknown to the subject. A framework that already existed. The true void is therefore not the “emptiness, my hands built with such deadly care” but “what has always been closest to me, the most fundamental, the most extensive...”

Here, once again let’s go back to Badiouan formula or chronology which prescribes ‘Self reflexivity → Revelation of the void → Disappearance of the site’ as the mark of true ‘change’ or ‘the site’. As the site disappears, it could either turn into mere fact, or a potential singularity. In other words, as something happens, which enables the ‘unknown known’, ‘the unconscious’ or the already existing framework to appear, the regime changes. From this, can one deduce, that the source of real change is to be located within the subject? That would put us in direct contradiction to the autonomy of objects, independent of the subject, that we have established through the thesis. Is change, a mere change of perspective? Or is it the change in reality itself? To answer this question, one has to retrace one’s steps, and try to find, what comes before the appearance of the site, and try to introduce what comes before ‘self-reflexivity’ in the chronology of what happens.

The event

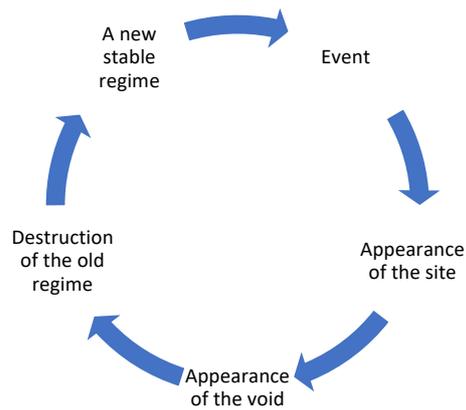
The very next stanza in the passage from the *Memoirs* reads,

“As the first bullets ripped into the guitars of Spain, when blood instead of music gushed out of them, my poetry stopped dead like a ghost in the streets of human anguish, and a rush of roots and blood surged up through it. From then on, my road meets every man’s road. And suddenly I see that from the south of solitude, I have moved to the north, which is the people, the people whose sword, whose handkerchief my humble poetry wants to be, to dry the sweat of its vast sorrows and give it a weapon in its struggle of bread”

This is the event which has already taken place, even before the appearance of the site. While Badiou posits the occurrence of the event (recall the typology of the Badiouan site given before) after the occurrence of a singularity, (or the appearance and disappearance of a site with maximal consequences, marked by the appearance of the void), as we analyse this passage from *Memoirs*, the chronology seems to alter. The event takes place right at the beginning, leading to the formation of the site and eventually, the appearance of the void. However, one soon realises, that Badiou was relating the story to us from somewhere in between and not from the very beginning. So, right after he lays out his typology of the site, he comes full circle by recognizing that the void if it has to appear, can only appear if something else disappears and goes into the void, to preserve the laws of the world according to set theoretical ontology. This is the mark or the trace of the vanished event. “If the in-existent of the site must finally attain maximal intensity in the order of appearing, it is only to the extent that it now stands in the place of what has disappeared: its maximality is the subsisting mark of the event itself in the world.”²¹³

212. Lacan, Jacques, *Écrits*, Trans. by Bruce Fink, W.W Norton & Company, 2007

213. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury 2013, Pg 378



We seem to have arrived to a circular chronology which starts and ends with events–

Event → Appearance of the Site → Appearance of the void ↔ Destruction of the old regime → A new stable regime → Event

Very interestingly, in both the narratives – Badiouan and Nerudian, in terms of a literal chronology of appearing, the site appears first and then the event, followed by a reconciliation or a retroactive realisation of the antecedence of the event, before it’s effects, which is the appearance of the site. If one were to apply a Heideggerian interpretation to the sequence, it would seem that the shift in perspective actually came first. For Heidegger, the essence of all things is its relation to Dasein. Heidegger says, “I see in the essence of technology, the first appearance of a much deeper occurrence of what I call *Ereignis* (The Event)”.²¹⁴ A shift in our relation to things is the actual catastrophe which comes first. As Zizek writes in ‘Event’, “For Heidegger, event has nothing to do with processes that go on out there in reality. Event designates a new epochal disclosure of Being, the emergence of a new ‘world’ (a horizon of meaning within which all entities appear). Catastrophe thus occurs before the f(act): catastrophe is not the atomic self-destruction of humanity, but the relation to nature which reduces it to its techno-scientific exploitation...”²¹⁵ However, in the Badiouan and Nerudian narratives, we find that even if the change in the old regime may have been carried out by the change in the ‘frame’ or ‘perspective’ of the subject, the change in the perspective is carried out by the change in reality itself/Event – once again giving the autonomy back to the object-which forges the material reality of any situation by existing at the intersection of ‘being’ and ‘being there’. Each time a new ‘object’ is formed, by the presence of a material object in a completely new context – the anchor not in the sea, but sprouting in a terrestrial garden, the chalk polish not on the shoe, but smeared on a face – an event has occurred. These new ‘objects’ become the catalysts for change.

But does the Event itself arise out of nothingness? By the above chronology (*Event → Appearance of the Site → Appearance of the void ↔ Destruction of the old regime → A new stable regime → Event*), the answer to the origin or cause of the event must lie in the new/continuing regime itself. Right after Badiou formalizes the category of the ‘site’ whose final or maximal manifestation is the ‘Event’, he goes on to compare his axioms about the

214. Refer to Heidegger Martin, *Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event)*, Trans. Rojcewicz Richard and Vallega-Neu Daniela, Indiana University Press, 2012

215. Zizek Slavoj, *Event, Philosophy in Transit*, Penguin, 2014, Pg 31

‘Event’ with that of Deleuze’s, whose philosophy of event is explored in *Logic of Sense*.²¹⁶ Deleuze, whose axioms about the event, place it squarely in the continuity of life/ the continuing regime – as a result or effect of the subject’s ‘actions and passions’, is reversed by Badiou, who claims, “It is not the actions and passions of multiples which are synthesized in the event as an immanent result. It is the blow of the evental One which magnetizes multiplicities and constitutes them into subjectivizable bodies”²¹⁷ Before one delves further into the source of the Nerudian event, it is important to fully understand the nature of this entire spectrum between Deleuze and Badiou, which even while being distinctive and opposed to each other, have definite overlaps. If one were to try and work out an analogy, a good illustration could be a scientific one. An ‘event’ in terms of principles of relativity, is something which has a spatio-temporal dimension, i.e., one could locate it in a specific space and time. Each event where rules of relativity apply is a four-vector entity - (x,y,z,t) where x, y and z are its spatial co-ordinates and t – its time co-ordinate. These events lie in a causal structure, which means every event is accounted for and is influenced by or linked to another event. Or, every cause matches up to a local effect. It’s a smooth surface with no gaps. Whereas in particle physics or quantum mechanics events produced by the interaction of sub atomic particles take the blow of uncertainty, and are hurled towards any probabilistic, undetermined effect. If the Big Bang is the Deleuzian event where everything follows from a unified compressed singularity, what follows less than a microsecond after the Big Bang, is the Badiouan event or quantum mechanical event of spontaneously breaking symmetry – where an infinite field of possibilities collapses into something finite. Unlike the smooth fabric of relativity, this is a rather tattered one with many holes and gaps. However, these gaps or the voids in the quantum universe, are Badiouan voids, which are not entirely empty spaces, but are fields which carry energies, somehow indiscernible. Thus the Badiouan evental blow, is seemingly a blow out of nowhere – or the blow of the invisible void, that which lurks in the gaps and holes under the surface. Nevertheless, as Žižek observes, “The two events can be opposed in many ways: relativity theory versus quantum cosmology, ideology versus materialism. But the fundamental lesson remains the same, the lesson of radical imbalance: the ultimate Event is the fall itself, i.e things emerge when the equilibrium is destroyed, when something goes astray.”²¹⁸

We can now return to the very last stanza of the Nerudian passage. The Spanish war had broken out, the exodus had started and Neruda had managed to send thousands of refugees to Chile to secure asylum. Meanwhile the second World War had broken out. His poetry had come to a turning point. After a major upheaval, a structural change had established itself. The following stanza describes this new regime after the destruction of the old one,

“Then space opens out, makes itself deep and permanent. We are now standing squarely on the earth. We want to take infinite possession of everything that exists. We are not looking for any mystery, we are the mystery. My poetry is becoming a material part of an atmosphere that extends infinitely, that runs under the sea and under the earth both, it begins to enter galleries of startling vegetation, to speak in broad daylight with the specters of the sun, to explore pits of minerals hidden deep in the secretive earth, to establish forgotten links between autumn and man. The air dims and at intervals, thunderbolts of phosphorescence and terror light it up; a new structure that is far from evident, from trite words, looms on the horizon; a new continent

216. Deleuze Gilles, *Logic of Sense*, Ed. Boundas Constantin V., Continuum, 2004

217. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury 2013, Pg 384

218. Žižek Slavoj, *Event, Philosophy in Transit*, Penguin, 2014, Pg 55

rises from the innermost substance of my poetry. I have spent years settling these lands, classifying this kingdom, touching its many mysterious shorelines, soothing its foam, going over its zoology and the length of its geography; in this I have spent dark, solitary, remote years.”

This new regime, is once again a quantum field of hidden energies that run ‘under the sea’, ‘under the earth’, ‘inside pits of minerals hidden deep in the secretive earth’, from which a new symbolic order (out of many other symbolic orders) shall once again emerge after thunderbolts like events. What is also important in this passage, is the third personification of ‘poetry’ –“My poetry is becoming a material part of an atmosphere”, “a new continent rises from the innermost substance of my poetry...”, which takes us back to the question that we had asked right before the beginning of this section,

whether, the poet acts as the ‘site’ giving rise to ‘poetry’ which then acts as the subject, or is it ‘poetry’ which is the event, whose retroactive effect is the poet, who then acts as the subjectivized body?

This is an extremely complex territory, somewhere in the intersection of philosophy and psychoanalysis, but it must be traversed in the contexts of the site and the event, to complete our analysis of the Nerudian site. A great insight into this matter can be found in Žižek’s analysis of Hegel’s ‘notion of madness’. At stop four of his book *Event*, (which claims to read like a “subway trip with many stops and connections, with each stop standing for a putative definition of event”), where Žižek speaks of Plato, Descartes and Hegel as the three events of philosophy, he quotes Hegel to say, “In a fragment from his *Jenaer Realphilosophie*, Hegel uses the mystical term ‘night of the world’ to characterize this experience of pure self, of the contraction-into-self of the subject which involves the eclipse of (constituted) reality:

The human being is this night, this empty nothing, that contains everything in its simplicity – an unending wealth of many representations, images, of which none beckons to him-or which are not present. This night, the inner of nature, that exists here – pure self – in phantasmagorical representations, is night all around it, in which here shoots a bloody head – there another white ghastly apparition, suddenly here before it, and just so disappears. One catches sight of this night when one looks human beings in the eye – into a night that becomes awful.²¹⁹

The symbolic order, the universe of the Word, logos can only emerge from the experience of the abyss. As Hegel puts it, this inwardness of the pure self ‘must enter also into existence, become an object, oppose itself to this innerness to be external; return to being. This is language as name-giving power... Through the name the object as individual entity is born out of the I. What we must be careful not to miss here is how Hegel’s break with the prevailing Enlightenment tradition can be discerned in the reversal of the very metaphor for the subject: the subject is no longer the Light of Reason opposed to the non-transparent, impenetrable stuff (of Nature, Tradition, etc); its very kernel, the gesture which opens up the space for the Light of Logos, is absolute negativity, the ‘night of the world’, the point of utter madness in which fantastic apparitions of ‘partial objects’ appear all around. Consequently, there is no subjectivity, without this gesture of withdrawal – which is why Hegel is fully justified in inverting the standard question of how the fall/regression into madness is possible: the true question is rather how the subject is able to climb out of madness and to reach ‘normalcy’ That

219. Hegel G.W.F, *Jenaer Realphilosophie*, Fruehe politische Systeme, Frankfurt:, Ullstein, 1974, Pg 204

is to say, the withdrawal-into-self, the cutting-off of the links to the environs, is followed by the construction of a symbolic universe which the subject projects on to reality as a kind of substitute-formation, destined to recompense us for the loss of the immediate pre-symbolic real. In short, the ontological necessity of 'madness' resides in the fact that it is not possible to pass directly from the purely 'animal soul', immersed in its natural environs, to 'normal' subjectivity dwelling in its symbolic virtual environs: the 'vanishing mediator' between the two is the 'mad' gesture of radical withdrawal from reality, which opens up the space for its symbolic (re)constitution."²²⁰

Isn't this 'night of the world' comparable to Neruda's self, before his turn to poetry, a painful state of "acute melancholy", "filled with the most tormented adolescent passions"? The poet had entered into the abyss, from which the symbolic order, the universe of the Word had emerged. The space that opens up at the end of the Nerudian passage has opened up via this gesture of withdrawal, via this fall into madness, which is the poet 'falling into poetry' – the necessary transition to pass from animal soul to 'normal subjectivity'. 'Falling into poetry' is the 'vanishing mediator'- the site/the maximal event, through which 'symbolic reconstitution' occurs, or the 'new continent' arises, not just once, but many times over, affirming, Badiou's fourth axiom about the event – "There can be no composition of that which is by a single event. On the contrary, there is a decomposition of worlds by multiple event-sites"²²¹

At this point one is tempted to take another short detour, only because, it provides for some very interesting parallels. Zizek, in Stop 3 of *Event*, in the chapter titled, 'Buddhism Naturalized'. At this stop, he looks at 'Event', as the "moment of Enlightenment, of getting disentangled from the cobweb of illusory reality and entering the void of Nirvana."

The Buddhist path prescribes a moral path in the very beginning, a middle path of balanced actions, free from our mental or physical passions. Once one follows this path long enough and learns to control his/her passions, they are ready to enter, the 'dispassionate' or detached state of Nirvana and alleviate their sufferings – Buddhism's first axiom. The event of Nirvana, is thus a shift in one's perspective towards reality as it is. The Hegelian event of 'withdrawal into self' turns into a 'withdrawal from self'. Zizek rightly says, "Although Buddhism presents itself as the remedy for the stressful tension of capitalist dynamics, allowing us to uncouple and retain inner peace and *Gelassenheit* (self-surrender), it actually functions as capitalism's perfect ideological supplement...The 'Western Buddhist' meditative path is arguably the most efficient way for us to fully participate in capitalist dynamics while retaining the appearance of mental sanity."²²²

The above detour into the ideas of Buddhism is important here, as this takes us to the time in Neruda's life right before the Spanish War, when he was living in countries of the Far East in the Orient in utter loneliness as the Consul-General of Chile. This was the time, when he had penned his *Residencia en la tierra* – a book so dark and gloomy (by his own admission) that a boy from Santiago had killed himself at the foot of a tree, leaving the collection of poems open beside him, at the poem, 'Significa Sombras' (It means shadows). This was the time when he would often come across statues of Buddha and while recalling them in *Memoirs*, he wrote, "And that very soft smile, that imponderable majesty which is nevertheless made of hard, everlasting stone – at whom, at how many, on the bloodstained planet are they smiling...? The

220. Zizek Slavoj, *Event, Philosophy in Transit*, Penguin, 2014, Pg 95

221. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury 2013, Pg 385

222. Zizek Slavoj, *Event, Philosophy in Transit*, Penguin, 2014, Pg 66

fleeing peasant women passed, the men from the fire, the visored warriors, the false high priests, the tourists who devour everything...And the statue remained in place, the immense stone with knees, with folds in its stone tunic, with a look lost in the distance and yet really here, thoroughly inhuman and also in some way human, in some form or contradiction a statue, god and not god, stone and not stone, under the screeching of black birds, surrounded by the wingbeats of red birds, of the birds of the forest..."²²³

This passage filled with ridicule and fascination in equal measures, finally gives way to a final rejection of this unnatural withdrawal from the self and the world as he later writes, "All the esoteric philosophy of the Oriental countries, when confronted with real life, turned out to be a by-product of the anxiety, neurosis, confusion and opportunism of the West; that is, of the crisis in the guiding principles of capitalism...the Orient struck me as a large hapless human family, leaving no room in my conscience for its rites and gods. I don't believe, then, that my poetry during this period reflected anything but the loneliness of an outsider, transplanted to a violent, alien world."²²⁴

Thus the Nerudian fall/site/event is the Hegelian 'fall into madness' which emerges on the other side of 'normal subjectivity', not the Buddhist fall from an event horizon into a relativist black hole like void – a place unaffected by events.

"Commencements are to be measured by the recommencements they enable"

When a poet writes a poem, the poem can either simply reflect the inner state of the poet, and as such, may be of no or little consequence to the world the poet and the poem both belong to; or the poem, once out in the world, acts an independent entity, forging its own relations with the other elements co-existing in the world. A possible change in the transcendental regime of the world in which the poet and his poem exist can happen in two circumstances –1) the poet's intensity of existence was maximal in world, when the poetry was written, the pair of the poet (x) and the poetry (y) existed as a 'site' which had the power to sublimate the proper inexistence of the world (\emptyset), (if, $x,y \in A$, $Id(x,y) = M$ (maximum) or $x=y=M$) or 2) The existence of the poet is non-maximal in the world, as such at the time of its birth, the poem would affect only those elements whose intensity of existence is superior to its own. However, at any later stage, under the effect of an eventual blow, the poem, independent of the poet, could gain maximum intensity of existence with the capability of destroying a previously existent element of the world, and sublimating the inexistence. Here, the relation of the poet to his own poem can just be one of a critic, with no claims of ownership – they cease to exist as a true pair. (if, $x,y \in A$, $Id(x,y) = p$ (between maximum and minimum), $x \neq y$)

At such times, the poet serves as a mere medium. The birth of poetry need not necessarily signal a spasmodic delivery through the pangs of poet's heart, it can be born out of its rightful predetermined purpose – these are words, sounds, images which had found a temporary home inside the poet. As Neruda wrote,

"There is no doubt that feelings are a major part of my earliest books, and so much the worse for the poet who does not respond with song to the tender and furious summons of the heart! Yet, after forty years of experience, I believe that the poet can take a firmer grip of his emotions"

223. Neruda Pablo, *Memoirs*, Trans. by Hardie St Martin, Rupa & Co, 2005, Pg 83

224. Neruda Pablo, *Memoirs*, Trans. by Hardie St Martin, Rupa & Co, 2005, Pg 84

in his work. I believe in guided spontaneity. For this, the poet must always have some reserves, in his pocket, let's say, in case of emergency. First, a reserve of mental notes on established poetic forms, of words, of sounds, or images, the ones that buzz right past us like bees. They must be caught quickly and put away in one's pocket. I am lazy in this respect, but I know I am passing on some good advice. Mayakovsky had a little notebook he was constantly going into. There is also the reserve of feelings. How can these be preserved? By being conscious of them when they come up. Then, when we face the paper, this consciousness will come back to us more vividly than the emotion itself."²²⁵

Thus in Neruda, the poet and his poetry can become 'sites' in equal measure – feeding off each other at different points in space and time – both co-ordinates simultaneously unmeasurable in the quantum field of memories.

However, while both the poet and the poem can be sites, the consequences can only be measured in terms of the effects of the poetry. To illustrate this, let us take the example of two completely different books of Neruda – *Residencia en la tierra* and *España en el Corazón*. While writing the two books, the poet is situated in two completely different worlds, and the intensity of his existence in their transcendentals is also different. While writing *Residencia*, the poet was spending his time as a Chilean Consul in countries of the Orient. In his own words, "I don't believe then, that my poetry reflected anything but the loneliness of an outsider transplanted to a violent, alien world." The poet's intensity of existence in this world, or his identification with the other elements of this world was anything but Maximum, in fact, close to nil. If we consider the world to be \mathbf{m}_1 the element which represents the poet as A or $A \in \mathbf{m}_1$, the existence of A , $EA \neq M$, $EA = p$, where the value of p lies between M and μ , i.e., $\mu \leq p \leq M$. In terms of the effects of *Residencia*, Neruda, we can once again recall the incident of the suicide of the boy in Santiago. Neruda himself had measured his poems in terms of its effect, rather than their literary qualities, "At times I, too, have spoken harshly of *Residencia en la tierra*, but in doing so, I did not have in mind its poetry but the rigidly pessimistic air breathed by my book. I cannot forget that a few years ago a boy from Santiago killed himself at the foot of a tree and left my book open at the poem *Significa Sombras*."²²⁶ Far from changing the existing regime, the poems in this book had registered a sense of hopelessness and despair - resistant to change, as their consequence in appearing.

When Neruda wrote *España en el Corazón*, he was the Chilean Consul in Spain, "In Madrid, turned overnight, as if by magic, into a Chilean consul in the capital of Spain, I met Garcia Lorca's and Alberti's friends. They were many. And within a few days I was one with the Spanish poets."²²⁷ Clearly his degree of identity in this new world with its other elements, was Maximum – "I was one". $A \in \mathbf{m}_2$, and $EA = M$. In the regime of \mathbf{m}_2 , when the Spanish War broke out, it was the Evental blow, and once again we have to revisit this story. On July 19, 1936, Neruda was scheduled to meet his dear friend Federico Garcia Lorca in the evening. Lorca could not keep his appointment. "Federico did not show up. He was at that hour already on his way to death. We never saw each other again: he had an appointment with another strangler. And so the Spanish War, which changed my poetry began for me with a poet's disappearance."²²⁸ As one poet disappeared in the war, poetry appeared, rose like a phoenix

225. Neruda Pablo, *Memoirs*, Trans. by Hardie St Martin, Rupa & Co, 2005, Pg 267

226. Neruda Pablo, *Memoirs*, Trans. by Hardie St Martin, Rupa & Co, 2005, Pg 270

227. Neruda Pablo, *Memoirs*, Trans. by Hardie St Martin, Rupa & Co, 2005, Pg 116

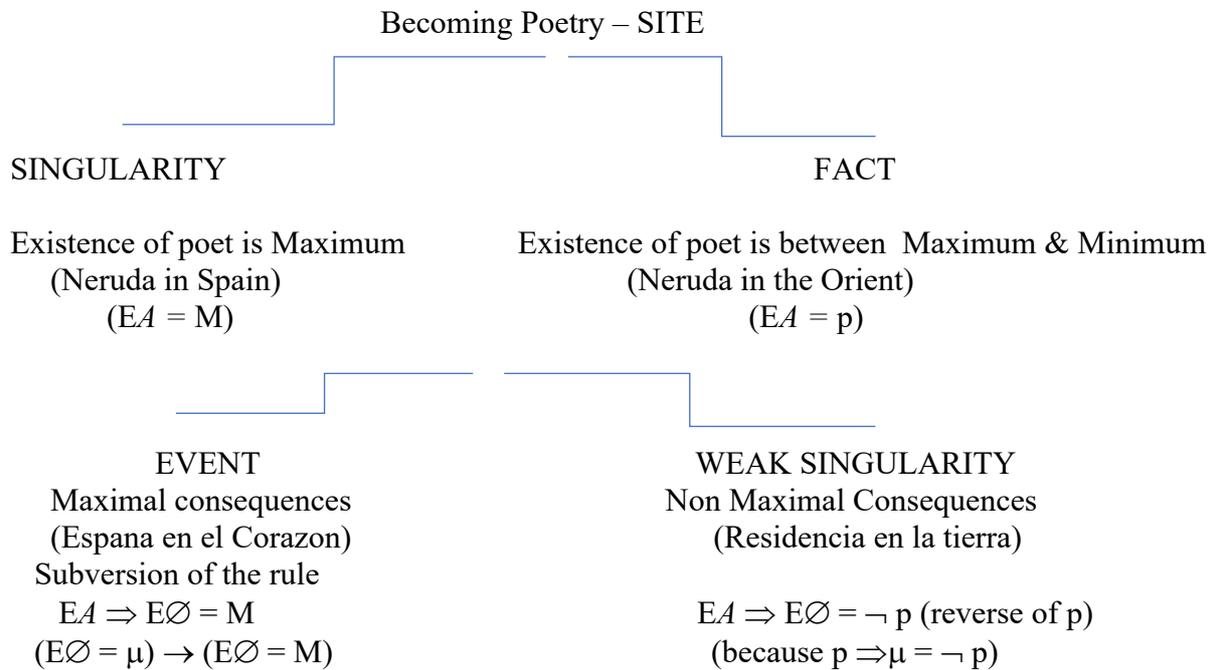
228. Neruda Pablo, *Memoirs*, Trans. by Hardie St Martin, Rupa & Co, 2005, Pg 122

almost literally from the ashes and debris of the war, in Manuel Altolaguirre's small press on the eastern front, near Gerona in an old monastery. "My book *España en el Corazón* was printed there in a unique way. I believe few books, in the extraordinary history of so many books, have had such a curious birth and fate. The soldiers at the front learned to set type. But there was no paper. They found an old mill and decided to make it there. A strange mixture was concocted, between one falling bomb and the next, in the middle of the fighting. They threw everything they could get their hands on into the mill, from an enemy flag to a Moorish soldier's bloodstained tunic..."²²⁹ In terms of its consequences, the book was a beacon of hope carried in sacks of soldiers instead of food and clothing. Even years later, it's appearance in other worlds mobilized and galvanized their most downtrodden people. Neruda had gone to Vega Central, a market in Santiago, Chile to read out poems from *España en el Corazón* at the union hall of the Vega market loaders. "About fifty men sat waiting for me on crates or improvised wooden benches. Some had a sack tied around their waist like an apron, others covered their bodies with old patched undershirts..." Amidst this audience, another event was under way, ushered by the site of the poetry. "I thought I would just read a handful of poems, add a few words and say goodbye. But it didn't work out that way. Reading poem after poem, hearing the deep well of silence into which my words were falling, watching those eyes and dark eyebrows following my verses so intently, I realized that my book was hitting its mark. I went on reading and reading, affected by the sound of my own poetry, shaken by the magnetic power that linked my poems and those forsaken souls. The reading lasted more than an hour. As I was about to leave, one of the men rose to his feet. He was one of those who had a sack tied around his waist. "I want to tell you, too, that nothing has ever moved us so much." When he finished talking, he couldn't hold back a sob. Several others were also weeping. I walked out into the street between moist eyes and rough handclasps."²³⁰

From all of the above, based on the 'consequences' we can finally form a uniquely Nerudian typology of the site based on the two collections of poetry mentioned above – *Residencia en la tierra* and *España en el Corazón*. The hierarchy here starts from the site itself, since, the very act of writing poetry/becoming poetry demands a reflexive intervention. So, instead of starting from 'modification' we shall directly start from 'site'.

229. Neruda Pablo, *Memoirs*, Trans. by Hardie St Martin, Rupa & Co, 2005, Pg 125

230. Neruda Pablo, *Memoirs*, Trans. by Hardie St Martin, Rupa & Co, 2005, Pg 127



At this point, we can dare to formulate another Nerudian postulate:

In a given world, both the poet and his poetry can exist, independent of each other in any intensity, Maximum (M), Minimum (μ) or anything in between (p), depending on their relations with other objects of the given world.

THEORY OF POINTS AND A LESSON IN SIMPLICITY

Having established the independence of the poetry from its creator, it remains to be seen who or what carries out the truth procedure in a given world, and how. If we refer back to the end of Chapter 2 in this thesis, we will see that we had briefly mentioned and described as the last tool in Badiou's arsenal, the 'Body' - the innermost ring or the third circle, into which we can finally try to enter now, having traversed the first and second – the ontological circle and the transcendental circles respectively. However, before we can effectively do so, we must familiarize ourselves with the notions of topology and the theory of points. The third circle or the 'Body' is essentially a topological circle – the structure within the structure which lies within a structure, and filters the infinite complexity of the given world to the simplicity of the 'two'. Just as the ontological structure is composed of the ontic being of the multiples in a given world and the transcendental structure composed of the degrees of relations between any two multiples of this world, the topological world is composed of 'points'. "There is a 'point' when, through an operation that involves a subject and a body, the totality of the world is at stake in a game of heads or tails. Each multiple of the world is then correlated either to a 'yes' or a 'no'." ²³¹ Before we can even begin to understand the true meaning of this 'yes' or 'no' or this decision in the Badiouan sense (since this 'decision' or its formulation is not something which is purely subjective), we have to first understand the basis, the logic and most importantly the need for this 'topological' turn in the journey.

While Badiou dives right into Book VI of *Logics of Worlds*, abruptly switching to topology as his choice of narrative, it might be incredibly difficult for the uninitiated to make exact sense of what's going on, even though this section of the book is relatively free of mathematical equations and calculus. And even though the entire narrative makes intuitive sense, it would still alienate the reader from the fundamental basis of its rigor, if one doesn't understand the nature of the mathematical branch of Topology.

What is Topology?

There is a very common joke which goes around in mathematical circles which says that, for a topologist, a coffee mug and a doughnut are one and the same thing. What it means is that any form that can be distorted into another without actually breaking it, is essentially preserved; hence, both the objects – the original and the resulting distorted one are topologically the same. The new object contains the same information about the surface of the object as the previous one, no matter how different they look. For e.g if a sphere made of putty were to be deformed into a shapeless blob or a dumbbell, topologically, all three would be considered identical and would be called homeomorphic objects. If one may recall, in the very first chapter of this thesis, we had entered into the mathematical/Badiouan dimension with the term 'homeomorphism' ²³²,

231. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury 2013, Pg 400

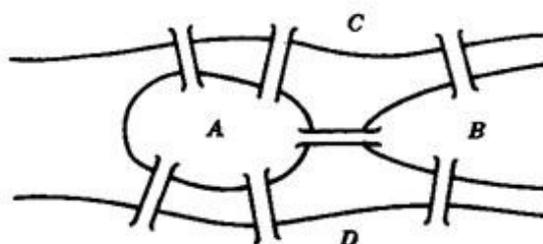
232. **Homeomorphism**, in mathematics, a correspondence between two figures or surfaces or other geometrical objects, defined by a one-to-one mapping that is continuous in both directions. A topological property is defined to be a property that is preserved under a homeomorphism. Examples are connectedness, compactness, and, for a plane domain, the number of components of the boundary. The most general type of objects for which homeomorphisms can be defined are topological spaces. Two spaces are called topologically equivalent if there exists a homeomorphism between them. The properties of size and straightness in Euclidean space are not topological properties, while the connectedness of a figure is. Any simple polygon is homeomorphic to a circle; all figures homeomorphic to a circle are called simple

whereby we had compared the two worlds – Badiouan and Nerudian and had established homeomorphisms between the two. In other words, it was a topological exercise, without quite understanding its fascinating rigors.

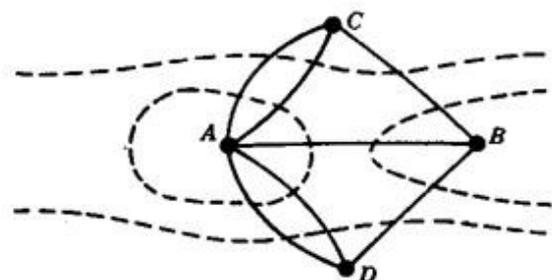
But coming back to the sphere, it can also be turned into a cube or a polyhedron. And an important number when it comes to topology is called the ‘Euler characteristic of a polyhedron’. This was introduced by the Swiss mathematician Leonhard Euler who had set out to solve a problem regarding the city of Königsberg in Prussia and its seven bridges²³³. The city was divided into four land masses divided by the Pregel river and connected to each other by seven bridges. The problem was to determine, ‘if it was possible to walk through the city and return to the same point, having crossed all of the bridges only once’? Euler determined the answer to be a ‘no’. How he arrived at this particular resolution is not important here, but the methodology he used to arrive to the solution laid the foundation of graph theory and mathematical topology. He had brilliantly reduced the huge complexity of the Königsberg terrain into vertices representing the landmasses and edges representing the bridges – thus excoriating only the most relevant and necessary information from a jamboree of unnecessary features in order to solve the problem. Thus was born the graph, which preserved the information about the connections in the city of Königsberg. Euler discovered the number, which was represented by the equation, $V - E + F$, where V = vertices, E = Edges and F = faces. For example, the Euler characteristic of a cube which has, 8 vertices, 12 edges and 6 faces, will be $8 - 12 + 6 = 2$. If another differently shaped object was to have the same Euler number, it would be considered topologically equivalent to the cube. For example, a tetrahedron with 4 vertices, 6 edges and 4 faces would also have the same Euler characteristic of 2 ($4 - 6 + 4 = 2$) and would thus be topologically similar to the cube. Why this number was topologically so significant was shown by the French mathematician Henri Poincaré²³⁴ in 1895. He proved the importance of the Euler characteristic by drawing a random graph on the surface of a sphere, connected by various polygons of different numbers of sides. He showed, if one were to increase the number of vertices, the number of edges would also increase by the same number, while the number of faces will remain the same thus keeping the Euler number constant. Similarly, if one were to increase the number of edges, say by joining two vertices, the number of vertices would remain the same, but the number of faces would increase, once again keeping the Euler characteristic constant. Thus Poincaré argued that the Euler

closed curves. These curves have this topological property: they remain connected if one point is removed, but they become disconnected if two points are removed. A figure-eight curve is not homeomorphic to a circle because removing a single point—the crossing point—leaves a disconnected set with two components.

233.



(a) Königsberg in 1736



(b) Euler's graphical representation

234. Refer to this link for a better appreciation of how Poincaré' generalized Euler's formula <https://www.sjsu.edu/faculty/watkins/eulerpoincare0.htm>

characteristic was independent of the way the map was drawn, it only depended on the surface and its most defining and relevant characteristics – namely, the edges and vertices – it’s ‘points’.

Badiou transfers this concept of ‘points’, to further his own phenomenology in the ‘world’, where each point acts as a filter, sieving out all irrelevant information, keeping only the most relevant bits. This process of filtration is not subjective, but is forced by the rigor of the topological characteristics of the transcendental of the world. “A point is not that which a subject-body ‘freely’ decides with regard to the multiplicities that appear in a world. A point is that which the transcendental of a world imposes on a subject-body, as the test on which depends the continuation in the world of the truth-process, that transits through the body”²³⁵. Thus, if this is to be understood topologically, these points are the vertices and edges, the equation, $V - E + F$ is the truth procedure, and the resulting Euler characteristic is the ultimate decision or the ‘truth’. It is once again important to reiterate that this process is not the choice which a subject arrives at by his own free will, rather he/she is pushed to a corner by the transcendental of the world. This is where and when the truth is tested. This corner, or the space of points is the ultimate place – the topological space. “The points of the transcendental of a world define a topological space”²³⁶. Just as the city of Königsberg and its seven bridges were reduced to points of a topological space, to carry out the truth procedure on whether or not it was possible to traverse the city by crossing the bridges only once, the Place de la République and its assortment of demonstrators were reduced to points to answer the one question – whether the political content of the demonstration supported or contested the government, by ‘abstractly regrouping the multiplicities and subsuming them under a binary’.²³⁷ Badiou illustrates his point further by citing examples of Sartre’s existentialist theatre and Julien Gracq’s *Les Rivages des Syrtes*,²³⁸ the latter being an example of a space where the multiples cannot be summoned to a duality. A seemingly plotless, story-less story of two fictional lands of Orsenna and Farghestan, in limbo for decades – a pointless world with no decisions to be

235. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury 2013, Pg 400

236. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury 2013, Pg 400

237. Starting the first section of Book VI of *Logics of Worlds*, Badiou refers back to the demonstration at Place de la République, whose various groupings and clusters he had analysed in such great detail, in order to establish the idea of the transcendental, now writes, “If we wish to obtain a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answer to a global question concerning this complex world - as harsh as some of its slogans maybe, is the demonstration a boon to the government? – It is obviously necessary to filter the complex transcendental through a binary device and reduce the nuances of evaluation to the simplicity that characterizes every ultimate choice, either 1 (for yes) or 0 (for no)” (*Logics of Worlds*, Pg 403). This is also how he grounds his theory in the precincts of Boolean algebra.

238. In his book, *The courage of hopelessness*, Slavoj Žižek presents an interesting analysis of Badiou’s exploration of Gracq’s novel, *Les Rivages des Syrtes*. He says Badiou’s motto in this particular analysis is ‘mieux vaut un desastre, qu’un desetre (better a disaster – the catastrophic outcome of an event – than a non eventful survival). He writes, “the origin of Badiou’s motto is Gracq’s novel, an account of Orsenna, a fictional stand-in for Italy, a country ruled by the ancient and decadent city of the same name which, for the last 300 years has been in a state of suspended war with Farghestan, the Barbarian desert country across the sea to the south. The leadership of Orsenna decides to provoke an open war with Farghestan in order to break the spell of decadent inertia and bring authentic life back to Orsenna, although they are aware that the war may well result in Orsenna’s destruction. The underlying existential dilemma is: what is more desirable, a still, inert life of small satisfactions, not a true life at all, or taking a risk that may well end in a catastrophe? But is Gracq’s example not misleading? The hedonist-decadent non-being of the Orsenna society is a false state that obfuscate the underlying social antagonisms – and the pseudo event of the war with Farghestan continues this obfuscation. So there are three terms and not two: the event (which may end up in disaster), the pseudo event (fascism or, in this case, war), and the hedonist utilitarian by the politics of nonbeing of regulating animal human life. (Žižek Slavoj, *The courage of hopelessness, chronicles of a year acting dangerously*, Penguin UK, May 2017)

made, until there are, and that's where the book ends. "Here, is an example, accomplished in literature, of a transcendental that no duality is able to summon to the tribunal of judgement, action or becoming."²³⁹ However, as the book nears its end, and the protagonist's wonderings about the opposite shore start to manifest itself, a point being to form, the atony of the world begins to disappear, and the question appears, whether to go to war or not? "Orsenna's path towards the abruptness of a point – there where the question of war will concentrate into a single alternative. The endless and idle declensions of collective existence – concerns destiny, destination. A point is, according to the Two, the destinal possibility of a world"²⁴⁰

The big question, that now lies before us and this thesis, is how the everyday world of Neruda – the seemingly pointless and endlessly habitual world of mixing tomatoes and onions, wearing socks and shirts, of ironing clothes and sweeping homes lends itself to these 'points'? How does this mundane, atonal world, gets transformed into a topological space? However, once one enters the Nerudian world, it's easy, almost natural to stumble onto topologies, more often than not, while simply taking a walk through streets or market places. Even if one randomly flips through the pages of his *Memoirs*, the 'topologies' or the essential core of its many worlds are promised in their most mundane.

Neruda travelled through Mexico and wrote, "Mexico is to be found in its markets. Not in the guttural songs of the movies or in the false image of the Mexican in sombrero, with moustache and pistol. Mexico is a land of crimson and phosphorescent turquoise shawls. Mexico is a land of earthen bowls and pitchers, and fruit lying open to a swarm of insects. Mexico is an infinite countryside of steel-blue century plants with yellow thorns."²⁴¹ He sailed through the Yangtze in China and wrote, "what is definitely extraordinary about this landscape is to see man working in tiny rectangles, on some little green dab on the rocks. All the way up, on the tip of the vertical walls, wherever there is a recess that holds a little bit of cultivable ground, there is a Chinese farming it. The Chinese mother earth is vast and hard. She has disciplined and shaped man, making him an instrument of work, tireless, subtle, and dogged. The combination of vast land, extraordinary human labour, and the gradual elimination of all injustice will make the people of this beautiful, far-flung, and profound China thrive."²⁴² He landed in Moscow and wrote, "For me, Moscow is a feast. As soon as I get there, I go out alone into the streets, happy to breathe, whistling cuecas. I look at the faces of the Russian men, the eyes and the braids of the Russian women, the ice cream sold on street corners, the popular paper flowers, the shop windows, in search of new things, little things that make life important."²⁴³ These little, important things are the points of the Nerudian world, distilled and crystalline, holding within themselves the infinite grandeur and complexities of all the large things surrounding them – the entire politics of a country, absorbed in a small patch of green land hunched over by a tireless woman, an entire revolution absorbed in a paper flower, an entire wilderness absorbed in an earthen bowl filled with fruits; each one of them effectively grappling with the question of justice in that world, each one of them, determining their respective destinies. Likewise, Badiou, while analysing the city of Brasilia, identifies these points in its Squares,

239. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury 2013, Pg 408

240. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury 2013, Pg 409

241. Neruda Pablo, *Memoirs*, Trans. by Hardie St Martin, Rupa & Co, 2005, Pg 150

242. Neruda Pablo, *Memoirs*, Trans. by Hardie St Martin, Rupa & Co, 2005, Pg 234

243. Neruda Pablo, *Memoirs*, Trans. by Hardie St Martin, Rupa & Co, 2005, Pg 244

it's East/West opposition, the forest like shores of the lake, and collects them to say, "If we now gather together all these points, we will see that they have a power of localization situated in some sense 'beneath' the transcendental. They are something like the summary of the being-there of the city; or more precisely, they extract from its transcendental the regime of tensions or even (for a materialist dialectician) of contradictions that organizes its spatial form: representation and habitation, power and everyday life, functions of peace and functions of war, study and leisure."²⁴⁴

The interior

However, it is once again important to remember that these points are only effective when they are localized within the boundaries of time and space. Here Badiou intervenes with more rigor, " 'to localize' means to situate a multiple 'in the interior' of another. Or, to utilize a multiple, whose worldly position is assumed as established, to delimit the place of appearance of another multiple."²⁴⁵ This isn't a particularly lucid statement, at least at this point, when we haven't yet unpacked the 'principles of interiority' as laid down by Badiou, more precisely by the mathematical principles of topology. Intuitively, it is safe to assume that in the context of Mexico, the earthen bowl lies within the interior of Mexico, as a part of its elements, and not somewhere outside of it, similarly with the green patch and the ice cream shop, with respect to China and Moscow respectively. It doesn't just mean, that these elements belong within the geographical borders of the aforementioned places or that they are mere elements of the set that is collected as elements of China, Mexico or Moscow, but other things as well. To understand these, and the concept of the 'interior', it is important to properly understand the very source of this phenomenology, which is topology.

In mathematics, whenever one speaks of a topological space, it is followed by the notion of the space's -1) interior, 2) exterior and 3) its boundary.²⁴⁶ In very simple terms, suppose there is a set S, containing the topological subset A with elements defined by the function $(x+1)^2 \geq 4$. So all the elements which satisfy the function $(x+1)^2 > 4$ will lie in the 'interior' of the set. Consequently, all the elements which follow the opposite function, such that $(x+1)^2 < 4$ shall lie on its exterior, and the elements that satisfy the function, $(x+1)^2 = 4$, shall lie on the boundary. Now how does this idea translate into Badiouan world. Very simply, if we consider the function $(x+1)^2 \geq 4$ as the truth function, the points of the topological space would treat it and naturally segregate the intensities of existence of the set into ones that satisfy this function and put them into its interior and the ones that don't would be expelled into the exterior – thus, 'in' or 'out' become the binary result for all elements treated by the topological space.

"The idea – which is very profound - is the following. A point concentrates the degrees of existence, the intensities measured by the transcendental, into only two possibilities. Of these two possibilities, only one is the 'good one' for a truth-procedure that must pass through this point. Only one authorizes the continuation, and therefore the reinforcement of the actions of the subject-body in the world. All of a sudden, the transcendental degrees are in fact distributed

244. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury 2013, Pg 416

245. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury 2013, Pg 411

246. For more interested readers this video gives an in-depth but lucid enough explanation of the concepts of interior, exterior and boundary of a topological space. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Knur17bP6X0>

into two classes by a given point, that treats the becoming of a truth: the degrees associated with the ‘good’ value and those associated with the ‘bad’ one.”²⁴⁷

Just as “the dreamy inertia of Captain Marino” in *Le Rivage des Syrtes* is assigned a negative value by the global point, ‘historical slumber or destructive awakening’, in the Badiouan interpretation of the Nerudian world, the point, ‘whether China will thrive or not’ assigns the green patch of land laboured over by a hardworking farmer, a positive value, whereas the point, ‘the true nature of Mexico’ shall assign the “guttural songs of the movies” a negative value. The same elements could be rendered positive or negative, once the context changes, or in other words, as their localizations change, they inhabit either the interior, the exterior or the boundary. As such, one of the aims of this thesis then becomes to identify not just these interior spaces of the Nerudian world, inhabited by the positivized intensities – the ‘good values’, but also to identify the exteriors and the boundaries - and explore their varied geographies, terrains, weather, smells and to spot some patterns if there are any. But before we set out on journey into the heart of some of the Nerudian topos or the Nerudian ‘body’, we must understand one more formal classification which Badiou lays out in order to define worlds, created by topologies. According to Badiou, there can be three kinds of worlds – 1) Atonic 2) Tensed 3) Neither of the two.

Atonic Worlds

“A world is said to be atonic, when its transcendental is devoid of points”²⁴⁸

In Set theory, it would mean that the multiples appearing within a particular set, are so disconnected, that there is not one equation, which could give a result with a range. Each criterion applied would only result in individually existing multiples. No function or equation could analyse or segregate them into two groups. In other words, these spaces do not have an interior function. These sets are sometimes called boundary sets. For e.g. if a subset within a set is to be defined by the function, $(x-2)^2/4 + (y+1)^2/9 = 1$, this subset will only be defined by a boundary, represented by a single element, and its interior would be an empty set. Thus there are only multiples, no points. In Badiouan, it takes us back to the very beginning of *Logics of Worlds*, where he postulates about democratic materialism saying, “there are only bodies and languages”.²⁴⁹

247. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury 2013, Pg 417

248. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury 2013, Pg 420

249. In the preface to *Logics of Worlds*, Badiou, in the very first stanza, writes, “Today’s natural belief is condensed in a single statement. There are only bodies and languages. I propose to name this conviction, democratic materialism.” He goes on to say, “Communities and cultures, colours and pigments, religions and clergies, uses and customs, disparate sexualities, public intimacies and the publicity of the intimate: everything and everyone deserves to be recognized and protected by law..” His dialectical counter to this idea of democratic materialism is materialist dialectic, “let’s agree that by democratic we are to understand the simultaneous maintenance and dissolution of symbolic or juridical multiplicity into real duality. For example: the Cold War of democracies against totalitarianism, the semi Cold War of the free world against terrorism, or the linguistic and policework of civilised countries against Islamist archaism. Let’s agree that by ‘dialectic’, following Hegel, we are to understand that the essence of all difference is the third time that marks the gap between the two others. It is then legitimate to counter democratic materialism – the sovereignty of the Two (bodies and languages) – with a materialist dialectic, if by ‘materialistic dialectic’ we understand the following statement in which the Three supplements the reality of the Two: There are only bodies and languages, except that there are truths. (*Logics of Worlds*, Pg4)

He further elucidates later in the book, “Empirically, it is clear that atonic worlds are simply worlds which are so ramified and nuanced – or so quiescent and homogeneous – that no instance of the Two, and consequently no figure of the decision, is capable of evaluating them. The modern apologia for the ‘complexity’ of the world, invariably seasoned with praise for the democratic movement, is really nothing but a desire for generalized atony.”²⁵⁰

A very fine example of such generalized atony can be the so called ‘free media’ space, especially the American free media. Let’s start with the New York Times which is touted as the most liberal newspaper in the country, and it is the third largest circulated daily, and yet, the country remains overwhelmingly conservative in its politics. People don’t just subscribe to the New York Times to read its editorials, and if they read it, they wouldn’t trust them, because who would, if the front page said something and the editorial quite another. So one will notice, that in the western world, meaning entirely the whole world today, there is no apparent censorship of views, whereas in the communist countries, or whatever remains of that, the society runs on censorship. Then why is it that America, for example is not facing the bloody revolution? Perhaps, that’s where information overload, and this apparent ‘freedom’ has its uses. This is a tool that the power uses to convince people that all views are allowed, all freedom is present, look at our free media - everyone is free! So what need for a structural change? There is a huge psychological and moral contentment attached to such a philosophy - the obligations to educate are less on the part of the media, since everything is taken off with a little bit of everything and the need to be agitated is less on the part of the civic society, because everyone gets what they want - the liberal gets his editorial, the material girl gets her Broadway review, the bibliophile gets his top 10 lists, the frustrated soul gets his gateway to the laughter club, the tourist gets the Zagat guide to night clubs and so on and so forth. There is a complete lack of point here – no question can be asked which could provide a real answer – Does the New York Times support the leftist cause? We don’t really know, because there isn’t dense enough empirical evidence, and if there is, it gets cancelled by the evidence of it’s contrary where it has supported the right wingers. And sometimes all its arguments are so complex, that it is impossible to figure out what it is trying to say.

Badiou cites the example of the current onslaught of movements, especially routed through Anglo-American gender studies, seeking to remove the man/woman polarity, and considering it as just one of the many unsegregable multiples amongst an ever-increasing array of sexual orientations people seem to be discovering every single day. To this Badiou says, “I will make no empirical objections to this view of things. I am very happy to accept that the figures of desire and the illuminations of fantasy unfold in the multiple – even if this multiple is infinitely more coded and monotonous than the deconstructors of gender suppose. My contention is simply that this infinite gradation, this return to multiple-being as such, does nothing but uphold, in the element of sex, the founding axiom of democratic materialism: there are only bodies and languages, there is no truth. In so doing, the ‘world of sex’ is established as an entirely atonic world.”²⁵¹

Neruda, however, is not a poet of ‘atonic worlds’. His worlds are populated with points – where the most mundane and the miniscule rise up to answer questions about the fate of humanity. In them a regular pair of scissors²⁵² divide the world into happiness and sorrow, nations are united

250. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury 2013, Pg 420

251. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury 2013, Pg 421

252. Neruda Pablo, “Oda a las tijeras”, *All the Odes*, , Ed. By Ilan Stavans, Trans. By Ken Krabbenhoft, Farrar, Strauss, Giroux, New York, Pg 485

within the rinds of an orange²⁵³, an onion single-handedly answers questions of hunger on earth²⁵⁴. Even while writing about the complete inactivity of the night, he finds within it, the seed of the day. Even when he writes his ode to peace and quiet, there is constant activity where all of nature around him is animated into a song of points, and he writes,

*We should sit still in the midst
Of this incalculable song,
Nothing on earth lacks a voice:
When we close
Our eyes
We hear
Things that slither,
Creatures that are growing,
The creaking
Of unseen wood,
And then the world,
Earth, heavenly waters,
Air:
Everything
Sounds
Like thunder at times,
Other times
Like a distant river.
Peace and quiet, a moment's
Rest, or a day's:
From your depths we will gather
Minerals,
From your unspeaking face
Musical light will issue.
This is how we'll perfect our actions.
This is how men and women will speak
The earth's convictions, and never know it.*

*(Oda a la tranquilidad)*²⁵⁵

One may ask the question, whether this general lack of atony again puts the poet in charge, where he deliberately finds or rather creates points where there are none, or in the worlds that he finds, or prefers to write about or respond to, points naturally create themselves? Or is it, that the points reveal themselves to some people and remain hidden to some? Is atonality in a world a poet's choice or his lack of insight?

253. Neruda Pablo, "Oda a la naranja", *All the Odes*, Ed. By Ilan Stavans, Trans. By Ken Krabbenhoft, Farrar, Strauss, Giroux, New York, Pg 482

254. Neruda Pablo, "Oda a la cebolla", *All the Odes*, Ed. By Ilan Stavans, Trans. By Ken Krabbenhoft, Farrar, Strauss, Giroux, New York, Pg 479

255. Neruda Pablo, "Oda a la tranquilidad", *All the Odes*, Ed. By Ilan Stavans, Trans. By Ken Krabbenhoft, Farrar, Strauss, Giroux, New York, Pg 505

At this juncture, it might perhaps be crucial and useful to speak of the current Corona virus pandemic in the world, and compare some responses to it. As the world lurches through one of the worst health and economic crises of modern times, the virus has perhaps emerged as a point – a decider – of how the world would look like on the other side. Arundhati Roy, responded to the crisis in an article she wrote for The Financial Times, titled, ‘The pandemic is a portal’.²⁵⁶ She concluded her essay with these lines, “Whatever it is, coronavirus has made the mighty kneel and brought the world to a halt like nothing else could. Our minds are still racing back and forth, longing for a return to “normality”, trying to stitch our future to our past and refusing to acknowledge the rupture. But the rupture exists. And in the midst of this terrible despair, it offers us a chance to rethink the doomsday machine we have built for ourselves. Nothing could be worse than a return to normality. Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next. We can choose to walk through it, dragging the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred, our avarice, our data banks and dead ideas, our dead rivers and smoky skies behind us. Or we can walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world. And ready to fight for it.”

Another response in the form of a poetry, identifies this point only to erase it with our postmodern tendencies and to affirm the first choice of atonality

*Our omnipresent nemesis
Is an unseen bug: cocking
One finger at science, one at the
Lord: swift
And immune to the divine
Vaccine, our lately brahmastra.
I will sit still.
I will drink still.
I will interrogate the navel.
I will await the onslaught.
Like everyone else, I will learn
Nothing.
Herodotus says the Caunians
Strapped on armour and ranked in
Rows,
Masses at the border, stabbing
At the air with pointed spears to expel
Foreign gods: I leave it
To my countrymen
To do the same, with mantras and
Chants
And aromatic havans.
Its an ungrateful song to sing, but
This entire maintenance
And management of life and the
Planet
Is an exhausting thing.*

256. Roy Arundhati, ‘The pandemic is a portal’, Financial Times, April 3, 2020. The essay in its entirety is available at this link: <https://www.ft.com/content/10d8f5e8-74eb-11ea-95fe-fcd274e920ca>

*The prophecy
 Is written invisible on the wall.
 At the very end – and
 All things end: devoured by kaal –
 We
 Will be far poorer
 And far fewer.
 But neither a wee wiser,
 Nor a wee nicer, nor more humane
 Overall.*

(‘Bugger it, Man’, Tarun Tejpal, unpublished)²⁵⁷

Neruda has written through many upheavals, wars and revolutions, and his poems have always stood in solidarity with the people going through those periods of crisis. In those periods, the poems themselves transformed into points – pushing the people towards a choice and their ultimate fate. They became points for the poet himself, independent agents transforming the poet himself. After finishing a reading of his poem *España en el corazón* amidst the market poorly paid and barefoot men of Vega Central market in Santiago, Neruda recalls, “The reading lasted more than an hour. As I was about to leave, one of the men rose to his feet. He was one of those who had a sack knotted around his waist. “I want to thank you for all of us,” he spoke out. “I want to tell you, too, that nothing has ever moved us so much.” When I finished talking, I couldn’t hold back a sob. Several others were also weeping. I walked out into the street between moist eyes and rough handclasps. Can a poet still remain the same after going through these trials of fire and ice?”²⁵⁸

Still the question of the classification of atonality of worlds or the treatment of points, won’t be effectively answered unless we elucidate the theory further. Going back to Badiou’s quote about sex and sexuality – and the modern race to create as many labels and ‘isolates’ as possible, Badiou makes the fair point, that the point of the two sexes – the ultimate duality – is the only isolate – which supports the entire system of amorous encounters, and ultimately breaks the atony of fashionable sexualities. Here he clearly defines the ‘isolate’ as, “a non-minimal degree of positive intensity such that nothing is subordinated to it, except for the minimum...It is a halting point in the world. Such a halting point attests that at least in one place the atony of the world is undermined and that one is required to decide to say ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to a truth procedure.”²⁵⁹

Further, in Badiou’s analysis of the seemingly legitimate experience of ‘atonic chaos’ by Goetz in Sartre’s *Lucifer and the Lord*²⁶⁰, while he identifies the collapse of all points when one brought them forth the moral duality of ‘Good and Evil’. All goods are somehow upturned into Evil. However, Sartre rescues the theory of the point, by identifying the correct isolate somewhere else instead of in the duality of Good or Evil. “Finally Goetz realizes that the only

257. Tejpal Tarun, “Bugger it Man”, Unpublished

258. Neruda Pablo, *Memoirs*, Trans. by Hardie St Martin, Rupa & Co, 2005, Pg 254

259. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury 2013, Pg 421

260. For an interesting analysis of Sartre’s play, refer to Ricoeur, Paul. “Sartre’s Lucifer and The Lord.” Yale French Studies, no. 14, 1954, pp. 85–93. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/2928967. Accessed 12 May 2020.

foothold is not found in the categories of conscience, but in the world's only isolate, the peasant's war. The process of this war does not call for any analytic dissolution. Neither does it appear before the abstractions of morality. It is itself its own end and requires only that one participates in it or oppose it".²⁶¹ He points towards Goetz's last words, "There is this war to wage, and I will wage it".

With the above explication, Tejpal's poem of atony has perhaps failed to identify the correct category or isolate – the point perhaps does not present a choice between being wiser or not, being more humane or not, there would surely be a different aggregate of points, transforming and treating the world in ways, unforeseen by the poet. There are truths or certainly a truth. Neruda would have identified it.

Let us explore in detail the next category of 'Tensed Worlds'

Tensed Worlds

As opposed to the lack of points in atonal worlds, 'tensed worlds' present themselves as places with a profusion of points. "In the tensed worlds, each key moment is an isolate on which one must ground a decision, that's when life, point by point, leaves you no respite, attuned as it is to the tension of everything that appears"²⁶² Neruda's Valparaiso, appears as a perfect illustration of such a world. Valparaiso, is a seaport, located around one hundred and twenty kilometres north west of Santiago in Chile. Because of its close proximity to the Peru-Chile trench, of the Nazca plate where constant subductions (movement of two adjoining tectonic plates over one another) take place, the city is extremely prone to earthquakes. The city has been ravaged many times by strong earthquakes. The city nestled on steep hillsides teems with stairways and funiculars. Its many lives clinging precariously on hills and cliffs, constantly exposed to uncertainties of geology have transformed many times over. Neruda used to visit the city often in his youth, inexplicably attracted to its wondrous rhythms. In his *Memoirs*, he recalls the many eccentric characters of the city, his "favourite lunatics" – Novoa, the journalist and naturalist – dressed in dark coat-tails climbing up and down the mountains with the sure footedness of a llama, with a huge wicker chair of innumerable nooks and crannies, filled with herbs and leaves collected from his infinite wanderings on the mountains; Don Zoilo Escobar, the hermit sailor with his collection of curios and memorabilia as eccentric as himself, amongst which was a Stradivarius, a famed, stringed instrument crafted exclusively by the members of the Italian family Stradivari which he never played himself or allowed anyone else to play; the old explorer with his odd collection of idols – masks, wooden gods, knives, shields, necklaces – the one who had covered the genitals of the wooden gods with loin cloth and was preparing for a secret trip; Don Bartolome, who moved around the town with a green parrot on his shoulder and an ancient sword under his cape. Each of these eccentric lives had journeyed through one of the many points, Valparaiso had scattered so liberally, to emerge on the other side, where instead of the banal, sometimes atonal compulsions of everyday life, lay something fascinating, bordering on insanity – lives completely dedicated to the vast grandeur of the mountains or a single Stradivari. Neruda wrote, "Perhaps in these secret realms, in these souls of Valparaiso, was stored forever, the lost power of a wave, the storm, the salt, the sea that flickers and hums. The menacing sea locked inside each person: an uncommunicable sound,

261. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury 2013, Pg 422

262. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury 2013, Pg 421

an isolated movement, that turned into flour and foam of dreams”²⁶³. And Badiou wrote, “In the tensed worlds, each key moment is an isolate on which one must ground a decision. That’s when life, point by point, leaves you no respite, attuned as it is to the tension of everything that appears”²⁶⁴

Formal exposition

For the formal exposition of the theory of points, one has to consider the classical transcendental set T_0 , with only two degrees of appearance – Maximum(M) and minimum(μ). This world dictated by classical logic, follows and validates the ‘principle of non-contradiction’. Just as in pure ontology, either something exists or it does not. There cannot be something in between or a third possibility. ‘To be’ is to appear with the maximum value of the transcendental, which is M, and to ‘not be’, is to appear with the minimum value or μ . This is an extensional set, with no other criterion for classification other than the fact that the element either belongs to the set or does not. This set is certainly a transcendental, albeit with the binary structure of Boolean Algebra.²⁶⁵ This is the set to which the transcendental set with different degrees of appearances has to be mapped on, if one were to follow the rules of topology. In other words, there has to be a surjective homomorphism. This means that if an element x belongs to a certain set say A, then after a particular function operates on it, it corresponds to element y in the set B.

$$\begin{aligned} x \in A, y \in B \\ f(x) = y \end{aligned}$$

As such A and B are said to be in surjective homeomorphism with each other. Or B, conserves the function $f(x)$. For e.g. if A was a set contain four elements 2, 4, 6, 8. Now if we were to consider the function $f(x + 5)$, the set B containing the elements 7, 9, 11, 13 will be surjective to set A, under the operation $f(x+5)$, with 2 corresponding to 7, 4 corresponding to 9 and so on. “A homeomorphism is said to be ‘surjective’ if all degrees of T’ are affected by the function. In other words, if $p' \in T'$, there exists $q \in T$, such that $\varphi(q) = p'$ ”.²⁶⁶ For this concept to manifest in the global scale, all degrees of appearance in a given world, i.e all degrees in the worlds transcendental T’, should correspond to the binary of T_0 or the two elements 0 and 1 of ontology. As explored in the previous chapters, the functions which define the transcendental of appearing in a Badiouan world are those of conjunction \cap and Envelope Σ . Hence, the surjective homeomorphism between the two transcendentals T and T_0 will conserve the (\cap - Σ) function. It also conserves the minimum and the maximum.

$\varphi(\mu) = 0$, $\varphi(M) = 1$. It is important to analyse further about the possibility of T being far more complex and different, for it to be able to be mapped onto a T_0 . If that be the case, it won’t be possible to identify a surjective homeomorphism between the two. “If we accept that a point, as the correlation between an infinite order and a simple duality, is that by which a global decision can divide a world, we can see how the question of knowing whether a transcendental

263. Neruda Pablo, *Memoirs*, Trans. by Hardie St Martin, Rupa & Co, 2005, Pg 80

264. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury 2013, Pg 423

265. For a beginner’s guide to the concept of Boolean Algebra, refer to <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Boolean-algebra>

266. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury 2013, Pg 438

has many points or a few, or even no points at all, carries considerable consequences.”²⁶⁷ This is the fact which makes one consider the formal possibility of the existence of atonic worlds. These are worlds devoid of any points, isolates or circumstances that force or seek the decision of a ‘yes’ or ‘no’, an ‘either’ or ‘or’. Badiou has produced a rather complex algebraic proof²⁶⁸ to show the existence of atonic worlds, which we can only include here as a footnote for more interested readers. His formal definition of a tensed world, is one which stands in complete opposition to the atonic world. The complete lack of points here is replaced by each degree of the transcendental behaving as a point in a tensed world. “A world with such a transcendental is the world ‘in tension’: it requires every truth process to confront the snares of nondescript existence, whose intensity, as weak as it may be, hides a point. We can invoke the world of the resistance: every circumstance is dangerous, every encounter difficult. Everything that appears demands that we be on guard and decide.”²⁶⁹

The poet amidst points

With this added insight, we can relook at some of the questions we asked earlier in this chapter: “Whether the poet deliberately finds or rather creates points where there are none, or in the worlds that he finds or prefers to write about or respond, points naturally create themselves, or even whilst situated in a world populated with points, the poet can retreat in atonality?”

To answer these questions outside of this thesis, we could have perhaps adopted a different methodology. But in the context of the thesis, where we are out to seek the truth of the Nerudian world, we shall look at Neruda’s own exploration of these questions. In the lovely montage of testimonies to some of his dear poets in the last chapter of *Memoirs*, Neruda explores some of these questions, somewhat obliquely, but with the deepest empathy. Writing about the French poet Pierre Reverdy in his *Memoirs*, he says, “His own poetry was like a vein of quartz, subterranean but filled with light, inexhaustible. Sometimes it threw off a hard glitter, like the sheen of some mineral torn with difficulty from its thick covering of earth. Suddenly it flew out like a spark from a match, or hid in the gallery of its mine, far from the light of day, but faithful to its own truth.”²⁷⁰ Again, writing about the Italian poet Salvatore Quasimodo, Neruda says, “The colours and sounds of a world that is sad but orderly are combined in Quasimodo. His sadness is not Leopardi’s hopeless uncertainty but represents the earth settling down to let things grow in the evening; the feeling of reverence given off by that time of day when scents, voices, colours, and bells watch over the work of the seeds that are deep in the ground.”²⁷¹ Once again, speaking about his fellow Chilean poet Vicente Huidobro, Neruda writes, “From the delightful workmanship of his Frenchified poetry to the powerful forces in his most important writing, there is in Huidobro a struggle between playfulness and fire, escapism and immolation. This struggle makes for quite a show, taking place in plain view, with a dazzling clarity, and almost always deliberately.”²⁷² In all these heart felt testimonies, Neruda comes

267. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury 2013, Pg 440

268. For the detailed algebraic proof, refer to *Logics of Worlds*, Pg 444-446, Badiou Alain, Trans. By Toscano Alberto, Bloomsbury, 2013

269. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury 2013, Pg 447

270. Neruda Pablo, *Memoirs*, Trans. by Hardie St Martin, Rupa & Co, 2005, Pg 279

271. Neruda Pablo, *Memoirs*, Trans. by Hardie St Martin, Rupa & Co, 2005, Pg 283

272. Neruda Pablo, *Memoirs*, Trans. by Hardie St Martin, Rupa & Co, 2005, Pg 286

across as a truly Badiouan philosopher of poetry, who completely understood the power and possibility of the void. He was as much at home inside the dark, yet mineral rich pits of Reverdy's poetry, the deep, scented underground of Quasimodo as he was in the sun lit squares of his works. As a critic he steered clear of classifying his poets into silos or labels of the fashionable movements of the day. But he chose to write about poets and poems and points - whether hidden deep within the architectural layers of his times or visible in broad daylight. "I have no other way of fathoming what some have taken to calling the mystery of poetry. I would call it the clarity of poetry."²⁷³ Neruda, like Badiou understood points and could smell the presence or absence and just as Badiou wrote, "many worlds are neither atonic nor tensed", Neruda illustrated it by saying, "there must be some connection between a man's hands and his work, between his eyes, the viscera, the blood of man and his work. But I have no theory. I don't go around with some dogma under my arm ready to drop it on somebody's head. Everything looks bright to me on Monday, everything looks dark on Tuesday, and I believe this is going to be a bright and dark year. The coming years will be a lovely blue."²⁷⁴ He was in all modesty, delimiting the possibilities of philosophising over poetry and was also simultaneously aware of the conditions necessary in order for philosophy to effectively function. So instead of completely renouncing it, or glorifying it as some all-encompassing totalitarian regime according points to every instance, he too wagered his world between 'atony' and 'tension'.

"I postulate not only that philosophy is possible today but that the possibility does not take the form of the final stage. On the contrary the crux of the matter is to know what the following means: taking one more step, a single step."²⁷⁵

If we look at the arc of Neruda's own poetry, could we then ask, that his transition from writing his earlier poems to writing fully committed political poetry, was a choice that he made between atony and a fertile world richly populated with points? At this point, if we look at this stanza from Neruda's *Memoirs*,

"We poets of this age have had to make a choice. The choice has not been a bed of roses. The terrible, unjust wars, the continual pressures, money's aggressiveness, all injustices have made themselves felt with greater intensity every day. The decrepit old system has baited its hooks with conditional freedom, sex, violence, and pleasures paid for in easy monthly instalments. Today's poet has looked for a way out of his anguish. Some have escaped into mysticism, or the dream of reason. Others are fascinated by the spontaneous and destructive violence of the young; they have become immediatists without realising that, in today's belligerent world, this experience has always led to repression and sterile agony."²⁷⁶

The world, according to Neruda, is populated with points and to go through them could sometimes be a matter of choice and sometimes not, but the world also offers voids to retreat, to keep safe, to grow in darkness, until one is ready to sprout. The poets may not outlive this period of darkness, but their poetry does, taking repeated tests in times, failing or passing at

273. Neruda Pablo, *Memoirs*, Trans. by Hardie St Martin, Rupa & Co, 2005, Pg 284

274. Neruda Pablo, *Memoirs*, Trans. by Hardie St Martin, Rupa & Co, 2005, Pg 265

275. Badiou Alain, *Manifesto for Philosophy*, Trans. by Norman Madarasz, State University of New York Press, 1992, Pg 32

276. Neruda Pablo, *Memoirs*, Trans. by Hardie St Martin, Rupa & Co, 2005, Pg 320

different points, and the best a poet could perhaps do is to learn lessons in simplicity – in the reductive capacity of the points or in their patient ability to remain hidden in the dark undergrounds. When Neruda chose to become a member of the Communist Party of Chile, he wrote, “I have never had any difficulties with my party, which, although modest, has achieved extraordinary victories for the people of Chile, my people. What more can I say? My only hope is to be as simple as my comrades, as persistent and invincible as they. We never learn enough about humility. I was never taught anything by individualist pride, which entrenches itself in scepticism so as not to espouse the cause of human suffering.”²⁷⁷

We are perhaps now closer, to enter the concept of the ‘Body’ as a collection of ‘points’. And in the process, have a closer look at Neruda’s real ‘body’ of work.

277. Neruda Pablo, *Memoirs*, Trans. by Hardie St Martin, Rupa & Co, 2005, Pg 320

CHAPTER – 8

THE BODY

To identify or explain the formal concept of the body, which we have previously touched upon informally throughout the thesis, Badiou starts off section I of Book VII of *Logics of Worlds* with two examples. The first one being Valéry's famous poem, 'The Graveyard by the Sea'²⁷⁸ (La Cimetière Marin) and the second, a rather long and detailed description of the birth of Galois' new algebra²⁷⁹. Both examples are beautifully curated, illuminating instances that bring forth the idea of the 'birth of a body', on its own terms.

'From the place where there was nowhere left to go'

One of my lasting literary memories of the sea, is from Jhumpa Lahiri's luminous novel, *The Namesake*²⁸⁰. In a touching passage from the book, the father takes his son 'Gogol' to visit the sea for the first time... "Will you remember this day, Gogol?" his father had asked, turning back to look at him, his hands pressed like earmuffs to either side of his head. "How long do I have to remember it?" Over the rise and fall of the wind, he could hear his father's laughter. He was standing there, waiting for Gogol to catch up, putting out a hand as Gogol drew near. "Try to remember it always," he said once Gogol reached him, leading him slowly back across the breakwater, to where his mother and Sonia stood waiting. "Remember that you and I made this journey, that we went together to a place where there was nowhere left to go." The sea, since then has been stamped on my mind as this dead end of a place from where there is nowhere else to go, until I came across Badiou's analysis of Valéry's poem, where the sea, at first complicit with the unchanging, motionless noon and the graves beside it, suddenly rises with the wind, stirring the poet's consciousness, transforming into the 'event-site'. From a place where there was nowhere left to go, it suddenly becomes this restorative force, at which the poet now cries, "Let's run into the waves and be hurled back into the living". The same ontologically invariant sea, but now in a transcendental relationship with the wind, reverses the value of its appearance. Badiou, in a more formal fashion, notes,

"The world of the poem comprises four objects: the sea, the sun, the dead and consciousness. The first three objects are bound by relations that are universally exposed in the poem, testifying to their immobile equivalence, their eternal return into the same. The fourth term is the proper inexistence of the place. In the pure vanishing image of its 'elusive foam' the sea is abruptly revealed to be a site, which plunges into the furore of its own evaluation. – This site is an 'event-site' because among its consequences, we find that the inexistence (consciousness, life) starts to exist maximally, that the ontologically vanquished becomes the living victor, that

278. Frederick John. "Paul Valéry: The Graveyard by the Sea [Poem]." *The Sewanee Review*, vol. 77, no. 1, 1969, pp. 1–7. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/27541694.

279. Evariste Galois was a 19th century French mathematician whose contribution to mathematics had immensely radical effects. The particular new algebra which Badiou cites in *Logics of Worlds* suggested a whole new way of solving polynomial equations of higher degrees (more than 5) by replacing discrete and determinate numbers like 1,2,3 by structures held under operations, called 'groups'. His theory is also called 'Galois theory'. For a more detailed understanding of his algebra, one may refer to <https://nrich.maths.org/1422>.

280. Lahiri, Jhumpa. *The Namesake*, New York :Mariner Books, 2004.

where the empty excluded of the place used to be, there now stands a body capable of breaking the 'pensive form' of its submission."²⁸¹

The second example heralds the 'body' in the invention of a new kind of Algebra by the mathematician Evariste Galois. In the very beginning of the theory of equations, one would identify an equation to generally be in the form, 'ax + b = 0', where a and b were numerical and constant co-efficients, and the solution for x would be '-b/a', unless a=0. This is the example of a first degree equation. When it came to second degree equations, of the form 'ax² + bx + c=0', x was solvable by radicals, with x having two values in the form, $x = \frac{-b \pm \sqrt{b^2 - 4ac}}{2a}$. The formulas for solving third and fourth degree equations were discovered subsequently, which logically led to the exploration of the idea of solving fifth and higher degree equations by using radicals. However this proved to be a dead-end. There was no such formula, which could solve such equations by using finite operations of addition, subtraction, multiplication etc. Once again, the mathematicians had arrived at a place, from where there was nowhere left to go, until Galois arrived with, "nothing less than a new definition of algebra, which replaces the central consideration of calculations, whose terms are numbers, with the consideration of structures, whose terms are operations."²⁸² Thus when the solutions of formal equations through radicals became a dead-end, Galois created an entirely new algebra, a new language, where solutions could be in the form of combinatorial structures. An entirely new algebra was created with different kinds of functions and operations, identified and classified into newly established categories. This new 'body' of mathematics, which authorised in it's own right, the 'analysis of analyses' – had in some way brought out, which was previously unknown albeit present in traces in the period between the mathematical forays of Lagrange²⁸³ and Cauchy²⁸⁴, in broad daylight. If one can refer back to the previous chapter and it's 'theory of points', the next obvious question, would be to identify and analyse how 'points' behave or are treated within a 'body', whereby they are assimilated, categorized and filtered to break new ground. Badiou repeatedly observes, that this new ground is achieved only through the metamorphosis of certain elements which were previously ontologically, 'already present' within the world. Going back to Valery's poem, Badiou notes, "It is clear that the trace of the poem opens onto a new present. Valery puts it with precision: Fly away, my Sun-bewildered pages!' means that the old inscription is dead. 'We must try to live!' is the imperative of the

281. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury 2013, Pg 458

282. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. by Alberto Toscano, Bloomsbury 2013, Pg 461

283. Joseph Louis Lagrange was a 18th century Italian mathematician and astronomer. He was known as the founder of 'Calculus of Variations', whereby his theory on analytical functions had perhaps sowed the seeds for the concepts of Galois's new algebra. Badiou noted in *Logics of Worlds*, "The very beginnings of the world that we are dealing with – in which the concept of group is born as the new body of the algebra to come- are to be found in Lagrange. Instead of labouring directly to find the formula that would give the solutions (or roots) of a general equation Legrange had the idea of going through the systematic study of the functions that link these solutions to one another" (Badiou, 2013, p.461)

284. Augustin Louis Cauchy was a 19th century French mathematician and physicist. His 'theory of combinations' opened up a whole new way of defining a calculus with something other than numbers. However, it fell short in completely radicalizing the existing algebra and was founded within the existing theoretical frameworks. As Badiou writes in *Logics of Worlds*, "Why does this possibility nonetheless fall short of the status of event site? Why does it not authorise the formation of a body? Very simply, because the transcendental value of Cauchy's invention Is not such as to maximise its consequences former and in particular to sublet the inexistent of the algebraic world, which is the very status of the notion of operation. This status is still bound to the particularity of numerical givens and is not thematized as such (Badiou, 2013, p.462)

present, grounded by the auto-appearance of the site. And waves, wind, foam and blue flesh are as though absorbed by this temporal imperative.”²⁸⁵

Thus, a ‘body’, according to Badiou is a compilation of those elements which have the ability to metamorphose, or are able to get absorbed into the new transformed reality. The sun, the water, the air - previously disparate elements suddenly become poetically compatible to announce the birth of a new perspective to life or a new consciousness. In more technical terms, all these elements are subsumed by their new ontological envelope – the new consciousness, which also forms a part of the body. The body is thus, “the totality of the elements of the site incorporated into the eventual present.”²⁸⁶ It is important to understand that this ‘new consciousness’ was previously inexistent or only existed as a trace; thus Badiou proposes an alternative formulation for the body, “a body is composed of all the elements of the site that subordinate themselves, with maximal intensity, to that which was nothing and becomes all”.²⁸⁷

Bestiary

With this new formulation, we can once again venture into Nerudian territory, into the dazzling world of Neruda’s poem ‘Bestiary’ – where a previously silent world, suddenly comes alive with such chatter and cacophony so as to redefine the order of the current world. This world populated with all kinds of animals, undergoes a very precise classification of its elements – birds, lizards, oysters, foxes, penguins, sheep, dogs, carriage-horses, cats, rabbits, spiders, fleas, pigs and frogs on one side; thoroughbred horses, wasps, rapid capitalists, systematic women, the professor and the poetess on the other. The first two stanzas set the tone of the poem,

If only I could speak with birds,

With oysters and with small lizards,

With the foxes of Selva Oscura,

With representative penguins,

If the sheep would listen to me,

The languorous woolly dogs,

The huge carriage-horses, if only

I could talk things over with the cats,

If the chickens could understand me!

285. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. By Toscano Alberto, Bloomsbury, 2013, Pg 467

286. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. By Toscano Alberto, Bloomsbury, 2013, Pg 468

287. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. By Toscano Alberto, Bloomsbury, 2013, Pg 468

I have never felt the urge to speak

With aristocratic animals:

I am not at all interested

In the world view of the wasps

Or the opinions of thoroughbred horses:

So what, if they go on flying

Or winning ribbons at the track!

I want to speak with the flies,

With the bitch who has just given birth,

To have a long chat with the snakes.

(Bestiary – Pablo Neruda)²⁸⁸

The ontological set of Bestiary contains all of its elements – all the animals, the capitalists, the professor, the women, the zoologists and the poet. Its transcendental consists of four kinds of relations – the animals with the poet, the poet with the animals, the zoologist with the animals (“exasperating simplifiers who take the fly’s point of view”), the poet with the other people (‘rapid capitalists’, ‘systematic women’, the ‘poetess’ and the ‘professor’). The transcendental presents an entire spectrum of relationships which ultimately provoke a decision – between a jaded, limited sense of the world with the human being at its centre and a deeper understanding of the planet and its intricate biomes filled with unknown, unheard forces and voices.

The affirmatory instance of a deeper relationship - “*I followed the nocturnal dogs,/those squalid, incessant travellers/who trot around town in silence*” followed by the negatory rejection “*I followed them for hours,/ they were quite suspicious of me,/ those poor foolish dogs,/ they lost the opportunity/ of telling me their sorrows,/ of running with grief and a tail/ through the avenues of the ghosts.*”²⁸⁹

The positive curiosity of the poet – “*I was always very curious/ about the erotic rabbit:/who provokes it and whispers/into its genital ears?*” and the negative simplification of the spiders – “*The spiders have always been slandered/in the idiotic pages/of exasperating simplifiers/who take the fly’s point of view*”²⁹⁰

288. Neruda Pablo, “Bestiary”, *Full Woman, Fleshly Apple, Hot Moon*, Trans. Stephen Mitchell, Harper Perennial, 1997, Pg 179

289. Neruda Pablo, “Bestiary”, *Full Woman, Fleshly Apple, Hot Moon*, Trans. Stephen Mitchell, Harper Perennial, 1997, Pg 179

290. Neruda Pablo, “Bestiary”, *Full Woman, Fleshly Apple, Hot Moon*, Trans. Stephen Mitchell, Harper Perennial, 1997, Pg 181

The positive physical connection with the fleas – *“I let them gallop across my skin,/let them reveal their emotions and amuse themselves with my blood,/just let me be introduced to them,/I want to know them from up close,/I want to know what I can count on”*, the often exasperating inability to achieve the required intimacy – *“with the ruminants I haven’t been able/to achieve an intimate friendship: I myself am a ruminant, I can’t see/why they don’t understand me”*, *“I feel that I haven’t yet learned the harsh-voiced idiom of the frogs”*.²⁹¹

The final declaration – around which all the previous points cluster separating the positives from the negatives and forming the envelope for the body – the collection of all the positives –

“Everyone has remained content

With the sinister presentations

Of rapid capitalists

And systematic women.

I want to speak with many things

And I won’t leave this planet

Without knowing what I came to find,

Without resolving this matter,

And people are not enough,

I have to go much farther

And I have to get much closer.

And so, gentlemen, I’m going

To have a talk with a horse,

Let the poetess excuse me

And let the professor pardon me,

All week I’ll be busy,

I have to constantly listen.

291. Neruda Pablo, “Bestiary”, *Full Woman, Fleshly Apple, Hot Moon*, Trans. Stephen Mitchell, Harper Perennial, 1997, Pg 186

What was the name of that cat?”²⁹²

Thus the world of the poem is built of regions which are efficacious to one point or the other and the body is the union of those regions which sublimate the previously inexistent (or the trace) and declares the manifesto of the poem. It is important here, that one distinguishes between a mere narrative or the hazy contours of a global thought and the concrete structure of a local organization, which surges forth to declare the narrative. There is pure onto-logy at play here which stands the structural test of a Badiouan set. It is a distinction which sets apart the materialist philosopher of objects from the philosopher of thoughts, and makes Neruda compatible with Badiou. “Without the efficacious regions of the body, without the organs that locally synthesize these regions, we would be merely left with principles. I must really run at the waves, expose myself to the wind, break with Noon, explode on the rock and so on. All of this presupposes a local organization of the surging body, a ubiquity of regional syntheses, in sum that the body self-organizes.”²⁹³ Unlike most anthropomorphized, moralistic accounts of literary animals in other ‘Bestiaries’²⁹⁴, the body in Neruda’s ‘Bestiary’ rises through its muscular ontology in the real, localized worlds of the animals – in the buzzing, bloodsucking realm of the fleas, in the jugular mastication of the ruminants, in the inelegant humping eros of the rabbits, in the vulgar grunting of the pigs and the jarring harshness of the song of the frog. These uncouth, brassy regions of Neruda’s ‘Bestiary’ come together to speak a new idiom and break new ground. In Stephen Mitchell’s curation of Neruda’s poems under the title – *Full Woman, Fleshly Apple, Hot Moon*, three poems are placed close to each other – ‘Cat’s dream’, ‘Through a closed mouth the Flies enter’ and ‘Bestiary’ – each of them form regions of a larger world and come together to speak the new idiom – an alien tongue, which one can only hope to decipher after undergoing a dehumanization and a certain chremamorphism²⁹⁵ or zoomorphism to shine new light upon hidden truths. It requires one to enter into a cat’s dream – “*I would like to sleep like a cat/with all the hairs of time,/with the tongue of flint, with the dry sex of fire/and after speaking with no one/ to stretch myself over the whole world, over the roof-tiles and the ground,/ intensely determined/ to go hunting the rats of dream.*”²⁹⁶ It requires a genuine surrender to the unknown – “*What we know is so little/and what we presume is so much/and we learn so slowly/that we ask and then we die./Better to keep our pride/ for the city of the dead/on the day of the departed/and there when the wind goes through/ the hollows of your skull/it will decipher these enigmas for you,/whispering the truth in the space/where your ears used to be.*”²⁹⁷ Badiou’s finds a true ontological manifestation of the

292. Neruda Pablo, “Bestiary”, *Full Woman, Fleshly Apple, Hot Moon*, Trans. Stephen Mitchell, Harper Perennial, 1997, Pg 187

293. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. By Toscano Alberto, Bloomsbury, 2013, Pg 468

294. ‘Bestiaries’ were traditionally medieval illustrated texts containing descriptions of animals, real and imaginary accompanied by symbolic and moralistic messages. The first amongst them was Physiologus, which contained stories about the phoenix and the unicorn delivering Christian messages of resurrections and purity of virgins. In more recent literature, at least up until 2000, most authors depicting animals have had a tendency of anthropomorphizing them or attributing human qualities to them. The allegorical Animal Farm, all the Disney animals, the spider in Charlotte’s web, the apes in Angela Carter’s *Nights at the circus*...so on and so forth.

295. While anthropomorphism is the technique of giving human qualities to non-human entities, chremamorphism is the opposite practice of according qualities of inanimate objects to people.

296. Neruda Pablo, “Cat’s Dream,” *Full Woman, Fleshly Apple, Hot Moon*, Trans. Stephen Mitchell, Harper Perennial, 1997, Pg 167

297. Neruda Pablo, “Through a closed mouth a fly enters”, *Full Woman, Fleshly Apple, Hot Moon*, Trans. Stephen Mitchell, Harper Perennial, 1997, Pg 177

sublimation of the inexistent, through Neruda's genius, in the wind rushing through the hollows of the skull, where the ears used to be...

Proof the Badiouan-Nerudian 'body'

In the end of the first section of Book VII (What is a Body) of *Logics of Worlds*, Badiou identifies five essential conditions required for the existence of a body or of the 'creative subject' and he bases them on or exemplifies them in the creation of Galois' new algebra.²⁹⁸ After listing each one of them here, we will try to see if these five conditions are met within the world of Neruda's 'Bestiary' and can go on to prove/disprove the rise of the Badiouan-Nerudian creative subject.

Condition 1 – *The mathematical world inherited by Galois is an active and dense world, teeming with new problems. It is the very opposite of an atonic world. Galois comes after Euler, Lagrange, Gauss and Abel. In the transcendental of such a world, there are points – in particular the point that concerns the question of knowing if equations are solvable by radicals, yes or no.*

Condition met - The animal world in Neruda's Bestiary, is similarly teeming with problems of language and understanding – of pounding curiosity met by exasperating mystery and silences, the clamouring need for "other languages, more communications, other signs. It is a tensed world seeking a break from the old inertia – *"Everyone has remained content/ with the sinister presentations/ of rapid capitalists/and systematic women./I want to speak with many things/and I won't leave this planet without knowing what I came to find"*. Each relationship in its transcendental answers to the point – Do we need new communications/languages to understand the planet we inhabit? – yes or no?

Condition 2 – *A site has come to be, which concerns the place of the abstract or formal study of operations in calculations and concepts. The trace of this site is the changed status of the study of permutations: from being a simple combinatorial pastime with no general significance, it comes to embody the paradigm of the concept of group in the mathematical world.*

Condition met – New sites have emerged in 'Bestiary' that have overturned their previous status of being mere zoological or anthropomorphised objects – the engineered masterpieces of the spider webs, the rabbit's genital ears, the poet's skin and blood as the flea's playground, the hardened hooves of the pigs, the poet's intestines, the hollows of the skull where the ears used to be – each signalling a new paradigm for the human-animal relationship.

Condition 3 – *There exist elements incorporated to the trace, and thus a real body (a new algebraic thought) which is not reducible to this trace. Namely, Galois's sudden vision whereby the analysis of groups of permutations makes possible a kind of descending diagram of the extensions of numerical domains.*

Condition met – Throughout the poem, lie scattered elements – resurrected from the trace but not entirely reducible to it, which rise like a body, in poetic majesty, above and beyond – to

298. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. By Toscano Alberto, Bloomsbury, 2013, Pg 474

name a few – the star that the spider shall weave for the poet (*I want to have a talk with the spider, I want her to weave me a star*), the clandestine passions hidden inside the poet's intestines (*I'll have to study this theme/grazing with cows and oxen, making plans with the bulls. Somehow I will come to know/so many intestinal things/hidden inside my body/like the most clandestine passions.*), the serenade of the frog that rose in the poet's dream like a climbing vine, reaching the astronomic jasmine of the black night of the South – each signalling the extension of the domains of human-animal understanding.

Condition 4 – *There exists an efficacious part of this body, made up of elements that decide the point – namely the form of the groups of permutations of solutions which are associated to different types of equations. It is this form which is associated to different types of equations. It is this form which is associated to the extensions and which legislates over the general figure of the efficacious part of the body (the correspondences between distinct structures). In sum, from the fact that, for equations of a degree higher than the fourth, these groups are simple or non-decomposable, there follows the decision on the point: these equations cannot be solved by radicals.*

Condition met – If we refer above, where we had listed the 'positive, affirmatory' regions of the poem alongside the negative ones, they act as the efficacious part of the poem to finally answer the question – 'Do we need new communications/languages to understand the planet we inhabit? – with a resounding 'yes'.

Condition 5 – *There exist new concepts that envelop the efficacious part and thereby define a new organ of the body, 'modern algebra'. For example, the concepts of group and subgroup, algebraic extension, invariant, simplicity...*

Condition met – "More communications", "other languages", "other signs" are some of the new concepts that envelop the efficacious part of the body of the poem and define a new paradigm of the human-animal relationship.

As Neruda, effectively satisfies each of these conditions, Badiou says, "Let's hold on to the notion, which we have seen at work in both mathematics and poetry, that the sequence world-points-site-body-efficacious part-organ is indeed the generic form of what makes it possible for there to be such things as truths"²⁹⁹

Traversing Lacan

Before we venture further into the formal construction of the 'body', it is crucial to traverse through the counter-currents of Jacques Lacan, who while underpinning the Badiouan structural constructs of the 'body' and the 'subject', simultaneously pits the two concepts against each other, arguing that the 'body', instead of being an active composition in support of the 'appearing of the subject form', actually resists the 'subject'. Thus in between the conceptualisation and the formalisation of the 'body', in *Logics of Worlds*, Badiou includes a section on Lacan which acts as an essential juxtaposition between the two thinkers. One's aim here is to attempt a triple juxtaposition of Lacan, Badiou and Neruda, in order to successfully

299. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. By Toscano Alberto, Bloomsbury, 2013, Pg 474

sail through the raging sea of strong psychoanalytic, political, poetic and philosophical currents.

Structure

The Lacanian structure, before attaining its topological dimension of a ‘Borromean knot’³⁰⁰ is essentially a triad of what Lacan refers to as the three registers – ‘the imaginary’, ‘the symbolic’ and ‘the Real’.

‘The imaginary’ is that primitive stage of the development of the human psyche where the ego is counterintuitively founded in the ‘other’ – a child addressing herself in third person or her inability to distinguish herself from her mother. It is a stage dictated by the binary logic of identity and non-identity – ‘me’ or ‘not me’. This sense of self is never one’s own, as it is borrowed by one’s primary caregiver, the small other who Lacan refers to as ‘a’, and is thus, imaginary.

The next Lacanian register is that of the ‘symbolic’. Here, the binary logic is now intruded by a larger order of things, within which the sense of self has to find its new place as an element of a much larger set of signifiers. The assimilation of this mirrored sense of self into a larger symbolic order or language, is what constitutes the ‘body’ in Lacan. This plane of the ‘imaginary’ and the ‘symbolic’ where the body finds its place, is what Lacan refers to as the plane of ‘reality’. ‘Reality’ opposes or resists the third register or the plane of the ‘Real’ wherein the Lacanian subject actually resides. ‘Reality’ protects the ‘body’ from the yawning chasm of the ‘Real’. The ‘Real’ which finds its analogical partner in Kant’s concept of the ‘noumenon’³⁰¹- the object outside of the relations of experience and perception – is an abyss of meaning, a psychic blackhole, beyond signification. It’s a kind of singularity – as one approaches it, the normal rules of reality, or the rules set down by the given set of signifiers, break down. The Lacanian psyche is constructed on the foundation of not letting the body experience the ‘real’ – the plane which paradoxically is the only one that truly belongs to the being or where the subject actually resides. Ironically, this is the plane of pure nothingness – an empty core or a rude cosmic joke playing itself out knelling the insignificance of it all. Encountering this ‘Real’ is nothing short of a trauma – an evental blow which creates a rupture between our perceived reality and the meaningless abyss of the ‘Real’. While this evental encounter with ‘Real’ is direct, in a non-ruptured reality, the ‘Real’ registers its presence in the background as a set of ‘displaced symptoms’ – unrecognizable or hidden. Thus the topological

300. The ‘Borromean knot’, in mathematics is essentially a figure of topology, which consists of three rings linked topologically to each other, in a three dimensional plane, in a way that they cannot be separated from each other. But if any one of the rings was cut or removed from the structure, the other two would also fall apart as unlinked loops. Jacques Lacan, the French psychoanalyst used this concept as a tool to understand the psychic structure of a person, the three rings representing the three registers of the imaginary, the symbolic and the real.



a.
301. Noumenon: the name given to a thing when it is viewed as a transcendent object. The term 'negative noumenon' refers only to the recognition of something which is not an object of sensible intuition, while 'positive noumenon' refers to the (quite mistaken) attempt to know such a thing as an empirical object. These two terms are sometimes used loosely as synonyms for 'transcendental object' and 'thing-in-itself', respectively. (Glossary of Kant’s technical terms, Palmquist Stephen)

or relational representation of this triad of two opposing poles is that of a Borromean knot, whereby no two rings are tied together directly but each pair of rings depends on the third ring to tie them, so that even if one ring were to disengage from the rest, the whole structure falls apart. The real is never directly linked to the imaginary, but must connect to it via the symbolic. The Lacanian knot is completed by the presence of a ring that ties the other three – the truth ring, or the ‘sinthome’ – it appears as the knowledge of what to do with the ‘symptom’ or the presence of the ‘Real’ in ‘Reality’ – as the ‘Savoir Faire’ of the symptom.

It is obvious that Badiou’s structure is underpinned by the Lacanian. The Badiouan ‘world’ is analogous to the ‘symbolic’ register in Lacan within which the ‘body’ exists as the Badiouan ‘transcendental set’ – in relation with the rest of the elements or the signifiers of the set. The ‘Real’ in Lacan presents itself as the ‘void’ in Badiou – as part of the larger set but hidden or excluded from a particular world or a particular set of signifiers. It is the element with minimum identity (μ) to the rest of the elements of the world or the set. This ‘void’ or the μ element takes on the maximum degree of identity only when an event occurs and it is rendered visible.

However, these similarities are purely structural up to this point. In their content, they differ. While the Lacanian action takes place at the level of the psyche and as such is in itself too generalized or almost metaphysical, the Badiouan action takes place at the level of the Lacanian symbolic order, in localized worlds. The difference is of matter. In other words, Badiouan action takes place in pure being or ontology within which the void is founded, whereas Lacan founds his void in pure nothingness. As Badiou says in one of his seminars, “Lacan is an enemy of ontology -and this is a crucial point of conflict – the point on which Lacan’s anti-philosophy bears”³⁰² The Lacanian ‘Real’ is the void with a negative connotation whose presence is the disease which psychoanalysis may cure by merely displacing the symptoms. Whilst in Badiou, the void is more of a political construct, the element subtracted from the state or the dominant ideological construct, which only rears its head when an event occurs and changes reality – by presenting the possibility of a pure presentation. In Lacan, the ‘sinthome’ or the possibility of the assimilation of the ‘Real’ into ‘Reality’ is perhaps through scepticism. In Badiou, when the void comes into its own, it reconfigures the entire transcendental set or the symbolic order of things. This process is what Badiou refers to as the ‘truth process’ which results in a real, material and most importantly, a ‘local’ reconfiguration. “What politics wants to think is the difference between collective presentation and representation by the state. That is the difference between the ‘true life’ of individuals, the true desire of individuals and the symbolic order of the state. The major thesis of politics is - there is a possibility of pure presentation and the major thesis of psychoanalysis is ‘there is no sexual relation’.”³⁰³

However Badiou understands the dogmatism that comes with the affirmatory nature of politics as well as the scepticism that follows the negative axiom of psychoanalysis as he says, “Political thinking protects itself from dogmatism by listening to psychoanalysis and psychoanalysis protects itself from scepticism by listening to politics. It is a form of alliance between the two thinkings. After all this is what Lacan authorizes us to do in seminar 20 – he compares the relation- Lacan:Freud to the relation Lenin:Marx. This is to recognize that the comparison of the two thinkings is possible and more importantly it is to recognize that they

302. Badiou Alain, ‘Lacan and Philosophy’, The UCLA Seminar in Experimental Critical Theory, (You Tube), nictsundnull, May 27, 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-GY8a3DYV0U>

303. Badiou Alain, ‘Lacan and Philosophy’, UCLA Seminar in Experimental Critical Theory, (You Tube), nictsundnull, May 27, 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-GY8a3DYV0U>

can educate each other” and he further adds, “We propose a sort of encounter between the two thinkings – we can only do so, in philosophy”.³⁰⁴

Neruda – The- Sinthome

This encounter effectively occurs in the poetics of Neruda which breaks down both psychoanalytic and political barriers to move closer to an idea of the ‘sinthome’, however, not as the Lacanian construct of ‘Joyce-the-sinthome’ but as the Badiouan ‘Neruda-the-sinthome’.

Of Joyce, Lacan says, “... I would hope, if he were here, to convince him that that he wanted to be Joyce the Symptom, in that, of the symptom, he gives us the apparatus, the essence, the abstraction... The symptom is purely what *lalangue* conditions, but, in a certain fashion, Joyce carries it to the power of language, without forasmuch any of it being analyzable; it is what strikes, and literally dumbfounds (interdit) . . . But we can call it something else, and it is here that I today crown what it is with the Name-of-the-Father at the point (degré) where Joyce testifies to it-with what it is appropriate to call the sinthome. It is inasmuch as the unconscious is knotted to the sinthome, which is what there is of the singular for each individual, that one can say that Joyce, as is written somewhere, is identified with the individual (in English in the original).”³⁰⁵—(Jacques Lacan, *Joyce le Symptôme I, June 16, 1975*). In Joyce’s stream of consciousness writings, especially in ‘Finnegan’s Wake’³⁰⁶, Lacan finds evidence of subjectivity, ‘the dynamic of knots, serving for nothing, but which finally, grips.’ This Lacanian, almost from the therapist’s couch, enjoyable assimilation of the unconscious into reality, albeit in literature, is also explained by Slavoj Žižek in his *The Sublime Object of Ideology* as, “*What do we do with a symptom, with this pathological formation which persists not only beyond its interpretation but even beyond fantasy? Lacan tried to answer this challenge with the concept of ‘sinthome’, a neologism containing a set of associations (synthetic-artificial man, synthesis between symptom and fantasy, Saint Thomas, the saint ...). Symptom as ‘sinthome’ is a certain signifying formation penetrated with enjoyment: it is a signifier as a bearer of jouis-sense, enjoyment-in-sense... symptom, conceived as sinthome, is literally our only substance, the only positive support of our being, the only point that gives consistency to the subject. In other words, symptom is the way we – the subjects – ‘avoid madness’, the way we ‘choose something (the symptom-formation) instead of nothing (radical psychotic autism, the destruction of the symbolic universe)’ through the binding of our enjoyment to a certain signifying, symbolic formation which assures a minimum of consistency to our being-in-the-world.*”³⁰⁷

304. Badiou Alain, ‘Lacan and Philosophy’, The UCLA Seminar in Experimental Critical Theory, (You Tube), nictsundnull, May 27, 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-GY8a3DYV0U>

305. Lacan Jacques, ‘Jacques Lacan – The Sinthome – The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XXIII’ : Edited by Jacques-Alain Miller : Polity Press 2016

306. Finnegan’s wake was Irish writer James Joyce’s last novel published in 1939. It took him almost seventeen years to finish to novel. The novel was largely unread due to its extraordinarily complex style of writing. Joyce abandoned all literary norms to juxtapose reality with dreams, inventing new words consisting of hundreds of letters, merging languages, liberally sprinkling unfinished sentences throughout. For e.g, a sentence in the novel goes like, “For hanigen with hunigen still haunt ahunt to finnd their hinnigen where Pappappapparrassannuaragheallachnatullaghmonganmacmacmacwhackfalltherdebblenonthedubbla ndaddydoodled and anruly person creeked a jest.”

307. Žižek Slavoj, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, Verso Books, 2009, Pg 107

However, for Badiou, whose playing field is materially different from Lacan's, this is not enough. "It is only as a transhuman body that a subject takes hold of the divisible body of the human animal. The breach is then on the side of creation, not of the symptom, and I'm not persuaded that the case of Joyce – 'Joyce – the - sinthome', as Lacan says – suffices to dissolve the one into the other. Rather, we observe the gap between, on one hand, the transcendental laws of appearing and, on the other, the present engendered by a subjectivizable body, the present that initiates an eternal truth."³⁰⁸

Thus, rises Neruda-the-sinthome, tying the Borromean knot of psychoanalysis, politics and philosophy – or perhaps more aptly, a topological ring network connecting the four Badiouan registers where change can take place – love, art, politics and science.

For Neruda, language isn't merely a fixed, alien symbolic order imposed by the Big Other. Instead, it acquires a Heideggerian character which makes poetry, a figure of the open, destining language to the open where the void resides. As the symbolic order of a localized world, it is an essential condition and place wherein the truth process occurs, through the Nerudian/Badiouan body, the assimilation of the self with a 'localized' symbolic order. Once again, the Lacanian construction of the 'symbolic' or the 'body' as the assimilation of the imaginary self with that of the symbolic order of the big other, holds true, except at this very point, lies the disagreement between Badiou/Neruda and Lacan.

"At the very point of agreement, in the interpretation of the ambiguity of the theory of 'two bodies', which is presupposed by every process of incorporation. In this aspect of teaching, Lacan treats what I believe to be a sequence or a contingent becoming as a structure. For him, in effect, the marking of bodies stems from the fact that the human animal is a 'living "being" which distinguishes itself from others by inhabiting language'. Under this axiom, the subject is effectively split into two bodies, the one which he 'has' and which, as an objective body or living object, bars access to the one which he uses, this body-place-of-the-Other where his speech makes him. If a man has a body, 'he has no other despite the fact that, on account of his speaking being, he has some other at his disposal, without managing to make it his. This second body is generally a symptom of something Other and not a possession or the basis for a new subject'"³⁰⁹

Badiou opposes this separation in his theory of the 'Body', whereby eternal truths "can only be accessed by vitally incorporating oneself into the Other body"³¹⁰. Neruda exemplifies this 'vital incorporation' in the second last chapter of his *Memoirs*, "You can't live an entire lifetime with a language, stretching it lengthwise, exploring it, poking around in its hair and belly, without having this intimacy become second nature to you. That's what happened to me with Spanish. The spoken language has other dimensions: the written language acquires unexpected elasticity. Using language like clothes or the skin on your body, with its sleeves, its patches, its transpirations, and its blood and sweat stains, that's what shows a writer's mettle."³¹¹ The Lacanian subordination to the signifiers turns into the body's intimacy with the signifier, thus

308. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. By Toscano Alberto, Bloomsbury, 2013, Pg 481

309. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. By Toscano Alberto, Bloomsbury, 2013, Pg 480

310. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. By Toscano Alberto, Bloomsbury, 2013, pg 481

311. Neruda Pablo, *Memoirs*, Trans. by Hardie St Martin, Rupa & Co, 2005, Pg 261

making it an “active composition for the appearing of a subject form”. In its localization, language is no longer the big Other, but is one’s own, sharing the same matter and material, which is different from the materials of another world, another localization.

*“Our language sometimes separates us Latin Americans from the Spaniards. However, it is the ideology of the language, more than anything else, that causes the split. Gongora’s frozen beauty is not made for our latitudes, but there is no poetry from Spain, not even the most recent, without an aftertaste of Gongora, without his richness. Our American stratum is dusty rock, crushed lava, clay mixed with blood. We don’t know how to work in crystal. Our elegant poets sound hollow. A single drop of Martin Fierro’s wine or of Gabriela Mistral’s turbid honey is enough to put them in their place: standing stiffly in the parlor like vases with flowers from someone else’s garden.”*³¹²

This ‘body’ which rises in localised worlds, carrying within itself blood and sweat, lava and clay is not the ‘body’ of democratic materialism, of mere animalist reductionisms, but is the ‘body’ of materialist dialectics, forged within the confines of its particular world, but with the capability to go singing in other worlds, of eternal and universal truths. “If my poetry has any meaning at all, it is this tendency to stretch out in space, without restrictions, and not be happy to stay in a room. I had to break out of my limited world by myself, not having traced it out within the framework of a distant culture. I had to be myself, striving to branch out like the very land where I was born.”³¹³

FIRST FORMAL SKETCH OF THE BODY

Just as all the previous Badiouan concepts have been cemented by formalizing them mathematically, it follows logically from the above discourse on the ‘Body’ that it be concretized with a formal exposition in set-theoretical terms.

Let us consider a world, and denote it as the letter **m**

Within this world, an object **A** resides, which is also a subset of **m** and is therefore a collection of elements within the larger set **m**.

As per the axioms of set theory and our previous expositions in the thesis, in chapter 2, whereby we had demonstrated the ‘Axiom of Foundation’ based on the axiomatic system of Zermelo Fraenkel set theory³¹⁴, we know, that every set of elements contains its proper inexistent, or an element whose identity is nil. Therefore there always exists an **x** within **A** whose identity is nil with rest of the elements of **A**, or

$\{x \in A, \text{ such that } Ex = \mu\}$ to be read as, there exists an **x** within **A** such that its existence is nil.

Now, if one recalls the previous exposition of the figure of the ‘site’ in Chapter six of this thesis, Badiou had characterized the site with three essential features,

312. Neruda Pablo, *Memoirs*, Trans. by Hardie St Martin, Rupa & Co, 2005, Pg 261

313. Neruda Pablo, *Memoirs*, Trans. by Hardie St Martin, Rupa & Co, 2005, Pg 261

314. The axiom of foundation or regularity was necessary to get rid of Russell’s paradox in set theory and it states that the relation \in (belongs to) on any family of sets is well-founded: Axiom of Regularity. Every nonempty set has an \in -minimal element: $\forall S (S \neq \emptyset \rightarrow (\exists x \in S) S \cap x = \emptyset)$. As a consequence, there is no infinite sequence.

“1. A site is a reflexive multiplicity, which belongs to itself and thereby transgresses the laws of being.

2. Because it carries out a transitory cancellation of the gap between being and being-there, a site is the instantaneous revelation of the void that haunts multiplicities.

3. A site is an ontological figure of the instant: it appears only to disappear.”

Let us then assume that **A** is the figure of the site within the world **m**. Hence it’s disappearance is imminent. But in the duration of time between it’s appearance as the site and its disappearance, its identity is Maximum. Or, $E\mathbf{A}=M$. During this passage, the existence of **x** whose previous value was nil or μ , acquires the degree of maximum existence or **M**. Badiou nominated this **x** as ϵ . The occurrence of the event is thus translated or manifested as

$$1.(E\epsilon=\mu) \xrightarrow{\text{EVENT}} (E\epsilon=M)$$

Now let us consider another object **x** within the collection of elements that is the site object **A**, (\mathbf{A}, Id) . This element, according to the rules of the transcendental enjoys a certain relationship with ϵ . (One may recall, all objects of the transcendental of a set are paired). Before the occurrence of the event, we have $E\epsilon=\mu$. Therefore the relationship between **x** and ϵ before the event would also be minimal or $\text{Id}(\mathbf{x}, \epsilon) = \mu$. Now, after the event we know ϵ acquires an existential value of Maximum, or $E\epsilon = M$. From the most fundamental ideas of set theory, we know that the identity relationship between **x** and ϵ cannot be greater than what is common between the two identities, or their conjunction.

$$2.\text{Id}(\mathbf{x}, \epsilon) \leq E\mathbf{x} \cap E\epsilon$$

Now if $E\epsilon = M$, the identity relation between **x** and ϵ cannot be greater than the degree of existence of **x**.

$$3.\text{Id}(\mathbf{x}, \epsilon) \leq E\mathbf{x}$$

Therefore we can say that the degree of identity of any element within the site object **A** with the prior inexistent ϵ , evaluated after the event has taken place, (such that the new value of ϵ become maximum (**M**)), is at most equal to the degree of existence of the element itself. Badiou formalizes it as, “An **x** incorporates into the evental present if and only if,

$$4.\text{Id}(\mathbf{x}, \epsilon) = E\mathbf{x}.$$

This means that “ $\text{Id}(\mathbf{x}, \epsilon)$ is as large as possible, or that **x** is as identical as possible to the consequence of the event”³¹⁵

If we extend these propositions to more than one element and add, say another **y** belonging to **A** in the situation. This element **y** can incorporate itself into the evental present, alongside **x** only if it is ‘compatible’ with **x**. (One may recall, the algebraic expression of compatibility, as established by Badiou and discussed previously in the thesis is – If *a* and *b* are compatible to each other, then the conjunction of their existences cannot be greater than the identity relations

315. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. By Toscano Alberto, Bloomsbury, 2013, Pg 484

between them, i.e. $Ea \cap Eb \leq Id(a,b)$). Therefore in the case of an evental site, if the two elements x and y were to incorporate themselves in the site then following P4.,

$$5. Id(x, \epsilon) = Ex \text{ and } Id(y, \epsilon) = Ey$$

But, we know from the axiom of appearance,

$$Id(x, \epsilon) \cap Id(y, \epsilon) \leq Id(x,y)$$

6. Therefore, from P5., we have, $Ex \cap Ey \leq Id(x,y)$, which proves x and y are compatible with each other.

More simply put, if two elements are both dominated by a third one, the first two are compatible to each other. This exposition allowed Badiou to formulate another definition of the ‘body’, “A body ‘ C_ϵ ’, relative to the proper inexistent ϵ of site (A, Id) , is the set of the elements of A , which incorporate themselves to the evental present”³¹⁶

Thus we have a ‘body’, ‘ C_ϵ ’ which is a subset of those elements of A , which are compatible to each other and are synthesized under the common envelope of ϵ , or for every x , that belongs to the body $C_\epsilon, x < \epsilon$.

Badiou takes this conclusion to develop further algebraic insight into the post evental situation. If one were to assume that an element x of the body had a maximal degree of existence or $Ex = M$. Now we know that in a post evental site or a body, $x < \epsilon$, therefore $Id(x, \epsilon) = Ex$. Or, $Id(x, \epsilon) = M$. In this case, it follows that $x > \epsilon$. By the axiom of anti-symmetry,³¹⁷ this leads to the conclusion that $x = \epsilon$.

Badiou concludes from the preceding algebra, “Unless the inexistence has become over-existent, the elements of a post-evental body do not maximally exist in the site. They have yet to become.”³¹⁸

From all the preceding expositions, Badiou puts forward eight postulates for the appearance of the ‘body’ in a post-evental site A , which contains the inexistent ϵ .

1. $(E\epsilon) = M$ (after the event occurs, ϵ , which had the minimal value of μ , before the event took place, now acquires the maximum degree of existence)
2. ‘ x incorporated to the evental present’, which implies that existence of x would be equal to the relation between x and ϵ . $Ex = Id(x, \epsilon)$
3. ‘ x incorporated to the evental present’, which implies that x would always have a value less than ϵ , i.e., $x < \epsilon$
4. $C_\epsilon = \{x/x \in A \text{ and } x \text{ is incorporated to the evental present}\}$ which means that the body C_ϵ is a collection of all those elements that belong to the evental site A and are incorporated to the evental present, as per points 2 and 3 above.

316. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. By Toscano Alberto, Bloomsbury, 2013, Pg 485

317. In Set theory, a relation say R is said to be antisymmetric on a set A , xRy and yRx hold when $x = y$.

318. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. By Toscano Alberto, Bloomsbury, 2013, Pg 487

5. $C_\varepsilon = \{x/x \in A \text{ and } x < \varepsilon\}$ This is a derivation from points 3 and 4 above, which makes sure that x is an element of A and the value of its existence is less than ε .
7. $\varepsilon \in C_\varepsilon$, which implies that ε will always belong to the body and ε is the real synthesis or envelope, of C_ε
8. Since ε is the envelope for all the elements of the body, C_ε , any x that would belong to the body shall differ from ε and its degree of existence would be lesser than the maximum M .

Second Formal Sketch

Just before the discussion on Lacan in this chapter, the informal discussion on the ‘Body’ was concluded with this quote by Badiou, “Let’s hold on to the notion, which we have seen at work in both mathematics and poetry, that the sequence world-points-site-body-efficacious part-organ is indeed the generic form of what makes it possible for there to be such things as truths”

The second formal sketch will now concretize this structure by formalizing the ‘treatment of points’ by the ‘efficacious part of a body’ which Badiou nominates as the ‘organ’. In the previous chapter on the theory of points, one had established via the topological route, that the points, served as functions which could filter the complexities of a larger transcendental set and surjectively project them onto the classical transcendental set T_0 comprising of just two elements 0 and 1 – the binary set or the decisive set.

Each point thus acts as a function, ‘ ϕ ’. “We then posit, that an element x of a body C_ε , affirms a point ϕ , if $\phi(Ex) = 1$.”³¹⁹

As demonstrated and postulated above (P.7), ε is the envelope of the body C_ε , and existence of ε in a post evental body is always maximum ($E\varepsilon = M$). Now, $\phi(M)$ always equals 1, hence $\phi(E\varepsilon) = 1$. Therefore, ε affirms the point or the function ϕ .

However, to derive the formal nature of the ‘efficacious part of a body’, it is important to note that the mere existence of ε , does not guarantee the existence of an efficacious part of the body, relative to a particular point or a specific function ϕ . This requires other elements of the body to also affirm the point ϕ . Hence, it is important to answer the question about the fate of the other elements of the body, which are different from ε , when they appear before the decisive juncture of the point ϕ . Some of them may affirm the point by producing the result $\phi(x) = 1$ and some of them would negate it by producing the result, $\phi(x) = 0$. What follows is then the coming together of all those elements that affirm the point ϕ as the ‘efficacious part of the body’ relative to ϕ . It is important to not forget that every ‘body’, if it resides in a tensed world, comprises of many points or many different ϕ ’s. Some elements may affirm one point and negate another and so on. Hence every efficacious part of a body is always relative to a particular and determinate point or ϕ . Thus the definition of an efficacious part of a body C_ε , as stated by Badiou is, “An efficacious part of a body C_ε for a point ϕ is the subset of all the elements of C_ε other than ε , which affirm ϕ .”

319. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. By Toscano Alberto, Bloomsbury, 2013, Pg 488

Badiou designates this efficacious part as $C_{\varepsilon\phi}$.

$$C_{\varepsilon\phi} = \{x/x \in C_{\varepsilon} \text{ and } x \leq \varepsilon \text{ and } \phi(x) = 1\}$$

The existence of $C_{\varepsilon\phi}$ is not a given. It may very well be, that no other element of the body in question, apart from ε affirms the point ϕ . In such a scenario $C_{\varepsilon\phi}$ would be an empty set. But, in case that there are elements that do belong to $C_{\varepsilon\phi}$, then by definition of a transcendental set as discussed in previous chapters, it must allow for an envelope, synthesizing the other elements. Badiou designates this enveloping element as ε_{ϕ} .

The above idea of the synthesizing or the enveloping element is derived from certain extremal properties of partially ordered sets. In a topological Hasse diagram³²⁰ the elements which form the top vertices of this diagram are called the maximal elements. However, if there is just a singular element occupying that position, it is called the maximum or the greatest element which has a relationship with all the other elements of the set or which dominates other elements. In case of C_{ε} , which is also a partially ordered set defined by the relation \leq , ε is the greatest element with the maximum degree of existence. But if we were to consider a subset of C_{ε} , which is $C_{\varepsilon\phi}$, and its greatest element, which dominated all its others, ε_{ϕ} , could be ε itself. The significance of this placement is enormous in Badiou's schemata, as it decides the fate of the elements which had gathered together affirming a certain point. The absence of a coherent synthesis from within the interior of this collection, results in a point not being treated and the truth process being obstructed.

Badiou calls the enveloping and unique ε_{ϕ} , which is distinct from ε as the 'organ' of the body. If there is no ε_{ϕ} and ε serves as the envelope for the efficacious part of the body, then this part is called 'dispersed' or 'inorganic'. "If there exists an organ ε_{ϕ} , then this organ is interior to the corresponding efficacious part $C_{\varepsilon\phi}$. We could say that every organ is immanent to its own region of efficacy in the body"³²¹

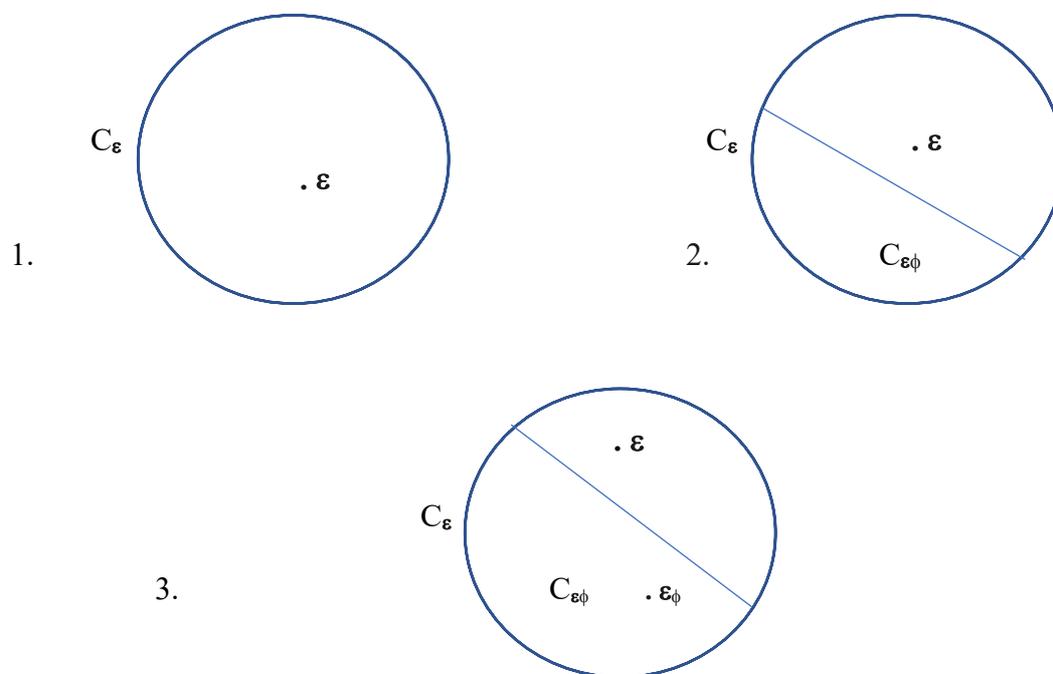
One more demonstration is important here, to fully establish the second formal sketch of the Badiouan sequence of 'world-points-site-body-efficacious part-organ', and that is to show that if at all a synthesizing organ is present for the efficacious part of the body, it has no other place but to lie in its interior.

If we consider that an envelope ε_{ϕ} is present for the elements of $C_{\varepsilon\phi}$, exterior to $C_{\varepsilon\phi}$. In such a scenario, ε_{ϕ} would not affirm the point ϕ as 1, since by definition, $C_{\varepsilon\phi}$ is the subset of C_{ε} , which is a collection of all x s that affirm the point ϕ . Therefore, we shall have, $\phi(\varepsilon_{\phi}) = 0$. However, since every point ϕ needs to maintain the order relation of the transcendental, $\phi(\varepsilon x) \leq \phi(\varepsilon_{\phi})$ (since, ε_{ϕ} is the enveloping element, hence greater than all the other elements of $C_{\varepsilon\phi}$), which would give us a statement that doesn't stand, which $\phi(\varepsilon x) = 1 \leq \phi(\varepsilon_{\phi}) = 0$. Therefore, logic dictates that $\phi(\varepsilon_{\phi}) = 1$, and hence has to lie in the interior of the subset $C_{\varepsilon\phi}$, or within the precincts of the efficacious part of the body.

320. Hasse diagrams are essentially topological diagrams of partially ordered sets. Since Partially Ordered Sets or posets, (as established in the very beginning of the thesis, Badiouan transcendental sets are also posets.) follow certain relational rules (reflexivity, anti symmetry and transitivity), the diagrams take those relations for granted and omit them, in order to simplify the representation. Refer to <https://www.math24.net/hasse-diagrams> for a simplified explanation.

321. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. By Toscano Alberto, Bloomsbury, 2013, Pg 489

A diagrammatic representation of the three possible destinies of a body relative to a given point is thus developed by Badiou³²²



- 1.No efficacious part
- 2.Efficacious part synthesized by ε
- 3.Efficacious part synthesized by an organ $\varepsilon\phi$, thus ensuring the effective treatment of the point ϕ .

With this, we arrive at a kind of a culmination of Badiou's entire thesis that he develops as the sequel to *Being and Event – Being and Event II* or *Logics of Worlds*. It is the identification of the five essential and rigorous conditions that need to co-exist in order to activate the 'truth-procedure'. These five conditions work as an algorithmic sequence, with the possibility of termination immanent at each step, and as such the 'creation of truth' is a rare and precarious process, requiring a singular and linear flow of events in order to get to the 'truth'. Other directions, end up in sterile dead-ends, falling short of the complete fidelity, that is required towards the implications of the event.

The five conditions³²³ put formally by Badiou, and as discussed above are-

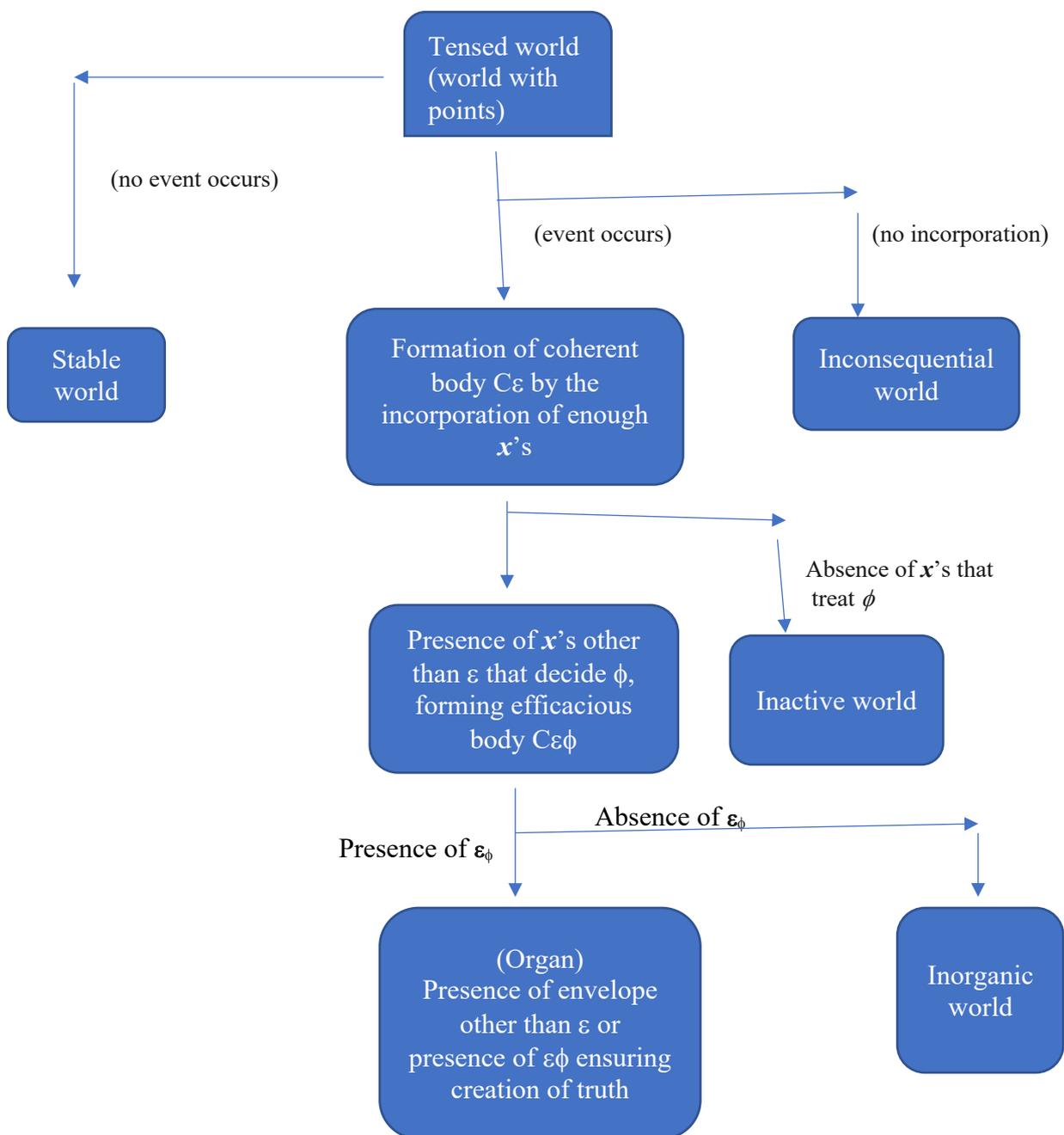
322. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. By Toscano Alberto, Bloomsbury, 2013, Pg 490

323. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. By Toscano Alberto, Bloomsbury, 2013, Pg 491

1. “The transcendental of the world is such that there exist points ϕ ” - In the previous chapter, we had discussed worlds that were so homogenized and vulnerable to co-option that all points of torsion are dissipated and dissolved even before any substantial force could build around them. Badiou had anointed these worlds as ‘atonic’ – worlds without points, with infinite gradations and no binaries. Thus the first input in the algorithm or the Badiouan truth creation flow chart is a tensed world, or a world populated with points or key moments – each acting as an isolate begging a decision.
2. “There must be an event” – In stable or atonic worlds, events don’t occur, but in tensed worlds, there is an immanent possibility of an ‘event’ or a rupture of the existing transcendental of the world. The possibility is immanent, because it is brought about by an ontological existent of the world, rendered phenomenologically inexistent. This inexistent (ε) of the world attains maximal existence. The transcendental of this world is not just slightly modified but radically altered.
3. “There must exist enough elements of the site which are incorporated into the eventual present (x ’s such that $Id(x, \varepsilon) = Ex$).” – This collection of points, whose intensity of existence is less than ε in the post-evental world and whose relation with ε equals its own existence, forms the coherent body $C\varepsilon$, which acts as the next input in the algorithm. The worlds in which there are no other elements which incorporate themselves into the eventual present following the two rules are called, “inconsequential worlds” by Badiou. These are worlds without bodies.
4. “Given a point ϕ , there must exist elements x other than ε that decide ϕ , ($\phi(Ex) = 1$)” The collection of these points form the efficacious part of the body $C\varepsilon$, and is symbolized by $C\varepsilon\phi$. There are worlds in which elements, other than ε of the body $C\varepsilon$, fail to treat the point ϕ . These are “inactive worlds.”
5. “The envelope of the efficacious part $C\varepsilon\phi$ must differ from ε .” There has to be an element $\varepsilon\phi$ within the efficacious part $C\varepsilon\phi$, other than ε which should be greater than all the x ’s of $C\varepsilon\phi$. Only this would result in a proper synthesis of the efficacious part, resulting in an ‘organ’ of the body which treats a point. The worlds without this organ are called ‘inorganic’, ending in the termination of the truth procedure.

These five conditions give us the following algorithm or flow chart, which we shall label as the ‘Badiouan Truth Algorithm’:

‘Badiouan Truth Algorithm’



Algorithms are problem solving operations or solution charts and the above schemata points is the possible Badiouan solution chart to the problem of ‘truth creation’.

“As rare as it may be, the effective treatment of a point by a body – the organicity of the body, with respect to the point – is by no means determined not to be. When it comes to the body that bears their subjective form, some truths are therefore always possible.”³²⁴

The ‘inorganic world’ of ‘China in the twenties’

Badiou chooses the example of the ‘Red Army’ in China as the ‘subject-body’ in order to illustrate the above sequence up until the failure of the formation of an organ in the tensed world of ‘China in the twenties’. To do so, he uses a retroactive approach of first identifying the presence of the ‘subject-body’ and then investigating the conditions of its existence in the said world. He calls his methodology, ‘subjective induction’, a logical reasoning based on deriving the general conditions based on a certain particular, a kind of reverse deduction. Having identified the ‘Red Army’ as the ‘subject-body’, he goes on to cite Mao’s famous report of October 1928, titled “Why is it that Red Political Power Can Exist in China?”³²⁵ in which he attempts to analyse the conditions which made the survival of the Red Power possible at a time when the revolution was ebbing, and terror of the white imperialists was rising. Mao wrote this report at a time in China which had no historical parallel, and as such was one of ‘transcendental singularity’ – the survival of a proletarian force, at a time of insurrections and defeatism.

Badiou identifies his transcendental set “of strongly localized intensities” in this world, “disputed, divided, dismembered into zones of influence of imperialisms that are allied to different local ‘local despots’”. At the time, the future of a socialist revolution was dependent on the hegemony of the proletariat, but this did not consist of the peasants of rural China. The *Comintern*, at this point was concerned with the urban or the industrial proletariat. In this connection, Leon Trotsky wrote, “The leading role of the isolated communists and the isolated communist groups in the peasant war does not decide the question of power...the peasant war may support the dictatorship of the proletariat, if they coincide in point of time, but under no circumstances can it be substituted for the dictatorship of the proletariat”³²⁶ In such a scenario, Badiou identifies “...what Mao calls the ‘democratic bourgeois revolution’ of 1926-27, the true eventual reference for the body in the making whose historical name will be ‘Red Army’.”³²⁷ and the elements that have maximum identity with this eventual trace, are the ‘peasants’. “But which elements of the world have a maximal identity with this trace and are virtually incorporable into the new body? Mao’s response is unequivocal: in a massive way, these are the poor peasants, together with a certain number of workers from the central and southern provinces and some intellectuals won over to communism”³²⁸

These then are the x ’s that become incorporated to the trace ϵ of the event. This new ‘subject body’, ‘the red army’ then surged forth to treat the various points of the situation, as outlined

324. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. By Toscano Alberto, Bloomsbury, 2013, Pg 491

325. Mao Tse-tung, “Why Is It that Red Political Power Can Exist in China?”, Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung, Volume I, Peking, Foreign Languages Press, 1964

326. Trotsky Leon, *Problems of the Chinese Revolution*, New York, Paragon Book Gallery, 1962, Pg 239

327. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. By Toscano Alberto, Bloomsbury, 2013, Pg 495

328. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. By Toscano Alberto, Bloomsbury, 2013, Pg 495

and classified by Mao in his six chapters of the report, namely, the ‘military question’, the ‘land question’, the question of political power’, ‘the question of party organization’, ‘the question of the character of the revolution’ etc. Badiou reiterates that these six issues are quintessentially ‘points’, since the choices available in each scenario are binary – the question of party organization could only have two possible outcomes in terms of its defence strategy – ‘a solid safeguarding of red power’ via strategic defence or ‘a fight to death response’. Similarly the question of the ‘character of the revolution’ could only be settled by one of the two responses, “Is it a proletarian revolution...or a democratic bourgeois revolution?”, so on and so forth.

However, as the incorporated elements, acting as the efficacious part of the subject body, try to treat its points, the ‘in-organicity’ of the situation becomes clear. In terms of the military point, the failure of the red guards and the ‘insurrectional detachments of workers and peasants’ to unite under one principle of ‘concentration of forces’ or in terms of the ‘point’ of the ‘land question’, the ‘efficacious part’ which comprised of the poor peasants failed to form an ‘organic cohesion’, “capable of forcing the passage of the agrarian reform over to an egalitarian redistributive line”. This ultimate lack results in the in-completion or the termination of the entire sequence to its ultimate end of a radically re-organised and stable transcendental world.

“Perhaps we have not moved beyond this. In any case, it is in this point, which in its own terms remains unresolved, that Maoist politics encountered the danger of its own reactive subject, and then of the becoming-obscure³²⁹ in which, in its extreme forms (the *Khmer Rouge* and *Sendero Luminoso*), it was shipwrecked.”³³⁰

This sad termination of the Badiouan sequence seems to plague most recent movements, some of which Badiou himself has reflected upon, like the Egyptian revolution of 2011, whereby he asks the question, ‘if a novelty is at all possible’?³³¹ In such bleakness, Neruda shines a ray of hope, upholding Badiou’s own thesis with much strength and vigour.

329. Badiou, in the very beginning of *Logics of Worlds*, much before he presents the set-theoretical formalization of his theory of worlds and the subject arising within them, he formally designates three distinct subjective attitudes towards the event – or three different forms which a subjectivized body takes – “The formalism borne by a body – is either a truth (faithful subject), a denial of truth (reactive subject) or an occultation of truth (obscure subject)” (Badiou, 2013, Pg 47). In his exposition on the revolt of some slaves around Spartacus, in 73 BC, the subjective form which was formed by the grouping of slaves acting under the phenomenal component, ‘we want to return home’, behaved as the faithful subject body, faithful to the new idea of an emancipated present. In the same context, there was also a huge number of slaves who did not join the revolt, “The customary intervention of their subjective disposition is that they retain within themselves the laws of the old world” (Badiou, 2013, Pg 54) This body of slaves could occupy the category of the reactive subject, albeit its features can’t be completely contained in its negation of the new present, “It is not a pure negation of the evental trace, since it also claims to produce something – and even, frequently under the cloak of modernity, to produce some kind of present – this present is not the affirmative and glorious present of the faithful subject. It is a measured present, a negative present, ‘a little less worse’ than the past.” (Badiou, 2013, Pg 55). In the same context, the patricians and bishops, alarmed by the news of the slave revolt occupy the place of the ‘obscure subject’. “What the patricians and the bishops want is no doubt the pure and simple conservation of the previous order. In this sense, the past is illuminated for them by the night of the present. But on the other hand, this night must be produced under the entirely new conditions which are displayed in the world by the rebel body and its emblem. The obscurity into which the newly produced present must be enclosed is engineered by an obscurantism of a new type” (Badiou, 2013, Pg 59)

330. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. By Toscano Alberto, Bloomsbury, 2013, Pg 502

331. El Sharnouby Dina and Linda Herrera, ‘Alain Badiou on the Egyptian revolution: questions of the movement and its vision’, open Democracy, 24 January 2018, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/north-africa-west-asia/alain-badiou-on-egyptian-revolution-questions/>

Neruda – between poetry and politics

Much like Badiou whose philosophy soars in the vast and infinite realms of numbers, but is grounded or ‘localized’ in the material reality of politics, Neruda’s poetry too, soaring in the unhindered sky of ideas, grounds itself in the political realities of his time. Thus in the final analogical analysis of this thesis, which sutures the two worlds of Badiou and Neruda, we shall look at Neruda’s analysis of the guerrilla movements of Latin America and the ‘Chilean Communist Party’, in the cold war period and perhaps find the solution of how to complete the prematurely aborted Badiouan truth sequence.

The conditions of the rise of the Red Army in China, were somewhat similar to the rise of guerrilla factions in Latin America. They were both disputed, conflicted regions, under the influence of authoritarian, democratic and communist groups vying for power. On one hand, exploitative capitalism/imperialism was at work, with the United States increasing its influence over the region and on the other, there was an increasingly discontent peasant class. These conditions made it possible for a decentralized, anarchic organizing of militant groups, based out of mountainous, difficult to access regions.

Neruda recognizes the transcendental of this world as one densely populated with what Badiou would term as ‘bodies and languages’- “a world consigned to an anarchy of political appearing”, filled with ‘anarchists’, ‘would-be leftists’, ‘political snipers’, ‘false liberals’, ‘mystical poets’, immediatists’, ‘reactionaries’...groups with all kinds of comfortable political positions. Within this transcendental, the trace element was ‘*los Comunistas*’ or the Communists,

“The Communists take whacks everywhere...whacks exclusively for them....Long live spiritists , royalists, deviates, criminals of every ilk... Long live philosophy with its smokescreen but without skeletons... Long live the dog that barks but also bites, long live lecherous astrologers, pornography, cynicism, Long live the shrimp, Long live everyone, except Communists...Long live chastity belts, Long live the Conservatives who haven't washed their ideological feet in 500 years ...Long live the lice of the poor, the free trip to potter's field, anarcho-capitalism, Rilke, Andre Gide and his sweet little Corydon, long live all kinds of mysticism...Anything goes... They're all heroes...All newspapers should be brought out, they can all be published, except the Communist papers...Let all politicians into Santo Domingo free as birds ...let them all celebrate the death of bloodthirsty Trujillo, except those who fought him hardest...Long live the carnival, the last days of the carnival...there are masks for everyone ...Christian idealist masks, extreme-left masks, good-gray-lady and charitable matron masks...but watch out, don't let the communists in... they have no right to anything... let's worry about the subjective, man's essence, the essence of essence... We'll all be happy that way...We've got freedom ...Freedom is great! They don't respect it, they don't know what it is... freedom to worry about the essence... about the essence of essence...” ³³²

In this context, a series of events during the period had ensured that this trace element rose with maximum intensity, mobilizing the oppressed to ‘become’ into their political selves, forming a coherent subjective body capable of treating the tensed and disparate world point by point.

Relative to the point, ‘whether revolutionary movements could overthrow oppressive regimes and bring about political change?’, it would seem that the elements of the subject body,

332. Neruda Pablo, *Memoirs*, Trans. by Hardie St Martin, Rupa & Co, 2005, Pg 333

‘Guerilla factions’ were treating this point affirmatively with its initial success in Cuba. However, Neruda’s reading of the situation, was far more accurate and accounted for what Badiou would term as ‘lack of a proper organ’. In Neruda’s analysis, the failure of this body to unite under any over-arching envelope was due to the ease with which these organizations could be infiltrated by spies and enemy agents.

“Guerilla methods in Latin America opened the floodgates for all kinds of squealers. The spontaneous character and the youth of these organisations made it hard to detect and unmask spies. That’s why the guerrilla leaders were haunted by suspicions and had to keep an eye even on their own shadows. In a way, this cult of risk was encouraged by the romantic spirit and the wild guerilla theories that swept Latin America. This era may have come to an end with the assassination and heroic death of Ernesto Guevara. But for a long time supporters of this tactic saturated the continent with theses and documents that virtually allotted the popular revolutionary government of the future, not to the classes exploited by capitalism, but to all and sundry armed groups. The flaw in this line of reasoning is its political weakness; it is sometimes possible for a great guerrilla and a powerful political mind to coexist, as in the case of Che Guevara, but that is an exception and wholly dependent on chance. The survivors of a guerrilla war cannot lead a proletarian state simply because they were braver, or because they were luckier in the face of death or better shots when facing the living.”³³³

However, Neruda recognizes the Badiouan ‘organ’ in the structure of an organised political party, which in the longer run had a better chance of treating the said point more effectively. The party acted as a proper organ, in its long term ability to spawn hope. So, notwithstanding its successes in places like Cuba, guerrilla warfare failed to emerge as an eternal truth (guerrilla warfare as a paradigm for socialist re-organization of societies), the Communist party still remains the only paradigm for effective political resistance. Its ability to reunite internal disparities internally (owning a specific Badiouan ϵ_ϕ) allows the efficacious part of the subject body to traverse the point perhaps more forcefully.

“We were living through serious conflicts at the time. Venezuelan, Mexican, and other Communists were having ideological disputes with the Cubans. Later, in tragic circumstances but in silence, the Bolivians also dissented...The Chilean Communist Party endured this period of divergences intelligently, it stuck by its intention of analysing our disagreements internally. In time, all traces of a fight have been wiped away. A clear understanding and a fraternal relationship exists between the two most important Communist parties of Latin America...In my party, Chile’s Communist Party, I found a large group of simple people who had left far behind them personal vanity, despotism, and material interests. I felt happy knowing honest people who were fighting for common decency, for justice.”³³⁴

The truth of the situation, or the world in question, according to Neruda, is the eternal hope it springs in the hearts of oppressed people. Writing about the Communists, he says,

“In the middle of our hemisphere, in the middle of our apple, these long-beards all singing the same song...Meanwhile men are soaring into the solar system... Shoes track up the moon... Everything struggles to change, except the outworn systems... These outworn systems were spawned in the immense spider-webs of the Middle Ages... Spider-webs stronger than the steel of machinery... Yet there are people who believe in change, who have made changes, who have

333. Neruda Pablo, *Memoirs*, Trans. by Hardie St Martin, Rupa & Co, 2005, Pg 331

334. Neruda Pablo, *Memoirs*, Trans. by Hardie St Martin, Rupa & Co, 2005, Pg 328, 320

made the changes work, who have made change burst into flower ...Caramba! ...Nobody can hold spring back!” ³³⁵

Although it is self-evident, and yet, as an end note, it is important to note that the point of this thesis is not to present accurate historical analysis (if there is such a thing), but in the specific world that we are dealing with – ‘The works of Alain Badiou and Pablo Neruda’, the truth is, there exists a common paradigm and structure for the process of truth production to exist.

335. Neruda Pablo, *Memoirs*, Trans. by Hardie St Martin, Rupa & Co, 2005, Pg 334

CHAPTER-9

CONCLUSION- END NOTES ON OBLIVION, SHARP STONES AND COMING BACK

The journey of this thesis which began from the Badiouan, (self-admittedly propagandist) station named, 'Mathematics is Ontology and vice-versa' and has paused at this deceptively quaint station called the 'point' has traversed a long distance through many a undulating terrains. This thesis which had started in the anticipation of making 'The truth of Neruda's poetry' as its final destination, changed its course somewhere midway and ended up going deeper into Badiouan territory, instead testing the truth of Badiouan philosophy through the poetics of Neruda.

In a sense, this exercise took us to the beginning of Badiou's *Manifesto for Philosophy* where he wrote, "...how should we interpret the fact that Lyotard can only evoke the destiny of Presence in commentaries on painters, that's Gilles Deleuze's last great book had cinema as its topic, that Lacoue-Labarthe (Like Gadamer in Germany) devotes his energies to Celan's poetic anticipation, or that Jacques Derrida calls upon Genet? Almost all our philosophers are in search of a diverted writing, indirect supports, oblique referents, so that the evasive transition of a site's occupation may befall to philosophy's presumably uninhabitable place."³³⁶ Neruda here is not just the 'indirect support', 'the oblique referent' for Badiou, but he also shares Badiou's burden in terms of philosophical singularization on the passage of history. Together they redefine the paradigms and conditions of philosophy, removing it from the impasse of the "idea that 'everything' is the concern of philosophy" and re-distribute it's burdens to politics, history, contingencies and traces of other ideas. "The crux of the matter is to know what the following means: taking one more step. A single step. A step within the modern configuration, the one that since Descartes has bound the three nodal concepts of being, truth and the subject to the conditions of philosophy."³³⁷

By giving up some of it's power, Badiou and Neruda in this thesis, together reclaim philosophy's rightful conditions and its ultimate destination through the exploration of its three cores – Being, Subject and Truth. This thesis has achieved certain important milestones in the field of all three of these nodal concepts.

On the question of Being

The thesis effectively tackles the seemingly abrupt nature of the transition from 'Being' to 'appearing' in Badiou's theory. As Badiou formulates the nature of 'Being' as inconsistent multiplicity, which under various operations (ideological, geographical, historical etc) are brought together in one world or counted as one set, it left critics and philosophers like Peter Hallward questioning the premise for it's lack of historicity. "Badiou assumes but does not account for the status of the middle and mediating term – the status of beings (*étants*). Neither Badiou's ontology nor his logic seem to provide any clear place for ordinary ontic reality. What appear in our various Parisian worlds, clearly are not instances of pure being or multiplicity,

336. Badiou Alain, *Manifesto for Philosophy*, Trans. by Norman Madarasz, State University of New York Press, 1992, Pg 28

337. Badiou Alain, *Manifesto for Philosophy*, Trans. by Norman Madarasz, State University of New York Press, 1992, Pg 32

but people. Depending on the transcendental configuration of the world, the people can appear or exist as tranquil workers, patriotic heroes or rebellious insurgents. But in each case, the transcendental appears to take the elementary ontic status of the inhabitants for granted. Between the being of a pure multiplicity and an appearing as docile or insurgent lies an abyss without mediation.”³³⁸

If one were to address that criticism, in its most reductive sense, one would need to answer the original Leibnizian question, why is there something instead of nothing? Bertrand Russell had replied saying, “I should say that the universe is just there, and that’s all”. So, either one accepts it as a brute fact, or take the theological route that it was God who made the universe. Badiou refuses to accept that, and would rather believe in the Universe spontaneously creating itself – bubbles of space-time spouting out of an unstable ‘nothingness’, the universe literally actualizing itself, lifting itself out of non-existence. Badiou’s theory starts after this point – when multiple beings have already emerged out of nothingness. These beings, then, grasped by the situation, develop in complexity via a Von-Neumanish hierarchy of accumulation – appearing in set-like situations and gathering density via operations allowed within that situation.

By defining the limits of Badiou’s project, this thesis has advanced by concretizing the idea of ‘Being’ in Badiou, as a mere formalism, which finds its true ontological support in the order of ‘objects’. ‘Objects’ are the atoms – composed at the intersection of ‘Being’ and ‘Being-there’, and as such are the halting point of the thinking of ‘Being’. Its plain and simple materialism, and Badiou’s theory takes off as the “dialectical overcoming of simple materialism” in the form of truths.

In this thesis, the so called ‘abyss’ between being and appearing is filled by the light and vitality of the various Nerudian objects which acquired layers upon layers of material density just by the virtue of appearing simultaneously in various Nerudian/Badiouan worlds - being shaped and moulded by the constant Badiouan transcendental force they were subjected to. Badiou himself raised this question in the beginning of *Logics of Worlds*, “What happens to the ontic basis of a multiple when it appears in multiple worlds?” Badiou provided the solution in terms of his theory of relations, whereby worlds get sutured to each other through exposed universal relations. In the exposition in Chapter three of this thesis around the Nerudian horses, we traversed the abyss between mere aesthetics (Being) to politics (appearing). The beautiful horses of Berlin in the poem *Caballos* when reappeared in the peasant world of *Oda al Caballo*, the two separate worlds of the poems got sutured through the universal relation of ‘labour’ adding material density to both the horse and the poetic gaze. Similarly, the separate worlds of the poems ‘Oda a la luna del mar’ and ‘Oda a la luna’ get sutured and make a decision about the moon – the ethical demands of the second world over-riding the mere aesthetic existence of the moon in the first, through the topos of their combined worlds.

Therefore, as each object invariably traverses through various worlds and inhabits them, the objects and their worlds - are continuously transformed, in material, size and density. This point gets further strengthened and elucidated as one moves on to the concept of the ‘Subject’.

338. Hallward Peter, “Order and Event: On Badiou’s Logics of Worlds”, *New Left Review* 53 (September-October 2008), Pg 118

On the question of the ‘Subject’

Perhaps the most important aspect of the interweaving of the Badiouan and Nerudian strands in this thesis has been to concretize the ‘subjectivization’ of the object.

“That truths are required to appear bodily (en-corps) and to do so over again (encore): that was the problem whose breadth I was unable to gauge. It is now clear to me, that the dialectical thinking of a singular subject, presupposes the knowledge of what an efficacious body is, and of what a logical and material excess with regards to a bodies-languages system might be. In short, it presupposes mastery of not only of the ontology of truths, but what makes truth appear in a world.”³³⁹ As the transcendental ‘object’ gets ‘topologized’ and ‘categorized’, it sometimes gets the rare opportunity to be ‘subjectivized’.

Under the spell of Badiou’s new ‘object-centered’ ontology and Neruda’s anarchic de-Daseining of the subject, the particular project of this thesis – of according the everyday, banal Nerudian ‘objects’, a ‘subjective’ status, succeeds. The committed body/subject is no longer limited to the ‘Dasein’. In the expositions in Chapter four on Neruda’s poems like, ‘Oda al edificio’, ‘Oda a la cuchara’, ‘Oda a las cosas rotas’, ‘Oda al serrucho’, ‘Oda a la lavendura’ and many others, we saw how in each instance there was a severing of the object/equipment from its user or Dasein – each time they took the poet by surprise by asserting their complete autonomy, toppling the expectations of the poet, directing the action in the poem by taking over the role of the subject. The possibility of such an appearing is directly hinged to the idea that there be a level playing field for all ‘beings’ present in a given world, that they have an equal ontological stature before they appear in the ways they do – that they be, the Badiouan ‘inconsistent-multiple’ (*étant*) before they consist a particular world.

Slavoj Žižek, however, in *Less than Nothing* raises his concerns over the initial homogeneity of a Badiouan world – ‘consisting only of mathematically thinkable pure multiplicity’, which then gives way to something inconsistent in appearing. He cites Schelling and Hegel and goes on to say, “In spite of the insurmountable differences between Schelling and Hegel, the two share a key feature: they try to account for the emergence of appearing with reference to some kind of tension or antagonism or contradiction in the preceding order of being. This route, however, is excluded a priori by Badiou, since his axiom is that, “being as being is absolutely homogeneous: a mathematically thinkable pure multiplicity”. This is why all Badiou can do is offer obscure hints about “a kind of push of being” towards appearing.”³⁴⁰

However, what Žižek calls “obscure hints”, is a well fleshed out theory of appearing, where the antagonism in a given world does not take place at the level of Being; it occurs at the level of appearing. As beings acquire material density, while they simultaneously inhabit separate worlds, their degrees of existence in each world, play off each other and their intensity or force in a particular world is established. Thus, only when an inconsistent multiplicity of similar ontological signature is forced to consist according to the dynamics of a given world which can never be adequately representational, the antagonism occurs.

The differences arise, because Hegel or Schelling were trying to approach the problem by answering the question – *how and why does the world appear to us the way it does?* This

339. Badiou Alain, *Logics of Worlds*, Trans. By Toscano Alberto, Bloomsbury, 2013, Pg 46

340. Žižek Slavoj, *Less than Nothing*, Verso, 2013, Pg 809

approach would inevitably lead them into the elusive territory of an external reality or a ‘radical externality’ forever trying to escape the grasp of our subjective perspectives.

On the other hand, Badiou approaches the problem by directing his energies to the question, *how does change occur in a given world?* And while he attempts to answer this question, he ends up with rare insights into the material nature of the world. Neruda’s intervention in the schemata, concretises the entire Badiouan concept of the ‘subjectivised form’. Read independently, the poems in the exposition in Chapter four might seem like mere leaps of a poet’s imagination, but if one paints them on the Badiouan canvas, they paint a proper Marxist picture of a material world supporting the super-structure of ideas.

The question of the world appearing the way it does, is thus resolved through the very structure of the Badiouan transcendental regime, which dictates its principles of organisation. This regime or order evolves continually through the process of Badiouan change, and the fidelity of various ‘subjectivised forms’, which appear in the world after the occurrence of an ‘event’. The question of the ontological support for the event, and the flags raised against its “proto-religious”, miraculous nature finds its resolution as Badiou incorporates the new logical operator of the ‘object’ into his theory. A new ‘object’ thus becomes the ontological support of the ‘event’. In the expositions of Neruda’s poems in the thesis, the ‘event’ itself gets ‘de-exceptionalised’, instead of being some grand, rare rupture, it can be an everyday affair, like putting on a suit (refer to the exposition of ‘Oda al Traje’ in Chapter 1), which brings along a gradual, but a fundamental change, much like the operation of ‘forcing’³⁴¹ in set theory.

While the event still remains an unpredictable occurrence in terms of its temporality, its spatiality is no longer that elusive. Badiou’s theory of the points helps one identify the points of torsion in a world – these points accumulate at the ‘site’ which is where an ‘event’ usually occurs. A good analogy could be that of the seismic sciences, which can identify the various fault-lines on the earth’s crust but are unable to predict the timing of an actual earthquake.

Through Neruda’s poetic intervention, it has been made clear in this thesis, (through the expositions in Chapter seven of this thesis) that a poet or the philosopher wagers his world between atony (world without points) and tension (world populated with points). The poems or the ideas are at some point severed from their source and have their own independent lives – sometimes as subjectivized forms or as resurrected truths.

341. The idea of ‘forcing’ in this context, is explained well by Andy McLaverty Robinson, in his essay titled, “Alain Badiou: Truth, Subjectivity and Fidelity”, where he writes, “As we have seen, ontology cannot think the Event. It cannot conceive the subject’s ‘being’, because this being occurs outside any situation. However, ontology can think the operation of a subject and a Truth. This operation can be thought of in terms of forcing, which is a recognisable operation in set theory. The idea of forcing marks a move from a mainly ruptural view of the Event, to a theory where an Event is a mainly slow, piecemeal, gradual but nonetheless fundamental change. Forcing steadily expands the zone affected by the Event. It involves performative statements which position particular enquiries within an Evental frame. Forcing involves attempting to combine the new element with each possible element in the previous situation. It is analogous to the procedure of forcing in set theory, which creates a larger set from the possible relations of the initial set. In maths, it is through forcing that one can arrive at a generic set, and therefore create a distinction from a previous formulation of a set. It involves adding one element of each subset into the new, generic set. Forcing reveals possible subsets which were invisible but present in the initial set. Forcing seems to be a way of making a process of change more consistent, and expanding it across a wider range of fields than would otherwise occur.” (Mc Laverty Robinson Andy, “Alain Badiou: Truth, Subject and Fidelity”, Ceasefire, 20/01/2015)

Peter Hallward, while acknowledging Badiou's theory of points still goes on to write, "By conceiving 'site' and 'singularity' effectively in terms of exclusion pure and simple, however Badiou evades, rather than illuminates engagement with the actual power relations that structure situations in dominance. Practical political work is more often concerned with people or situations who are not so much invisible or unseen as underseen or mis-seen, oppressed and exploited, rather than simply excluded. Modern forms of power do not merely exclude or prohibit but rather modulate, guide or enhance behaviour and norms conducive to the status quo."³⁴² However, Badiou's theory of atonal worlds is an engagement with exactly such a nature of the power structures operating today. In fact, his entire thesis is an engagement with the current order of post-modern atonalism which seeks to destroy the points of torsion in a world by co-opting all the anticipated forms of tension. At the end of Chapter eight, in the exposition of the Nerudian passage on the Communists, the thesis showed this very Badiouan engagement with worlds, populated with mere bodies and languages. In such a scenario, the truth procedure becomes rarer and even more precarious as it depends on that which is completely 'excluded' to trigger it.

On the question of truth

At the end of the thesis, as far as 'Truth' is concerned, there are questions remaining of its ontological basis, with many contenders. 1) The 'void' or the inconsistency present within a world could be the truth, 2) the event – an occurrence leading to a revaluation of the world, could be the truth, or 3) the consequences of the event and the new order could be the 'truth'. However there are limitations and ambiguities in each of these instances.

If we consider the first instance of the 'void' as the truth of the Badiouan world, the concept becomes a negative one – of that which 'is not'. After the event, when the void suddenly comes into its own and gets maximised, it no longer remains the void or the inconsistency, but becomes 'all' and something else within the world is relegated to the void which is not the truth of the current world. As such, inconsistency cannot exactly be the ontological basis of the 'truth'.

As far as the 'event' is considered, if we consider the 'site' without the temporal dimension to be its ontological basis, its actual occurrence can either be considered as just the rise of the void, or as the whole series of re-ordering of the various transcendentals of the situation (formation of new objects). However, if after the event, an effective organ fails to rise, the new order that is generated can only be considered as the set of mere modifications without any radical change in the existing order. Hence, event is not a guarantor of the revelation of the 'truth'. Therefore an event cannot be the ontological basis of a truth.

In the third case, if we consider the new order to be the ontological basis of the 'truth', like any other ordered world, it would also reveal its points of torsions sooner or later. As Žižek points out, "If Truth is an order enforced or imposed on the multiplicity of being, then the question arises: How does Truth differ from a World? Can Truth become a World? To put it bluntly, does an Event, like every situation (or World), also have (or rather, generate) its point of symptomal torsion, so that a Truth-Event is merely a passage between one and another

342. Hallward Peter, "Order and Event: On Badiou's Logics of Worlds", *New Left Review* 53 (September-October 2008, Pg 120)

world?”³⁴³ However, a Truth, according to Badiou is eternal and is present across worlds. In other words, it is universal and absolute, and not a relative or historical entity.

“...its eternal Idea survives its defeat in socio-historical reality, it continues to lead the spectral life of a failed utopia which will haunt future generations, patiently awaiting its next resurrection.”³⁴⁴ Badiou had identified the ‘generic set’³⁴⁵ as the ontological basis or the support of a universal truth. “For me, a generic set is the support of a universal truth – why universal? For negative reasons. Because a generic set cannot be defined by properties which are known in the situation. So, a generic set can be sufficiently anonymous to exist in another world or another context. Exactly like universal truth which can be recognized as such in very different civilizations, in different moments of history...”³⁴⁶

However, the generic set too falls short to completely contain the dazzling sparkle of the Truth, because ultimately it happens to be a negative property – “no property of a defined world”. “It is not a positive proof of universality – because maybe in some world, genericity is not proof by itself of universality. It was too empirical a definition of universality...”³⁴⁷

The idea of a universal truth generated in one world, completely disappearing from another, until it is resurrected in yet another world – seemed inadequate for a concept that would define the absolute.

John Berger had also raised this question with respect to art works that endured through time, “If art is bound up with certain phases of social historical development, how is it that we still find, for example, classical Greek sculpture beautiful?”³⁴⁸ In trying to answer the question, he writes about the process through which a timeless painting is created and after taking into account the historical challenges, the character of the painter and his will to push the limits, in true Badiouan vocabulary he writes, “According to the painter’s character and the historical situation, the result of his pushing varies from a barely discernible variation of a convention - changing no more than the individual voice of the singer changes a melody- to a fully original discovery, a breakthrough...Ideology partly determines the finished result but it does not determine the energy flowing through the current and it is with this energy that the spectator identifies. Every image used by a spectator is going further than he could have achieved alone, towards a prey, a Madonna, a sexual pleasure, a landscape, a face, a different world. ‘On the margin of what man can do’ wrote Max Raphael, ‘there appears that which he cannot or cannot yet do - but which lies at the root of all creativeness.’ A revolutionary scientific history of art has to come to terms with such creativeness.”³⁴⁹

Badiou after having developed that very revolutionary theory of Truth in his *Being and Event* and *Logics of Worlds*, in a true salute to his own theory of always going further than intended,

343. Zizek Slavoj, *Less than Nothing*, Verso, 2013, Pg 815

344. Zizek Slavoj, *Less than Nothing*, Verso, 2013, Pg 817

345. A generic set is a subset of a given set which cannot be defined by a property of its elements, in contrast to the axiom of separation, which separates elements into a subset on the basis of a specific property.

346. Prague Axiomatic Circle, Alain Badiou: Five Points, Final Speech, YouTube, Speech by Alain Badiou, a. 10 May, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iWws287P1OU>

347. Prague Axiomatic Circle, Alain Badiou: Five Points, Final Speech, YouTube, Speech by Alain Badiou,

348. Berger John, ‘The Work of Art’, *Selected Essays*, Ed. By Geoff Dyer, Vintage International, 2001, Pg 432

349. Berger John, ‘The Work of Art’, *Selected Essays*, Ed. By Geoff Dyer, Vintage International, 2001, Pg 435

has since moved on to try and finish his project in his next book, *The Immanence of Truth*³⁵⁰ where he explores the concept of the mathematical infinite as the new ontological basis of Truth.

As Bertrand Russell had said, philosophy takes up the mantel at the point where science gives up, similarly, where philosophy comes to an impasse, poetry comes in. In the inexhaustible resource of the language of the committed poet, there will always be words to capture the most elusive of concepts. Hence, as far as the question of Truth is concerned, this thesis, supported by the poetics of Neruda, has been able to answer the question by concretely establishing the unique interplay of the Dasein world and the material world which went beyond the yet recognized categories of historical materialism, as the site of truth production. In the last exposition of the previous chapter, we saw that in the Nerudian/Badiouan world Truth is that energy which is produced through this interplay that always has ‘hope’ as its constant – a potential of going beyond the original intentions.

At this point therefore, there couldn’t be a better end note to this shared bonhomie between Alain Badiou and Pablo Neruda than this previously unknown poem resurrected by archivists in forgotten boxes kept at the Pablo Neruda Foundation in Chile. This is Neruda addressing Badiou directly,

*Even in these steep
years
with a clear view of
the mountain range of my life
after having
climbed
the vertical snow
and reached
The diaphanous plateau
of unwavering light
I see you
near the snail peddling sea
hoarding pinches
of sand
wasting time with
birds
that wing across
a marine loneliness
I look at you
and don't believe
I'm myself
so stupid, so remote,
so abandoned
A kid
just
arrived
from the provinces,*

350. Badiou Alain, *The Immanence of Truths, Being and Event III*, Trans. by Kenneth Reinhard, Susan Spitzer, Bloomsbury Academic, to be published 10th Feb, 2022

*a poet
with trim eyebrows
and threadbare
shoes
you're me
I who live
again,
just in from the rain,
your silence and your arms
are my own,
your verses
repetitious as
grains
of oats,
a swan,
a trapeze artist between high phrases
and the surrounding emptiness,
your obligation
is to coal and fire,
you must
dirty your hands
with burnt oil,
with smoke
from the cauldron,
wash yourself,
put on your new suit
and then
with heaven in reach you can
worry about the lily,
take on the orange blossom and the dove,
arrive into your radiance,
without forgetting the state
of oblivion,
of blackness,
without forgetting your own
or the earth,
toughen up
take a walk
over the sharp stones
then come back .³⁵¹*

351. Neruda Pablo, "Even in these steep...", *Then Come Back, The Lost Neruda Poems*, Trans. by Forrest Gander, Bloodaxe Books, 2017

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