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# WORDS

By Cheryl McGeachan and Chris Philo

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## Introduction: the work of words

I was determined that these texts always be in relation ... with reality; not only that they refer to it, but they be operative within it; that they form part of the dramaturgy of the real; ... I didn't try to bring together texts that would be more faithful to reality than others, that would merit inclusion for their representative value, but, rather, texts that played a part in the reality they speak of - and that, in return, whatever their inaccuracy, their exaggeration, or their hypocrisy, are traversed by it: fragments of discourse trailing the fragments of reality they are part of. One won't see a collection of verbal portraits here, but traps, weapons, cries, gestures, attitudes, ruses, intrigues for which words were the instruments. Real lives were 'enacted' ... in these few sentences: by this, I don't mean that they were represented but that their liberty, their misfortune, often their death, in any case their fate, were actually decided therein, at least in part. These discourses really crossed lives; existences were actually risked and lost in these words. (Foucault, 2002: 160)

When preparing his monumental history of 'madness' originally published in 1961 (Foucault, 1961 [1965, 2006]), Michel Foucault conceived an 'anthology' of fragmentary words illuminating the eighteenth-century history of internment. Culled from the archives of the Bastille, the Paris *Hôpital Général* and elsewhere, these words - in royal *lettres de cachet*, 'police reports' and miscellaneous petitions - documented why certain individuals were incarcerated or why others felt incarceration either required or mistaken. Some examples appear in **Table 1**. Foucault recalled the impact of these words, prompting 'my pleasure, an emotion, laughter, surprise, a certain dread', and admitting that 'these 'short stories' ... stirred more fibres within me than what is ordinarily called 'literature'' (Foucault, 2002: 157 & 158). He wondered if he should just forget them, 'leav[ing] them in the very form that had caused me to first feel them' (Foucault, 2002: 159), but an alternative was to create a compendium of these often-awkward words - sometimes the plain-speak of bureaucrats itemising depravities committed and miseries endured; sometimes the stilted prose of the barely-literate stammering the languages of law and state - with the cumulative effect of turning an ear to that 'unending hum' of small, chaotic worlds which, on occasion, attracted the attention of sovereign power (Foucault, 2002: 169). Whereas Foucault is often been accused of attending solely to the words of elites and experts, here he wilfully sought out the 'infamous': 'these cobblers,

these army deserters, these garment-sellers, these scriveners, these vagabond monks, all of them rabid, scandalous or pitiful' (Foucault, 2002: 160).

**Table 1: Extracts from the archives of internment** (from Foucault, 2002: 158)

Mathurin Milan, placed in the hospital of Charenton, 31 August 1707: "His madness was always to hide from his family, to lead an obscure life in the country, to have actions at law, to lend usuriously and without security, to lead his feeble mind down unknown paths, and to believe himself capable of the greatest employments."

Jean Antoine Touzard, placed in the castle of Bicêtre, 21 April 1701: "Seditious apostate friar, capable of the greatest crimes, sodomite, atheist if that were possible; this individual is a veritable monster of abomination whom it would be better to stifle than to leave at large."

In his 1977 essay introducing this never-realised project,<sup>1</sup> Foucault (2002: 158) elaborated on how one might detect something of 'these lives whose disarray and relentless energy one senses beneath the stone-smooth words'. His purpose was not to deaden their affective qualities – 'the shock of these words must give rise to a certain effect of beauty mixed with dread' (Foucault, 2002: 159) – but neither was it to accord them with any special representational capacity for picturing lives lived in the nooks and crannies of France's *ancien regime*. His objective was rather to see these words squarely *in* the run of the real: as 'operative' within a material-social world *beyond* the pages bearing the words, 'play[ing] a part in the reality they speak of', being the 'instruments' through which lives – or 'existences' – were shaped, secured, released, made and unmade. It is not as if the world is *only* made of words. Indeed, nothing could be further from the case, since what excited Foucault was how 'fragments of discourse' are always intermingling with 'fragments of reality', the stony surfaces of the former forever flaking off into the constitution of the latter, and *vice versa*, in a constant, lively and combustible movement between 'words and things' (between *les mots et les choses* [Foucault, 1966 [1970]]). Moreover, he understood words, bundled up into discernible discourses, as entirely real in themselves, thoroughly material and social, whether inscribed and circulated on paper (or other media) or even when merely uttered by mouth. To write thus about Foucault is immediately to counter a banal received wisdom about him as a 'discursive constructionist' (see below), and to underline that there is so much *more* to say about words than is suggested if all we ask is how well or badly they represent a non-wordy reality beyond. It is this 'more' that propels our chapter.

Human beings live amongst words. Words spoken, written, typed, heard, mouthed and read enter into almost all aspects of how we (humans) daily cope with the everyday worlds that we inhabit. Words are both crucially *reflective* of the goings-on in the human world, but also unavoidably *generative* of that world in all kinds of ways. Words can shape, wound, fracture and direct how lives, and the material landscapes housing these lives, are planned, enacted, altered and obliterated. This chapter duly charts how human geographers have addressed 'discursive life' (Philo, 2011), not merely as a 'mirror of the world' (however opaque: Rorty, 1980) but as makers, shapers and breakers of worlds.<sup>2</sup> Following an introduction to the relationship between geography and words, including notes on differing geographical treatments of words, we argue the need for *restating* the importance of human geographies attuned to words. The hinge of the chapter is a table discriminating between different orders of words being worded in the world 'out there', mapping across to illustrative studies from the geographical literature. An interlude then considers a recent departure within the conceptualising of human geography, non-representational theory (NRT), which is highly critical of the attention paid to words. Finally, returning to the cue above from Foucault, we use examples from our own research on the geographies of 'madness', demonstrating how working *on, with, and through* words in the context of the so-called 'therapeutic encounter' might appeal to geographers taking seriously the generative *work* that words unavoidably do in the world.

We confess to sidestepping the many confusions attending to what might actually be meant by words – and about where words stop and 'signs', 'symbols' or even 'gestures' start, or about the differences between single words, ones in sentences or ones in larger combinations – and, more complex yet, the manifold debates about language (in its philosophical, linguistic and 'technical' dimensions).<sup>3</sup> Such issues have figured in the geographical literature (Tuan, 1978; Barnes and Curry, 1983; Laurier and Philo, 2004). Here, though, we work with a 'common-sense' understanding of words as the 'stuff' written across the spaces of a book, journal, report, newspaper, magazine, wall, website, mobile phone display and so on, or as the 'stuff' that we either gossip to one another or sometimes hear in lectures, speeches, interviews and other forums of speech. Arguably, we adopt a wilfully *naive* stance in what follows, asking for a new look at words-in-the-world that does not become mired in past controversies. What we will underline is that we do intend to evade the snares of a simplistic 'discursive constructionism' (Potter and Hepburn 2008), as set within a more encompassing 'social constructionism' (Hall,

2001) that has recently been critiqued in (and beyond) human geography. For us, indeed, word(s) and world(s) are precisely not (to be) collapsed on to one another, for we see words as lively 'things' very much in the flow of the world, jostling for attention, space and effectivity alongside a plethora of other 'things'.

### **Words *in* and *about* places**

Sun is shining, and I'm besotted with Edinburgh. ... Last night the geographers hit the town; some of the landscape people headed up Arthur's Seat to gaze down at the urban environment; spatial person that I am all I saw were the cosmopolitan bright lights and lots of people. Different senses of Edinburgh, different senses of geography? (Crang, 1991: 175)

Phil Crang is here recollecting the 'New Words, New Worlds' conference held at the University of Edinburgh in September 1991, hinting at the diverse geographical imaginations present at this event. The conference introduced in capsule form many of the theoretical moves – from psychoanalysis to post-colonialism; from identity politics to embodied geographies; and much more – that have since diffused throughout human geography in the UK and elsewhere (Philo, 1991; also Cook *et al.*, 2000). Different and sometimes contradictory stances arose on what might indeed be the geographer's 'new words' for conceptualising 'new worlds', or for reconceptualising older ones, and a debate could be staged about this event as just one moment in a longer history of proposing and contesting the 'keywords' of human geography (Passi, 2012; after Williams, 2010). Such evaluation of the words *of* geographers themselves, and of what they might reveal about the role of 'linguistic, disciplinary and 'authorial' contexts' in determining which words become hegemonic and which forgotten, could be highly revealing (Passi, 2011, 2012; also Fall, this volume). Such reflection is beyond our scope here, however, and instead we simply wish to flag the 'New Words' event, not only because it will be useful to us when concluding, but also because of Nigel Thrift's discussant's comments cautioning against the lure of 'over-wordy worlds' (Thrift, 1991). We return shortly to this caution, but first we deploy Crang's reverie as a device for elaborating our claims about the work of words in the world.

Gazing down at the twinkling urban landscape of Edinburgh from the imposing mass of Arthur's Seat, set against a blanket of jet black sky, one sees a typical Western city in an evening setting full of buildings, roads, cars and parklands, all animated by the bustle of people getting on with their daily lives in the scene far below. Wrapped up within many elements of this view, woven tightly into the very fabric of the material landscape, is a rich tapestry of words. There are the words

spoken by the people in the scene: young lovers whispering to one another on the hill, tourists chattering about their visit to the castle, students singing the latest chart success, a young man asking if anyone has spare change, a geographer muttering the beginnings of tomorrow's conference paper. Enrolled too are the different layers of words that are 'written' into the foundations of the numerous decisions made by different authorities about the lay-out of the streets, the structure of buildings, the regulation of shops and businesses, the utilisation of public spaces and the creation of new communication networks. Viewed thus, the city space is both a scene *of* words and one partially constituted *by* words. Although many of the words conveyed by its occupants have little or nothing to do with landscape itself – relating to a new film watched, a meeting missed, a family argument brewing – some may be very much influenced by or even directly related to it. The film watched thanks to construction of a new art-house cinema, meetings missed due to traffic delays, family arguments triggered due to the early closure of the museum: each of these small intrigues may not involve words directly referencing the scene, but rather will cross-link with ones read, heard, spoken or written beyond the boundaries of the scene itself, in humble office spaces or grand parliamentary buildings. Words are voiced both *in* places and *about* places (Pred, 1989, 1990), and what this vignette suggests is the deeply entangled skeins of discursive life that are threaded into the very text(ure) of any city space.

Various manoeuvres taken in the history of the discipline have intimated the relevance of discursive life for the study of human geography. Particular strands of behavioural geography not only drew attention to the behavioural dimensions of moving house, going shopping or locating businesses, they also considered cognitive aspects of human beings perceiving and processing spatial-environmental information (Wolpert, 1964; Pred, 1967; Golledge and Rushton, 1976). The drive to appreciate the 'thoughts', 'meanings' and, at times, 'feelings' of individuals making locational decisions and responding to spatial environments was deepened by humanistic geographers wishing to centralise human agency, (pre-)consciousness, awareness and creativity (Relph, 1976; Tuan, 1976; Buttimer, 1979). More recent work from the so-called 'cultural turn' in human geography (Cook *et al.*, 2000) has tackled 'popular' knowledges, 'media-ated' in various ways, alongside more humdrum conversational happenings for the formation of everyday 'life-worlds', demonstrating in each case their significance as words-filled vehicles for informing human socio-spatial activity (Cloke *et al.*, 2004, esp. Chap.10). Attention has also been paid to 'writing worlds' (Barnes and Duncan, 1992), detailing how landscape

representation can be explored through the discourses of, for example, geopolitics, poetry, economics and travellers' descriptions (Duncan, 1990; Duncan and Ley, 1993; Withers and Keighren, 2011). Moreover, numerous geographers have engaged directly with literary works, spanning poems, plays, television scripts, novels and magazines, exploring how 'imaginative geographies' (after Said, 1978) or 'senses of place' (Pocock, 1981; Massey, 1993; Piatti *et al.*, 2009) may be shaped in, and by, such wordy mediums (e.g., Sharp, 2000, 2009; Perriam, 2011).

Through such manoeuvres, the words of the people ('great' and 'small') involved in situations of human-geographical interest – what they might say about a situation and how they might say it – become foregrounded as more than just *data*. More than just clues about seemingly more fundamental things in the worlds beyond, these words are taken as 'ingredients' in and of the world needing careful disclosure and explication in their own right. Many historically-aware geographers – of both older (e.g., Wright, 1947; Kirk, 1963) and more recent (e.g., Philo, 1989; Driver, 1988, 1990; Ogborn, 2004, 2005/2006, 2007, 2011a, 2011b; Withers, 2002, 2010) vintages – have reflected upon the 'perceptions' and 'imaginings' or 'languages' and 'discourses' (often scoured from the documents and texts of archival deposits) inhering within individual or collective acts of intervening in the world. For such geographers, their currency is precisely the production, circulation and consumption of words (whether moral tract, scientific treatise, committee report, legal proclamation or declaration of war), and they are acutely aware of what words tend to *do* in history, not just how words reflect back *on* that history. We should admit too, as historical geographers ourselves, that our orientation cannot but be influenced by our own experiences 'in the archive', but we have no qualms about rewording the phrase directly above as being also aware of what 'words tend to *do* in geography, not just how words reflect back *on* that geography' – where 'geography' here does not mean the academic-institutional edifice of Geography, but rather the 'geographies' in and of the world 'out there' beyond the academy.

To clarify, this chapter is *not* about writing, in the sense of addressing issues of methodology and creativity in the writing of human geography.<sup>4</sup> That said, there is a fuzzy area between attending, on the one hand, to the words deployed *in* the phenomena and events of the world that we wish to study and, on the other, to the species of words to be adopted in re-representing these words *of* the world. It is also worth stressing that there has long been concern for geographers' ways of writing the world, from H.C. Darby's (1962) ruminations on 'the problem of geographical description', through claims about the 'narratives', 'poetics' or 'politics' of

geographical writing (Daniels, 1985; Gregory, 1989, 1994; Keith, 1992; Barnes and Gregory, 1996; Withers and Keighren, 2011), to a range of experimental attempts at writing (human) geography otherwise. The latter have challenged the boundaries of conventional academic writing protocols, pushing to the limits how geographers convey their understandings and engagements with the worlds around them through the written (and spoken) word (Ogborn, 2005-2006; Lorimer, 2008; Dewsbury, 2009; Brace and Johns-Putra, 2010; Daniels and Lorimer, 2012). The paradigmatic case in human geography is probably Gunnar Olsson (1980, 1991, 2007; see also Abrahamsson and Gren, 2012), the one-time spatial scientist who became the 'poet-and-jester', drawn to surrealism and a dazzling array of (high-modernist) literary-illustrative devices for mimicking – at the same time as unpicking – what he repeatedly calls the 'braiding' of words and worlds.

Olsson's experiments with words have been animated by an appreciation of what he terms, in various places, 'the game of ontological transformations' whereby words (ideas, ideals, ideologies) translate into things (the bricks-and-mortar of buildings, regions, states and empires) and sometimes back again. Laying bare these transformations, exposing their taken-for-grantedness and critiquing their often insidious consequences: these ambitions energise Olsson's word-play, rendering it deadly serious, not merely or perversely 'play-full' (cf. Billinge, 1983). Moreover, Olsson probes the logical impossibility of how conventional language functions, which pretends a stability to the 'identity' between words and the things to which they refer, crystallised in the unresolvable tension between the true but uninformative statement  $A = A$  and the untrue but informative statement  $A = B$  (the latter being the basic form of a regression equation  $[y = (f)x]$  but also the standard move in most discursive practice). Put another way, Olsson has long challenged the problematic given-ness of the categorical grids of names and meanings through which 'we' are socialised into our worldly roles, a given-ness that is constantly (and unavoidably) contradicted by the chronic instability of ever-changing time-space contexts (also Dixon and Jones III, 1998a, 1998b; Cloke *et al.*, 2004, Chap.7). He sees this 'taboo-ed' impossibility as both the secret of dominating power (the mischievousness of 'God's word') and the source of individual 'madness' (since only the 'insane' truly appreciate that words and things cannot be related in the manner that we are continually told they are [also Philo, 2012b]). Our chapter is shaped by Olsson's insights, not least when we turn to the place of words in the negotiation of 'madness'.

## **Words, their work and their orders**

It is crucial to think about what *work* words do in the world across a range of registers. Colin Gordon (1979: 34), discussing Foucault (esp. 1972; and see above), notes how ‘discourse’ should be regarded as ‘a specific order of historical reality’, sitting in among many other layers of reality (economic, social, political, cultural [and many more fine-grained distinctions in-between]), being shaped by these other layers and exerting an influence back upon them as well. (This envisioning owes much to both Braudel’s ‘geohistory’ and Althusser’s structural Marxism: see Foucault, 1994.) We will shortly return to ‘discourse’, but here the critical point is the readiness to suppose that discourse possesses ‘ontological status’, rather than somehow hanging *outside* society, history and geography as a free-floating representational entity. It is instead figured as absolutely *in* the ‘stuff’ of society, the ‘working-out’ of history and, we would argue, the ‘differences’ of geography. It is fully *in* the maelstrom of lively worlds in transition, and so should be treated much like all of the other objects, processes and forces reckoned integral to these worlds, not somehow positioned as fundamentally different – and certainly taken to be neither occupying a privileged location of ‘commentating’ upon all of these other dimensions, nor seen only methodologically as offering access to said dimensions.

What we do wish to stress, moreover, is the necessity of *not* collapsing words into *all the same kind of substance*, a (minor) crime which we feel is being committed by the recent hostility to words within contemporary human geography (see below). Rather, we wish to dismantle the overall cupboard called ‘words’ into a number of separate drawers, *each* of which, to echo Gordon, we might say entails a specific order of historical reality. In thinking about words, it is all too easy to collapse them into a simple *sameness*, portraying one set of words as straightforwardly equivalent to another. Yet it is vital to recognise that different types or orders of words embody different ontological status relative to one another, exhibiting distinct modes of being in the world, having different relations to other realms of worldly matter, and evincing different kinds of effectivity in shaping ‘things’ and making ‘things’ happen. There are of course many ways in which we could envisage ontological distinctions between different orders of words, but in **Table 2** we propose – albeit hesitantly – a sixfold categorisation (named as: *chatter*, *testimony*, *lore*, *report*, *opinion* and *discourse*). We offer a brief characterisation of these different orders of words, with somewhat arbitrary exemplars, as well as brief notes on where geographical scholars have arguably studied or worked with each domain. There is a loose logic to the ordering of the words in the table, in that moving downwards we find words whose provenance is increasingly written rather than spoken, words thoughtfully

articulated rather than spontaneously uttered, and whose contents might be said to veer from being trivial, superficial and inconsequential to being (what most people would take to be) more serious, profound and hence highly consequential.

These organisational distinctions are deeply problematic, of course, either because they elide what should not be elided (failing to appreciate differences) or because they separate what should not be separated (failing to appreciate commonalities). The distinction between written and spoken words has long preoccupied scholars, with some proclaiming their irreconcilable difference and others their essential sameness, and with some regarding writing as the symbolic representation of speech (Saussure, 1966) and others speech as derivative of 'structures' given in writing (Derrida, 1976). There are also claims to be made about 'words spoken as a (heard and of course not heard) subset of a more cacophonous world' (Withers, 2012),<sup>5</sup> maybe with potential affects – consider what is induced by a shouted insult, an urgent command, a whispered confession – which diffuse between bodies and through places in a manner quite different to those of words written. Related difficulties attach to differentiating the trivial and the serious, a notion instantly complicated by a phrase such as 'I love you' (trivial?), and the problem is exacerbated by supposing too neat a parallel with differentiating what is (merely?) spoken compared with what is written down, in which regard how do we assess the president's weary sigh to her confidantes, 'This means war ...'? Crucially for geographers, the time-space context of a statement's wording may be taken as a clue as to whether the component words, whether scribed or uttered, are deemed/taken as 'trivial' or 'serious', either of no moment or potentially cataclysmic in their import. Our table hints at the sorts of contexts, and their spatial-temporal scales, that might be of relevance in this connection. More broadly, by talking about 'types' or 'orders' of words, we skirt the distinctions that might normally characterise treatises on language, such as between 'form' (with linguistic, orthographic and, after Saussure, structural connotations) and 'content' (with interest in what is communicated, its message, meaning and perhaps affectivity). Such distinctions do not entirely disappear from our table, but rather become re-distributed, so that intimations about form appear in several columns while possible contents are listed in the column marked 'examples'.

We are aware that the cupboard of words could be emptied in other ways, that the respective orders of words could be named and characterised differently, and that other scholars may feel that we have neglected crucial domains needing further attention. At the same time, these orders are hardly hermetically sealed off from one

another, such that in different empirical settings it may be entirely unclear where, for instance, opinion ends and discourse begins, while it is undoubtedly the case that one order of words necessarily depends upon being able to cross-reference with another. In the research of one co-author of this chapter (Laurier and Philo, 2007), attention is paid to what Jürgen Habermas (1989) termed ‘opinion’,<sup>6</sup> as formulated in eighteenth-century London coffee-houses, but one conclusion – following Markman Ellis (2002, 2004) – is that these complex social spaces were at least as much venues for chatter, testimony and lore (so much so that Habermas’s claims must be reappraised, precisely on the basis of carefully excavating exactly what orders of words were being uttered). The distinctions also *only* apply to words dealing with what might be called, again hesitantly, the ‘factual’ material of the world – words purporting to trade in the ‘facts’ of the world, however ‘storied’, contrived or downright misconstrued – and not to the words of self-consciously ‘fictional’ accounts (for which quite other schemata, to do with narrative forms or differences between novels, poetry, plays, film-scripts and the like, are required).

If it is accepted that something akin to the distinctions of **Table 2** *should* be made, then it is also true that each of these orders of words maps on to different geographies of the words involved, such that there are more-or-less fundamentally different ‘landscapes’ of chatter, testimony, lore, record, opinion and discourse. There are different sites, scales and networks implicated both in their speaking/writing and in their hearing/reading (for roughly parallel reasoning about ‘the geography of the book’, see Ogborn and Withers, 2010).<sup>7</sup> Such variable landscapes matter in being material for critical inquiry in their own right, and there is perhaps warrant for fostering a more fully fledged sub-field addressed to ‘the geography of words’ (exploring the geographies of language, discourse, statements and books). Yet these different orders of words potentially also matter more broadly for the geographer for the very reason that they are so transparently, indeed unavoidably, ‘set lose’ in the constitution of (human) societies and their histories. Olsson’s ‘ontological transformations’ strike us as more grounded and graspable once they are situated in these landscapes. If we can allow ourselves a slightly indulgent metaphor, it is as if the Tower of Babel has been up-ended from the vertical and its cacophonous babble dispersed across the horizontal reaches of worldly geography.

### **Battling with words: non-representational geographies**

Before providing empirical elaboration, we need to review the central claims of NRT

**Table 2: Orders of words at work in the world**

Order of words	Other possible names	Description	Spoken or written?	Spatial /temporal scale	Examples	Trivial /serious?	Geographical 'application': examples
<b>Chatter</b>	Conversation, talk, gossip, tittle-tattle	The everyday words that people routinely say to, or inquire of, each other (or even just to themselves) to 'get by', to 'pass the time', to communicate (low-level) information	Almost entirely spoken face-to-face between a handful of people; but possibly written in e-mails, text messages, tweets, blogs, 'social media'; to be read by a few people, possibly more	Usually local, anchored in specific social spaces; one-off comments, instantly forgettable	"Pass the butter"; "Did you feed the cat?"; "The sun is shining"; "Did you see the film on the geography of Africa?"; "Yes, I will be supporting Team GB at the Olympics"	Seemingly trivial, of no great consequence for the lives of the people concerned; <i>but</i> could be seen as significant in smoothing the flow of everyday conduct, transferring information with value beyond the immediate	Ethno-methodological geography (Laurier, 1998, 2001, 2008, 2010, this volume), where <i>conversation analysis</i> of words-as-situated-practices is a component, the goal being to ascertain the work done by mundane words in allowing 'occasioned' practical activity to unfold
<b>Testimony</b>	Witnessing, personal stories, confessions	The deeply meaningful words that individuals may say or write to each other, or maybe to a researcher, relating events/lives in a personal life-story, perhaps with emotional/affective qualities	Spoken face-to-face, and may well be one-to-one; possibly written down in published testimonies (pamphlets, books, blogs) to be read by larger numbers of people	Testimonies will likely tell of specific spaces and places, but could have relevance well beyond these sites; may be memorable for those who hear them	"That man did it, and this is what I saw"; "The sadness was unbearable"; "We travelled for days without seeing the sun"; "My mind was tortured by the sights and my own complicity"	Likely to be serious for the individual giving the testimony, but may be seen as trivial – because too personal – by others, or may strike a chord, and hence seem profound, for/to others	Emotional/psychotherapeutic geographies (Bondi, 2005), notably ones addressing the physical and mental health dimensions of lives experienced with pain, suffering, complex embodied conditions (Parr, 1999, 2008; Davidson, 2000; Davidson and Henderson, 2010)

<b>Lore</b>	Accounts, recounts, shared stories, fables, 'lessons'	The meaningful words that groups of people may relate to each other, perhaps 'storying' circumstances or 'debating' issues affecting themselves or others, serving the purpose of conveying shared accounts of what apparently 'matters' in a given time and place	Largely spoken face-to-face, but may involve one or more people addressing larger groupings; but possibly written in e-mails, etc., or in newspaper articles, or in locally-published quasi-publications	Fairly local, associated with particular localities; comments with repeated elements, maybe across generations, and hence remembered	"This is how we do things around here"; "People should respect the old ways"; "You know what those new-comers are like!"; "Trust depends upon demonstrating loyalty to the cause"	Seemingly trivial, maybe barely distinguishable from chatter, but actually serving to sediment/adjust prevailing senses of right/wrong (even what might be termed a local 'moral order')	Anthropologically-inflected, possibly humanistic, social /cultural geographies (Richardson, 1981; Jackson, 1985, 1987; Jackson and Smith, 1984; 1977, Ley, 1978), where attempts are made (in effect) to retrieve 'local knowledges' (after Geertz, 1973) as shared 'stores of meaning' for informing local actions
<b>Record</b>	Noting, documenting, reporting, archiving	The seemingly quite banal words recording, often in a self-consciously 'factual' manner and may also be list-like with numerical elements, events that have happened, phenomena that have been assembled, things that have been said	Perhaps spoken face-to-face, but mostly written down precisely as a matter of 'record' – in a report, a ledger, a set of minutes, a compendium, a newspaper article	Could be extra-local, as in the minutes of a local council meeting, or could be at scale of nation-state, as in a census return or a parliamentary inquiry; precisely recorded so as to have evidential value and temporal longevity	"On 5 <sup>th</sup> March, 1865, the asylum was formally opened"; "We found that 3,578 people inhabited the village"; "Mr Crudup reported that there was no grounds for re-opening the inquiry"; "The monarch declared the country at war"	Could span from the ostensibly trivial (noting details of limited interest or consequence) to the unequivocally serious (reporting on occurrences or proclamations of global significance)	Empiricist historical geography (e.g., chapters in Darby, 1936, 1962) using archival records to reconstruct past landscapes; but also historical/cultural geographies (Ogborn, 1998; Holloway, 2000) using archival or other records to reconstruct assemblages (technical, therapeutic, political) of one kind of another (a key feature of work on 'institutional geographies': Philo and Parr, 2000)

<b>Opinion</b>	Debate, dispute, argument, contention, ideology	The words (and sentences) elaborating what appear to be informed views or judgments, usually pronounced by 'authorities' recognised as possessing a role in the shaping of 'public opinion' (in another vocabulary, perhaps, 'ideology'), ostensibly on matters of social, economic, political import	May be spoken face-to-face or in spoken addresses, possibly reaching a large audience, but mostly written down in widely-available texts, from newspaper editorials to all manner of 'media-tised' documents (including popular and academic works)	Could be local, but more likely to be declarations that become networked and circulated quite widely, perhaps very widely, and hence becoming hard to ignore, having various effects, and acquiring temporal longevity	"There is no doubt that the economy has gone into recession"; "There is no doubt that the nuclear capacity is there, really, honest"; "The plight of unemployed young people has worsened"; "Sexual morality needs to be re-established"	The words here will be self-consciously serious, tackling matters conventionally regarded as of great moment for the 'nation', 'epoch' and so on; and often seeking, as 'opinion-forming' claims, to effect changes in the workings of the world	Cultural-geographical studies of popular culture, notably inquiries into the popular-geopolitical 'scripting' of the world (e.g., Sharp, 2000; Schlottman, 2005), but also historical-geographical studies of 'opinion' (e.g., Laurier and Philo, 2007) and of the sorts of contemporary debates shaping the likes of urban/social policy (e.g., Driver, 1988, 1993)
<b>Discourse</b>	Disquisition, 'essaying', bodies of expert knowledge	The words (and statements) cohering into relatively organised bodies of (what are taken as) highly informed 'expert' knowledges, emanating from individuals and agencies widely agreed as knowledgeable (but not 'ideological'), whose verdicts on matters of import are treated with more credence than mere 'opinion'	May be found in spoken addresses, but mostly written down in widely-available texts; quite possibly found in scholarly works of science and philosophy (and their many sub-divisions)	Statements, assembled as knowledges, that become networked and circulated widely, if perhaps only read in full by other 'experts' and by 'students' in institutes of advanced learning; maybe having effects, and clearly acquiring temporal longevity	"The statistics prove an inner-city clustering of deprivation"; "The data reveals unprecedented levels of anthropogenic climate change"; "Decolonisation proceeded apace, but certain institutions from the colonial era remained intact"	The words here will virtually always be self-consciously serious, addressing pressing intellectual questions (as posed within scholarly disciplines) and spreading out into wider society, shaping realms of medicine, law and public policy (possibly articulated there through the words of 'opinion')	Historical and social geographies of all kinds (e.g., Driver, 1990; Craddock, 2000; Philo, 2004, 2006; Legg, 2006) which map out the self-serious statements of sustained 'discourses' of given societies – exploring the geographies inhering <i>in</i> these statements – and often then tracing links through into the likes of grounded urban/social policy (fusing with attention to the effects of 'opinion')

or non-representationalism in contemporary human geography. This is not the place to offer an extended survey and critique: we simply note that the relevant ideas stem initially from Thrift, and what can be configured as his sustained battle against an envisaged tyranny of words in *what* 'we' (as academics) elect to study, in *how* we study and in *how* we report our findings.<sup>8</sup> In numerous publications, Thrift (e.g., 1997, 2000a, 2000b, 2005, 2008) assembled an impressive array of arguments demanding that we engage with the 'still point' – when representation stops or in respect of which representation just does not matter; when thought and words are stilled – which arguably lies at the beating heart of most (all?) human activities. Thus, when we dance, paint, craft a sculpture, play a sport, make love or walk, wave or put on a coat, the claim is that we are *not* functioning reflexively, knowingly or self-consciously with an implied chronology whereby, first, we 'think' (or speak to ourselves) the nature of the act to be undertaken before, second, we perform the act. If anything, so Paul Harrison (2000) emphasises, the chronological gap is the reverse, such that the act occurs and our apprehension of the act – our ability to word it to ourselves – is always racing to catch up, maybe only nano-seconds behind but always late. Far from being generative, thoughts-and-their-wordings are doomed to be secondary in the majority of practices occurring from one minute to the next, whether kissing, kicking or killing, prompting profound questions about why academics have spent so much time worrying about what we say as opposed to investigating what we do.

As such, then, Thrift and his co-travellers have long been battling *against* words, although there is inevitably more nuance in their position than this statement implies. Even so, Thrift's (2000a) agenda for NRT in human geography is unambiguously entitled 'Afterwords', envisaging a form of human geography *after words* and rejecting the apparent prominence of words, texts, meanings and discourses to the discipline's 'cultural turn' post the early-1990s. In questioning our 'over-wordy worlds' (Thrift, 1991), Thrift rehearses the need to prioritise practices and to resist the seductions of representation, not only in what academics research – always look for evidence *other* than mere words in the human-geographical situations under study! – but also when experimenting with less word-heavy ways of reporting our ideas, findings and recommendations. The message is that so little of what 'we' humans are and do is worded, at least not firstly or generatively, so that our efforts as geographers must look elsewhere for what matters, is decisive, might make a difference. Moreover, Thrift and J.D. Dewsbury (2000) effectively position as 'dead' much that has recently passed for human geography and social science, with

its cultural and textual obsessions, spending too much time in the company of words (both those of academics and those at large in the world). The inference is obvious: words are deadening, an irrelevance, a curious obstacle for getting at what *really* is the lodestone of humanity's compass.

There may be (rightful) objections to this blanket portrayal, and it should be admitted that Thrift (2000a: 223; emphasis in original) acknowledges how 'talk' might be ushered into an NRT frame: 'talk is responsive and rhetorical, *not* representational; it is there to do things'. Examples can also be adduced of NRT-inspired geographers showing remarkable sensitivity to words, such as David Bissell (2009, 2010) on how worded testimonies of chronic pain can be explored and utilised from an NRT perspective. Yet, in the more assertive statements of NRT - and in effect when pushed to logical limits - there is a risk of a problematic homogenising of *all* words, so that, polemically at least, all words tend to be regarded as overly-laden with cognitive reason. Indeed, they *all* risk becoming fixed as carriers of Reason (the capitalised first letter indicating the sense of a unitary, intentional agency); with all words, irrespective of their own immense variability, cast as the foot-soldiers of rational thought. For an NRT position pushed in *extremis*, words become the enemies of the irrational and its lively energies, appearing as the worker ants of a repressive cognitivism, necessarily imposing the strictures of Reason, order, truth and even morality on to the momentary events of 'resistance' (the latter being conceived as a quite alternative political 'order', after, say, Dewsbury [2008]).

To an extent, just such a binary between words and life can *also* be identified in the work of both Olsson and Foucault, with the latter often accused (e.g. Thrift, 2007) of over-stressing the discursive gridding of the world wherein the words of the 'elites' (or a dispersed 'police') end up programming (maybe curtailing, even confining) the worldly wiggle-room of the 'masses'. The Nietzschean construct of 'the prison-house of language', repeatedly invoked by Olsson, certainly remains a presence in Foucault's *oeuvre* (cf. Philo, 2012b), and these *are* terrains across which Foucault, Olsson and NRTists travel in roughly the same direction. These travellers eventually take their leave of one another, however, in that neither Olsson nor Foucault elects to abandon words, viewing them as hopelessly complicit with the side of Reason, order, dominating power and the like. Instead, they simply see words everywhere: words, statements and languages emitting as much from the darkened wastes of irrationality as from the Panopticon's enlightened rational galleries; words expressing 'other truths' ('other cognitions', 'other reason[ings]', 'other wor(l)ds'). The decisive gesture is not to get *after words*, then, but to be even more fully *with*

*words* of all types (defiantly *in* them, in their grain, attentive to their twists and turns, their dislocations and relocations). In so doing, with reference to **Table 2**, the challenge is remaining ever-alert to the words of chatter, testimony and lore, which arguably comprise a more pitted, warped and sheltering landscape than that of record, opinion and discourse, in whose words the tendency is often towards the straight lines/boundaries of categories, evaluations and recommendations (Cloke *et al.*, 2004, Chap.7). Our formulation here is designed as both a gentle critique of NRT, an appeal to keep words as welcome friends, and a segue into our final major section where we explore the ‘big words’ of (medicalised) reason, notably its opinions and discoursing, and *also* the ‘small words’ chattered by those deemed to be unreasonable, irrational and bereft of words that matter.

### **Therapeutic encounters: R.D. Laing and the wor(l)ds of ‘schizophrenese’**

Thinking seriously about the importance of words in human geography, their generative powers and therefore the work that they actually do in the world, can usefully be pursued through the example of the ‘therapeutic encounter’ (meaning a range of psychiatric and psychotherapeutic practices).<sup>9</sup> The crucial element in most such encounters is the relationship between therapist or client/patient, and it is in this realm where words, and the work that they do in the world, become of paramount importance.<sup>10</sup> In discussing what has become known as ‘narrative counselling’, centralising patient stories or narratives, Alette Willis (2009: 88) suggests that a patient’s words can be key to facilitating healing transformations. By closely reading Linda Hogan’s 2011 memoirs, entitled *The Woman Who Watches Over the World*, Willis shows what words can bring into the therapeutic exchange. For Hogan (2001: 56-57):

Language is an intimacy not only with others, but even with the self. It creates a person. Without it, in the dawn, in the dark of the night, there is no way to know who or what we are ... . One day the words came. I was an adult. I went to school after work. I read. I wrote. Words came, anchored to the earth, to matter, to the wholeness of nature. There was, in this, a fall, this time to a holy ground of a different order, a present magic, a light-bearing, soul-saving presence that illuminated my heart and mind and altered my destiny. Without it, who would guess what, as a human being, I might have become.

The task of the narrative counsellor is to help the client free themselves from extra-personal narratives – we might say opinions or, even, discourses – that dominate their lives, clearly limiting their possibilities for being-in-the-world. Drawing heavily on Foucault (especially 1979, 1980), White and Epston (1990) explore the dominating narratives that the client experiences at the inter-personal scale,

localising within themselves the 'normalising truths' of modern power/knowledges. These limiting stories about individuals discipline them into being 'docile bodies' that provide and promote modern power/knowledges, a Foucauldian portrayal that could equally well be rephrased in the Olssonian terms suggested earlier. Willis (2009, 88) notes that '[t]he revolutionary possibility of pain lies in rendering docile bodies into disruptive ones and one of the ways of amplifying this disruptive potential is through words'. Such words, emerging through what we might term the chatter (and occasionally the report) of the therapeutic encounter, need to be heard and treated respectfully, for only then might they be allowed to do 'disruptive' work snapping at the heels of opinion and discourse. There may also be much 'pain' in the process, a pain likely exceeding the words spoken (Harrison, 2007), but Willis implies that the pain cries out for wording, however inadequate such may be.

The intricate connections between different orders of words and different varieties of therapeutic practice can be further probed through an example from our own research, specifically by considering the early work of Scottish-born psychiatrist and psychotherapist Ronald David Laing (1921-1989) (McGeachan, 2010, 2013). With works such as *The Divided Self* (1960), *The Self and Others* (1961) and *Sanity, Madness and the Family* (1965), Laing became a globally renowned figure for views, albeit controversial, on mental ill-health. He explored the processes of going 'mad' through an existential-phenomenological approach, and sought to understand his (often schizophrenic) patients within the context of their own local, social and familial worlds. He was fascinated by language, particularly when commenting on the standard psychiatric approach to the speech (or 'psychotic communication') of patients diagnosed as schizophrenic. For Laing, most clinicians 'assumed that language was a non-distorting medium which served to reflect fairly accurately what an individual thought and felt' (Beveridge, 2011: 288), but he found such an assumption exceptionally problematic in the case of those deemed 'mentally ill'. He suggested that 'it is quite obvious that[,] if we judge schizophrenese [see below] from the standpoint of our sanity[,] we will find that it is a mass of absurdities, incongruities and so on' (in Beveridge, 2011: 288). In such circumstances, everyday lore, popular opinion and expert discourse commonly join forces in dismissing the words of mental patients as merely 'the ravings of a mad person', not worth a second hearing. Conversely, Laing's growing conviction was that, far from dismissing such words, they should be embraced. In order to (attempt to) understand the psychotic experience, he concluded, one must enter into the worlds of diagnosed schizophrenics through their own perspectives, hence taking seriously

their own (use of) words.

Laing offers two well-springs from which we draw inspiration.<sup>10</sup> First, his desire to challenge the dominant languages of 'madness' (the record, opinion and discourses of the 'sane') through paying close attention to the muttered languages of 'madness' (the chatter and testimony of those deemed 'insane') demonstrated Laing's engagement with words as lively 'things' in the flow of the world. Secondly, in the therapeutic encounter Laing attempted (creatively) to use the words that many others dismiss as incomprehensible gibberish, seeking thereby to access the patient's existence in the world and, in turn, to remain ever-alert to the connective sinews of words and worlds. We can now turn to two different examples: Laing's theoretical challenge to the 'big words of madness' through the figure of Emil Kraepelin; and an instance of Laing's own therapeutic attentiveness to the 'small words of madness' voiced by a patient named Julie.

#### *Challenging Kraepelin's epistemology*

In opening his first – and most critically acclaimed work – *The Divided Self*, Laing (1990: 18) conveyed the difficulty faced when working with certain types of words:

As a psychiatrist, I run into a major difficulty at the outset: how can I go straight to the patients if the psychiatric words at my disposal keep the patient at a distance from me? How can one demonstrate the general human relevance and significance of the patient's condition if the words one has to use are specifically designed to isolate and circumscribe the meaning of the patient's life to a particular clinical entity?

Laing felt strongly that the medical-psychiatric discourses of 'mental illness' framing how he should engage with patients in the therapeutic encounter tended to see 'man [*sic*] in isolation from the other and the world, that is, as an entity not *essentially* 'in relation to' the other and the world' (Laing, 1990: 19; emphasis in original). These discourses spoke of psychosis as a *failure* of adjustment, *mal*-adaption of some kind, *loss* of contact with reality and *lack* of insight, all of which 'implies a certain standard way of being human to which the psychotic cannot measure up' (Laing, 1990: 27). Laing objected that such discourses did not accurately capture the nature of a patient's experience of his/her self and world, proposing instead that behaviour, including speech, should not be quarried for signs and symptoms of a 'disease' but rather understood as an expression of that patient's everyday existence. Through his existential-phenomenological approach, Laing was drawn to consider the mundane realities of immediate, situated existence, demanding detailed consideration of how a patient is feeling, speaking, acting and relating their existence in response to the

particular situation (context, place and moment) where they find themselves. In this respect, Laing may be cast as a decidedly 'geographical' thinker and practitioner (McGeachan, 2010, 2013).

One case that Laing used to demonstrate his unease with standard medical-psychiatric discourses was the classical account of a catatonic patient given by Kraepelin, as discussed in the opening chapters of *The Divided Self* (see **Figure 1**).<sup>11</sup> Kraepelin brought an eighteen-year-old male patient into a lecture hall to show his students the 'signs' of catatonic excitement:

The patient I will show you today [said Kraepelin] has almost to be carried into the rooms, as he walks in a straddling fashion on the outside of his feet ... . The patient sits with his eyes shut, and pays no attention to his surroundings. He does not look up even when he is spoken to, but he answers beginning in a low voice, and gradually screaming louder and louder. When asked where he is, he says, 'You want to know that too? I tell you who is being measured and is measured and shall be measured. I know all that, and could tell you, but I do not want to.' When asked his name, he screams, 'What is your name? What does he shut? He shuts his eyes. What does he hear? He does not understand; he understands not ... You understand nothing at all, nothing at all; nothing at all does he understand. If you follow now, he won't follow, will not follow. Are you getting still more impudent? Are you getting impudent still more? How they attend, they do attend,' and so on. At the end, he scolds in quite inarticulate sounds. (in Laing, 1990: 29-30)

Kraepelin continued to question the boy, interrogating him before the students and clearly regarding his behaviour – through the 'signs' that he was displaying – as inaccessible. In this way, Kraepelin starkly reinforced the already implanted notion that the boy was displaying the 'symptoms' of a disease: 'Although he undoubtedly understood all the questions, he has not given us a single piece of useful information. His talk was ... only a series of disconnected sentences having no relation whatever to the general situation' (in Laing, 1990: 30). Laing argued that how Kraepelin viewed this patient's behaviour was dependent upon the relationship that the boy had (or had not) formed with him, the doctor. By contrast, Laing insisted that to look at and listen to this boy as a *patient*, immediately predisposing the doctor to detect 'signs' of a 'disease' such as schizophrenia, and to look and listen to him as a *human being* were, without doubt, to see him and hear his words in radically different ways (Laing, 1990: 33).

Perhaps, Laing countered, the reactions of Kraepelin's patient to the words addressed to him could be related to the situation where he was placed. Being

Figure 1: Laing's words: handwritten notes on Krapelin<sup>12</sup>

Source: Glasgow University Library Special Collections MS Laing A260. *Notes on depression and mania*, c. 1960. Copyright of the image is vested in the R.D. Laing Estate.

When he pins her and wont let her go she starts to cry, ~~but~~ and she stops when he lets go, a fact he notes with interest, as also he notes her senseless resistance to him, and her persistent obstinacy.

He concludes that she is suffering from a disease which is causing disorders affecting, her movements, her thinking, her feelings, ("a certain fear exists but it can scarcely be very active"); which is probably - almost certainly due to something the matter with her brain, altho' he cannot say definitely what this can be, he is pretty sure that there ~~was~~ must be something wrong in it somehow or other.

Later, he gets an 18 year old boy in to demonstrate, who is probably rather intelligent as he is a pupil at an Oberreal school. (higher grade modern-side school). His approach here is substantially the same. He starts asking him questions. The boy, sitting with his eyes shut at first ~~begins to answer~~, in a low voice, but ~~gradually begins to scream~~, when he is asked where he is, he screams ~~↳~~ He does not look up at seq.

displayed to a room full of strangers, to be asked many questions that appeared to have nothing to do with his ongoing mental 'pain', was in all likelihood a distressing experience. Laing was in no doubt that, had Kraepelin taken time to heed the boy's chatter about the tyranny of being 'measured', the doctor's analysis would have been considerably different: 'What does this patient seem to be doing? Surely he is carrying on a dialogue between his own parodied version of Kraepelin and his own defiant rebelling self ... . This seems plain enough talk' (Laing, 1990: 30). For Laing, this plain 'talk', not mere ranting, must be addressed with reference to the speaker's intention and within the context of his own world: 'What is the boy's experience of Kraepelin? He seems tormented and desperate. What is he 'about' in speaking and acting in this way? He is objecting to being measured and tested. He wants to be heard' (Laing, 1990: 30).

The gauntlet thrown down to Kraepelin's epistemology stemmed from the desire to forge a genuine therapeutic relationship with patients. Laing believed that it was only by changing how psychiatrists view their patients – through looking and listening; by being alert to the situational dynamics of patients' own words and worlds, including those arising in encounters with psychiatrists – that any form of understanding could be fostered. Laing thus employed a 'humanist paradigm' wherein the therapist ceases to be a scientist deducing the causes underpinning the 'signs' and 'symptoms' demonstrated by the patient, since such hypotheses almost always profoundly mis-regard the patient's words. Instead, 'the therapist [becomes] an exegete, making sense of a puzzling and baffling text by drawing upon the possibilities of being which he [or she] shares with the patient' (Miller, 2004: 43; also Miller, 2008). For Laing (1990: 20), judging the schizophrenic individual by the categories compiled and conveyed by the 'sane', in which case they inevitably fall short, was fundamentally unhelpful for *both* individuals involved in the therapeutic encounter; not least because 'we have already shattered Humpty Dumpty who cannot be put together again by any number of hyphenated or compound words: psycho-physical, psycho-somatic, psycho-biological, psycho-pathological, psycho-social, etc.'. Rather, Laing (1990: 38) supposed that '[w]e have to recognise all the time his [or her] distinctiveness and differentness, his [her] separateness and loneliness and despair', by taking the time both to 'hear' properly the otherwise 'silenced' words of the 'mad' and, importantly, to reach out and attempt to converse back. The work of such words, as windows on but also actants in patient worlds, was to be foregrounded, not dismissed.

*The case of the 'ghost of the weed garden'*

Laing's attentiveness to the different kinds of words whispered, spat, muttered and screamed by his patients can be explored through the case of Julie, a female patient who Laing encountered during his time spent working as a psychiatrist in the refractory wards at Gartnavel Royal Hospital in Glasgow, and she became the concluding and perhaps pivotal case of *The Divided Self* (a full case description appears in Laing, 1990: 178-205). The case is one of Laing's most famous and has attracted substantial critical attention (e.g., Mitchell, 1974: 261-267; Howarth-Williams, 1977; Beveridge, 2011: 238-248), with Laing himself claiming that his account of Julie was what gave the book its heart (Mullan, 1995: 266). We dwell here not on the specifics of Julie's case, but rather examine Laing's empathetic and creative ways of working *with, on* and *through* Julie's words during the therapeutic encounter.

When Laing encountered Julie in the overcrowded refractory wards of Gartnavel in 1954, she had been a patient for over nine years, since she was seventeen years old. Diagnosed as schizophrenic, Laing spent considerable time with her, conducting over 180 interviews in an attempt to enter into her closed worlds (Beveridge, 2011: 238). These interviews, together with Laing's interpretative comments, comprise a mixture of what we term testimony and record. Laing (1990: 178) noted that Julie was mostly mute but added that, when she did speak, it was with the most 'deteriorated' 'schizophrenese'; and it was upon this seemingly demented chatter that he trained his attention. He was convinced that Julie's speech should not be dismissed as nonsensical, but taken as meaningful if considered within the context of her own worlds. He recorded some of the complexities of entering into dialogue with Julie:

Even when one felt that what was being said was an expression of someone, the fragment of a self behind the words or actions was not Julie. There might be someone addressing us, but in listening to a schizophrenic, it is very difficult to know 'who' is talking, and it is just as difficult to know 'whom' one is addressing. (Laing, 1990: 195)

One example of such difficulty was demonstrated when Julie said:

You've got to want this child. You've got to make her welcome ... you've got to take care of this girl. I'm a good girl. She's my little sister. You've got to take her to the lavatory. She's my little sister. She doesn't know about these things. That's not an impossible child (quoted in Laing, 1990: 202).

Although these words were spoken by Julie herself, Laing (1990: 196) argued that 'her 'word salad' seemed to be a result of a number of quasi-autonomous partial

systems striving to give expression to themselves out of the same mouth at the same time'. This complexity was further heightened because, when Julie did start to articulate words to Laing that were her 'own', the particular 'self' that was disclosed then appeared almost completely psychotic – and yet still he felt that these words were of such meaningful value that they could (and should) not be ignored. In repeating some of her utterances, admittedly the more coherent ones, he sought to decode her words as testimony about her existential position in the world.

Julie called herself 'Mrs Taylor', which Laing (1990: 192) interpreted as meaning, 'I'm tailor-made' ... I'm a tailored maid; I was made, fed, clothed, and tailored', as he felt that much of what she said was a rich mix of illuminating puns, metaphors and double entendres. She could often be anyone – 'I'm Rita Hayworth, I'm Joan Blandell. I'm a Royal Queen. My royal name is Julianne' – but also no-one – 'I'm thousands. I'm an in divide you all. I'm a no un' (quoted in Laing, 1990: 203-204). Laing (1990: 204-205) reported that the image of being born under a 'black sun' recurred throughout her chatter, and he went on to discuss this aspect further [Julie's words in bold]:

She was 'an occidental sun', i.e. an accidental son whom her mother out of hate had turned into a girl. The rays of the black sun scorched and shrivelled her. Under the black sun she existed as a dead thing. Thus,

**I'm the prairie.  
She's a ruined city.**

The only living things in the prairie were wild beasts. Rats infested that ruined city. Her existence was depicted in images of utterly barren, arid desolation. This existential death, this death-in-life was her prevailing mode of being-in-the-world.

**She's the ghost of the weed garden.**

Hearing Julie's language in this manner, as an expression of how she experienced her being-in-her-world, is certainly not beyond critique and in many ways depends upon whether, like Miller (2004: 246), Laing is regarded as 'a reliable hermeneutic guide'.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, his desire not only to attend faithfully to Julie's words as relayed to him in the noisy office spaces of an overcrowded mental institution, but also to treat them seriously as meaningful aspects of her world, is instructive when thinking about the connective tissues between worlds and words.

Both of these examples show Laing's dedication to be more firmly attuned *with words*, embedded within their very texture, following their twisty pathways and

thinking carefully about the meeting points between different orders of words and their worldly consequences. By turning away from the 'big words' of psychiatric discourse, Laing ultimately exposed their significance in the 'placing' of individuals experiencing mental ill-health, notably institutional-clinical settings but also in therapeutic encounters more or less prepared to work with a patient's own wordings (Wolch and Philo, 2000; Parr, 2008). His simultaneous attentiveness to working on, with and through the 'small words' of the individuals themselves, and to discerning and describing their meaningfulness, resonates strongly with some of the moves discussed previously (Willis, 2009). In a passage of peculiar pertinence for our present chapter, from Laing's unpublished notes,<sup>14</sup> he (1959, no pagination) made this observation:

Many patients feel very often, therefore, that the words they use are not their own. They are everyone's property. They may even feel that the words are strangers to them and therefore that they are in a sense persecuted by words, so they attack their own words by splitting them up and so on, or they invent words which come as far as possible to have meaning which they alone understand, and in that sense achieve in language something private. One must understand here that the schizophrenic is suffering from no organic failure to be able to use words in the usual way, but they are using words quite intentionally in a different way from the way we do. They are using words to convey to others that their words have a private, secret meaning, rather than to communicate in terms of shared sounds and meanings of sounds.

There are many colours of 'mad words', then, and they do many different varieties of 'mad work' (Laws, 2012). If this conclusion speaks directly to the study of mental health geographies, it also serves to advance claims about both the 'official' and the 'secret' lives of words – a notion that will now feature in our final conclusions.

### **Conclusions: lively, naughty words**

Really enjoying the talks so far. This morning had Miles talking about Norbert Elias. With all that snot and farting, it's like an academic version of Ben Elton [UK stand-up comedian]. (Crang, 1991: 176).

The words passing at the 1991 Conference struck Crang as often 'too polite', as if there was a certain moral regulation emerging around what could and could not be spoken when setting 'new words' for future disciplinary agendas. Hence, 'Norbert, Miles and nose-blowing in the eighteenth century provide[d] controlled relief' (Crang, 1991: 176). 'Miles' here is Miles Ogborn, an historical geographer whose sustained attention to the words of the historical record is a major influence on our

thinking here, not least when suggesting that, '[i]t is possible to imagine a complex historical geography of the changing ecology of speech, manuscript and print' (Ogborn, 2010: 30). 'Norbert' here is Norbert Elias, renowned historical sociologist, the scholar who Ogborn introduced as a potential source of new concepts/words to stir into a revisioned human geography. Alongside other dimensions of Elias's work on 'the civilising process' in European history (Elias, 1982a, 1982b), Ogborn had discussed Elias's patient reading of early-modern 'books of manners, the etiquette books which were the very instruments of the fashioning of behaviour which he is concerned to describe' (Ogborn, 1991: 79). From this mass of words, Elias discerned a major transformation comprising a mannerly narrowing of what it might be appropriate or inappropriate conduct – so that nose-picking, passing wind and the like started to be 'ruled out of court' (where the word 'court' acquires peculiar salience) – and he regarded this narrowing as fundamental to the *longue durée* of the (re-)fashioning of the self. In the written version of his spoken paper Ogborn (1991: 84) signals how such materials could anticipate further inquiries into (nothing less than) 'the time-space constitution of modernity and the construction of the self'.<sup>15</sup> These etiquette books possessed their own geographies: their own locales of production, circulation and application, notably in and around 'courtly spaces' (and '[t]he *locus classicus* of Elias's work is the French absolutist court': Ogborn, 1991: 80). But they were also themselves generative of particular geographies of words: 'For example, certain phrases or ways of speaking are *good* simply because they are used at court' (Ogborn, 1991: 80; emphasis in original). Here, then, we have a mini-case study exemplifying the simple message of this chapter: that words are intimately connected to worlds, that words do things in history, that they have their own geographies which are far from incidental to their impact in/on historical-social change, and that they ought to be centralised as such, not marginalised, in our studies.

It might be added that Elias's so-called 'civilising process' has undoubtedly been implicated in the progressive identification of what is deemed reasonable and, conversely, unreasonable in human speech-and-action. This march of manners has transparently hooked into the emergence of expert discourses about what defines not merely good and bad conduct, but also the designation of 'reasonable' (we might say 'sane') and 'unreasonable' (we might say 'insane') modes of being-in-the-world. Many of the bodily dispositions progressively 'ruled out of court' – including, of course, unruly ways of speaking – have become identifiers of individuals who might end up being 'ruled into the asylum'. It is thus telling to hear the countless words of

experts, spread across psychiatric textbooks, older and more recent, which record such dispositions as unequivocal 'signs' and 'symptoms' of mental disorder (e.g. Page, 2004). The link to various claims above should be obvious, notably when considering Laing's rejection of standard medical-psychiatric framings in favour of attending to the jumbled words of 'schizophrenese', emanating from those seemingly disqualified from a presence in the hallways of civilised modernity. This is also a return to Foucault's unearthing of words from the records of internment that retell something of how 'power', in the shape of sovereign, police and bureaucrats, latched on to 'the miniscule history of these existences', these lives on the margins, 'their misfortunes, their wildness, or their dubious madness' (Foucault, 2002: 159). Resounding through these words, but in a sense also performed precisely *in* and *by* these words, is 'the sound of the discourse that delivered variations of behaviour, shames and secrets into the grip of power' (Foucault, 2002: 169). On the horizon too are Foucault's better-known formulations of discourse as 'monument' – the material presence of those 'stone-smooth words' which, in principle, should be excavated from history with the patience of the field-archaeologist (Foucault, 1972) – and as an irreducible ontological level in the play of history, itself striated by countless combats as 'bellicose' as any wars waged between bloodied bodies (Philo, 2007). A connection can also be made with arguments about Foucault's sustained interest in the discursive injunctions of the powerful against 'vital' eruptions from the powerless (Philo, 2012d), whose own counter-wordings of the world can, just occasionally, still be heard in the 'unending hum' of history.

In a sense, this is to arrive at a specific conclusion about only certain orders of words, those entrained in and constitutive of the combats just mentioned. What really matters for this chapter, however, are the more generalisable claims to be reached about words and the work that they do – and that they cannot but be doing – at the heart of the world's human geographies. So, in closing, let us once again stress that we do not see words as 'deadening', as against life, as might be implied from an extreme NRT stance. Rather, we wish to see them as themselves lively, not only when they emerge from the mouths and pens of the 'undisciplined' (those perhaps widely deemed unreasonable, wild and 'mad'), but even as they career around the opinions and discourses of the most 'disciplined' (including elites and experts of all kinds). Although we freely admit the pitfalls of putting things like this – while also asserting something deadly serious in such an apparently frivolous finish to our chapter – we do like to ponder notions such as words having 'lives' of their own, being promiscuous as they race around our speech and texts, as they develop

dangerous liaisons with their brethren in all manner of books, reports and memos co-habiting in real or virtual libraries, and as they snort, fart and generally make a nuisance of themselves (even in the politest of documents).

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### Notes

1. Foucault envisaged a whole series of volumes collectively to be called *Parallel Lives* – this one was to be called *Lives of Infamous Men* – but it is probable that nothing concrete ever materialised (Elden, 1998).
2. Throughout these paper we shift between talking of ‘the world’, as the singular planet that ‘we’ (humans and non-humans) inhabit, and ‘worlds’, as the plural, multiple domains of being and doing (spatially and temporally circumscribed in a variety of ways) where ‘we’ (humans and non-humans) find ourselves.
3. We are acutely aware of skating on thin ice, neglecting the depths relevant to the issues of which we are speaking: meaning everything from the physicality of ‘voicing’ and the cognitive sciences of thought-and-speech, through to the complexities of Saussurian structural linguistics and then the Wittgensteinian philosophy and sociology of ‘ordinary language’ communities – in sum, much that arguably *ought* to be worded in a chapter on words.
4. Neither is it about the methodologies of dealing with words in a human-geographical study: it is not about how to record words (e.g. in interviews) or how to transcribe them, ‘code’ them, ascertain patterns or regularities, disclose meanings or sentiments, and so on; and hence it has nothing to say about, for instance, ‘contents analysis’, ‘conversation analysis’, ‘discourse analysis’, ‘semiotic analysis’ or any other formalised techniques of treating words. Such matters are crucial to the expanding qualitative methods toolbox of human geography (e.g., Cloke *et al.*, 2004, Chaps.2-4 and 10), but remain to one side here.
5. Spoken words (shouted, orated, whispered, muttered) as part of ‘soundscapes’ (Smith, 1994) or ‘sonic geographies’ (Gallagher & Prior, 2013) could perhaps repay further reflection.
6. Habermas’s deployment of the term ‘opinion’ is a big influence on the decision here to use the term: our description of ‘opinion’ hence has Habermas’s theorising and empirical borrowings in mind. See also Withers (1999).
7. We do not mean the subfield sometimes known as ‘linguistic/dialect geography’ or even geolinguistics’, as in the study of the geographies – distributions, place associations, spaces of speaking – of languages (English, Gaelic, Swahili, etc.), dialects and idioms, etc., albeit such work is highly significant and clearly would intersect with the vision here for an enlarged ‘geography of words’ (for instance, Pred’s [e.g. 1990] structurationist-inspired work on ‘names and places’ centrally hinges on how he deals with the specificities of the Swedish language). For an introduction to such matters, alert to *both* geolinguistics *and* other aspects of geographers’ interest in language (Olsson’s ‘linguistic geometry’ included), see Withers (2000).
8. The paragraphs here are borrowed, considerably adapted, from Philo (2011).
9. There is an emerging interest in ‘psychotherapeutic geographies’, which can attend to the following: the spaces (places, locations, environments) within which different

versions of psychotherapy, past and present, have been enacted; the 'spatialities' of the therapeutic encounter, as played out with(in) specific micro-spaces (rooms, clinics, couches) and as relationally negotiated between the 'bodies' there present; the 'spatialised' vocabularies which often permeate the words deployed in such encounters, as well as in the training of psychotherapists; and how all of these elements, together with aspects of psychotherapeutic theory, can rebound into the concepts and methods of human geography. See Bondi (2005, 2009, 2012; Bondi and Fewell, 2003)

10. It is important to stress that, although words in these processes are significant, they are not the only dimension. In many respects, these 'other' aspects of therapy are picked up most strongly by geographers engaging with psychoanalytic theory and practice; indeed, although psychoanalysis is often dubbed the 'talking cure', it centres more profoundly on aspects such as unconscious drives and mechanisms that have interesting correlations with some of the issues raised by NRT (Pile, 2012).
11. Laing is now becoming a co-travelling companion in geographical enquiry, particularly through his conceptualisation of 'ontological insecurity', as demonstrated at the 2012 RGS-IBG Conference (see Philo, 2012c; also Bondi, 2012; McGeachan 2012; Waite and Valentine, 2012).
11. Kraepelin was a German psychiatrist, famous for the formulation and demarcation of two disease concepts, *dementia praecox* (schizophrenia) and manic-depressive psychosis (bi-polar disease). For a portrait of his life and work, see Decker (2004). For many training psychiatrists throughout the last century, the Kraepelian model was highly influential, passing across different spaces and times through textbooks and repeated in lectures, showing the power of discourses (the circulated words of expert authorities).
12. This extract is taken from notes for *The Divided Self* (Laing, 1960) made by Laing during his time at the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations. The case history discussed at the beginning refers to Kraepelin's lecture on 'Katatonic Stupor' which appeared in his *Lectures on Clinical Psychiatry* (Kraepelin, 1913). Laing later used this example in *The Politics of Experience* (Laing, 1967) to highlight his belief in the inhumanity of certain approaches to patients. The case described towards the end of the document shows the beginnings of Laing's engagement with the case described in *The Divided Self*, demonstrating his desire to challenge mainstream psychiatry, through Kraepelin, on the subject of schizophrenia.
13. Intriguingly, Laing critiques Binswanger's famous patient case study of Ellen West for burying Ellen under 'a rubble of words', and the same critique could be applied to Laing here in his projection on to Julie (see also Beveridge, 2011: 238-248).
14. This passage, along with some notes on the 'geometry' of space in mental hospitals (Laing really was a geographer!), did not make the final cut which was the published version of *The Divided Self* (Laing, 1960/1990).
15. In passing, we might note the remarkable prescience and insight of Ogborn's essay here, and how it prefigured his own contributions to exploring just such grand themes, yet always attentive to the most detailed of substantive evidence (eg. Ogborn, 1998).

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