The Aesthetics of Everyday Life: The Poetics of Frank O'Hara, Barbara Guest and Lyn Hejinian

& Belonging is a Prolonged Thirst

Fangyuan (Olive) Zhong

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Abstract

This thesis examines the rising demand for attention to everyday life in the United States in the post 1945 period. It explores this phenomenon by analysing the work of three poets: Frank O'Hara, Barbara Guest, and Lyn Hejinian. It is comprised of two parts: the creative collection entitled *Belonging is a Prolonged Thirst* and the critical research. This collection reveals that the search for belonging is an important element of every life due to alienation and provides different perspectives of understanding and creating belonging in both reality and poetry. The research on the three poets' poetics and the philosophers' everyday theories has expanded the meaning and expression of belonging. In other words, this collection is an integration of poetic practice, theoretical investigation, personal reflection and emotional evolution as a poet, a researcher and an individual. The critical research introduces the social, cultural, political and aesthetic circumstances to contextualise the growing attention to daily life and to reveal the perilous ramification of alienation or non-belonging. Due to the close interrelation between philosophical theories and poetic experiments of everyday life, this thesis investigates these two streams in tandem so as to more fully understand the everyday. It draws attention to everyday theories of Henri Lefebvre, Guy Debord, John Dewey, and Ludwig Wittgenstein to reveal the diversity and possibility of reconsidering the everyday through the work of O'Hara, Guest, and Hejinian. These three poets transform the familiar yet unknown everyday through a multiplicity of innovative strategies and poetics that reflects the four mentioned theorists' understanding of the quotidian. It also articulates how these poetic strategies mitigate alienation and create reconnection for them to re-belong in the everyday. By exploring theories of the everyday and creative strategies of reconstructing daily experience in poetry, this thesis illustrates the urgency and significance of the reassessment of the everyday through poetry. In addition, it also demonstrates the vast

possibility of reviewing and re-experiencing the quotidian from a diversity of poetic strategies.

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Belonging is a Prolonged Thirst



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https://briefencounters-journal.co.uk/article/id/194/?fbclid=IwY2xjawGbFnpleHRuA2FlbQIxMQABHZ9F9ZyOmg-ln7YLVQ2ibxO95sAp5CL-La4R2sBLfMRtMR4ObWdQLSIBOw_aem_b036VzQgP6Z9EkjDYKmmLA

https://magiquepublishing.wordpress.com/darkly-beautiful/

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I had two desires: desire

to be safe and desire to feel.

— Louise Gluck *Vita Nova*

Wind Carries a Language Across

The leaking roof
Of an ill-looking shelter.

Its door is a cracked tooth
Looking like a pain in a remote shade.

In the front, a malnourished girl munches
On a parched apple. The girl and the apple. Unripe.

The wind casts a grey-shaped autobiography
In a ripe language

Narrating something indecipherable
Yet familiar like your own name.

The Longest Bike Ride in Town

Your office table is engraved
With accumulative banters.
Coffee steam congeals

Around a chilled outline of a redundancy speech
In which words smell like the particulars
Of the certainty of a pause

And the possibility of
Of suspended continuity. You are pedalling
On the edge of a deformed landscape

To a rented room.
It lacks the metaphor of a home and ears.
Saturated silence drizzles

Across the terrain of
Weeping. Moon-
Light doesn’t lighten.

Dawn is down.
You are dis-
Placed without waking up.

Dialogues With a Mirror

I
You've seen me climb a scaffolding up down up

Down… nimble like a monkey jumping among naked trees in autumn.

I know what you wanna say. It's okay. I'm not too old for this work.

Bills arrive as punctually as tomorrow.

II
As I told you before

My love stories are nettles.

They stung my youth and prickled the flesh of my continuity.

III
My evergreen hope kicks me to walk forward

When the red light is on at an intersection.

IV
I have a snake-like scar on my forehead. Your said don't blame Sara, as

She was holding the knife, and you were holding her hand.

V
If a rumour is porous, truth will come through.

You blindfold yourself, waiting to see the fact.

As I said you are aging, not maturing.

Eviction Notice

A stray and elastic meow. A mute shadow.
And a pallid house. It was full
Of home in the moon-lit past.

In the current mottled time,
the virgin loneliness
Becalmed on a barbed wire fence.

A dim voice is stretched thin
Like a soaked match
Like a fishless stream running

Through the hair of reality. Appeals
Paled. A driveway
Cold as a speech on worn lips.

Stillness is dislocated.
Continuing. Locating is
Wind with a cane.

It is Night All Day

stars wake up from soil
rising through potently grey air

peeling the last strip of warmth
off the red brick wall

while the sun pliantly limps
along the trajectory of the plump shades

night nibbles on the radiance
of fireflies and connotative dawn

leaving the 25th hour
sit on a cactus, motionless

The Plurality of the Moon

∞

The word, moon, is a connotative image.
This image is an affective poem.
The poem has elastic lines.

∞

The moon is the face of a name
Having a song in its dimples.
The dimples ripple like the fragrance of belonging.

∞

The shooting stars are the moonlight.
They are falling like a dream
In a closed eye.

∞

The moon of last night is under water.
The disorientated stars around it become axolotls on land
Their parched voice for water is snapped.

∞

The undertone of the wrinkled page
The weather of the penultimate verse
Arise from the spine of the moon, blooming.

Upside Down

Stars are the sparkling flowers
in the sky

Flowers are scented stars
on the earth

A singular bird flies
Sideways, paralleling

Between the freckles of the moon and
the anticlockwise orange of a robin.

a screech
in mid air

a pause
in babble

a car
up

a name
away

Waiting in Mid-air, in War

Spiderly haze deepens like doom.
Blood trickles and boisterously blossoms.

The only flower in six-dimensioned shadows.
Its freshness permeates

In the mute green
Of a summer's eye.

Ripples are fluid scars.
Dawn and imagination are in a coop.

The clock hands and the news
are cumulatively cold and motionless.

The present loses its compass,
The elasticity of waiting is scenic and public.

Inverted Continuity

crumbled particulars of confusion
tumble, tick, and trail along
clockwise

the cadence of clarity is
a secret face turning around
anticlockwise

before they meet
the voidness has blunt teeth

nibbling cured moments
in the furrows of the past

when they meet
the air is full of punctures

and a tinge of tartness.
the reddish remarks are

as naked as synaesthesia
and as conservative as December.

after a bony glance
they continue.

Ing

the sonnet of air
written from the right to the left
is in plural heat

the straight light of the last line
squiggles to
the verse of petals

the dappled meaning left
on the verdant page
spreads like dominos in the shape of a sunflower

looking at the sun
the sense of be-
longings tangled

in the flush of the moon
the face of soil
and the diagonal past

in rich absence
in penetrating dark
is an eloquent eye

Disorientation

Roads inch to curlicues
And to an unresolved riddle.

I stand in front a façade. It is like a decisive glory
Rising in a golden volume

In infinite city lighting
In mature continuity

In which my eyes are a bell
With a timid voice:

belonging is a
Leafy palimpsest.

Below my left eye is
A loud and long dimple, rimming with

27 alphabets and
The irregularity of formality

Visualising Belonging

I

Liberating is a misplaced hour, squirming
Out of the cocoon of fog. A squirm
Is an eloquent move and claim.

II

A slab of skewed river
Hoards the slim evergreen moonlight
To re-recognise itself, maybe shelves.

III

The fragrance of a temple bell
Becomes a kaleidoscope in circulation and
In Repetition. Untrammelled.

IV

Hyphen is a word collagist.
It creates new visions and versions of belonging
Leaving the re-definition ajar.

V

Each wrinkle is a city.
It does not need a name.
Only autobiography and sensation.

An Ambivalent Surrender

her eye has

a bone in it

words are quieter

than timid scent

of silence

of shade-in-shade

no place to rest weariness

and paradox

the aftertaste of

a sting

inside

thickening repeating

despair

has a thousand fangs

yet a single soft tongue

pain circles

afresh

a meek rope and branch

cannot hold the weight

of her ordeal

told

untold

routines continue

disjointed

A Path Has no Tense

The insipid contour of the same weather
Is certain as mundanity and
Clear as muffled sounds

The regularity of clock ticking
Chafes the breath
Of seven moons

The sun was long beheaded
The eighth moon continues
In a mobile coma

A winter is profoundly
Full and naked
In a bowl

Overflowing with
Chipped chirps which
Diffuse

Into a moment when
The noon and water
Snap

Dead Dead from Honeymoon

Straightway you
Undergo the skull of a fox terrier

The wicker-basket full
Of crops presses on

Your back like a drenched mountain
Your head is bent on the ground

The taste of a blow of his fist is a muzzle
Across your breeze-shaped voice

You become a prisoner
At a home of no temperature and seasons

Of sharp emptiness
You are a red-seeded dandelion

Without wings
In closed wind

Full stop is tattooed
In the eye

In the vein of breath
Repeats like a voracious noose

Vision and calendar
Fracture with the continuity of bruises

You are pirouetting on flames
And into pellucid and serrated dooms

Digging your own
Grave is a prolonged poem

Written in the fullness
Of non-existence

Capricious Balance

The sweet moon
Arises from the whistles of words

While the descending sun
Meditating the words of whistles

The moment of exquisite
Equilibrium:

Half belonging
Is a poem made of open rivers

And collage.
Is a free verse on windmills

Half belonging
Is the concrete comfort

And the clean monotony,
Is the pellucid silhouette of sound sleep.

Half belonging
Is the shape of cloud.

Half belonging
Is the warm net the clock hands weave.

Half belonging
Is to stray.

Half non-belonging
Is to stay.

Belonging in Couplets

●

A bookmark of nights with succulent yesterdays

Is in the absence of visible page numbers

○

A familiar name flips the definition

And familiarity of rotation and denotation

●

A porous poem was born in the moist voice

Of an aimless compass and delicious insomnia

○

Clean clinginess and songs in the fixed water of the present,

In the volatile and radiant past and in the mirage of the future

●

In the city of fruity memories, there are diluted shadows

Of his profound profile and scented initials

○

In soft unity, there is poem-like estranged closeness

Where an anonymous belonging lies under the whistle of a calla lily

●

The taunt timeline breaks loose into the flush of a lemon,

Into muzzled vision and air and into a trail of a fractured song

○

In the sparks of a rhythm

There is the shyness of lunar moisture, shining like a haiku

●

Remote and brewing longing on the eclipse's spine is made

Of deserted chlorophyll and a monochromatic aurora

o

His name is a rhyming landscape; is a collage made

Of evergreen dawn and punctual nostalgias; is a panorama of Haiku

●

The voice of no pulses, hums through rugged sleepiness

Through a cracked gaze and through collected loss

○

Clocks are a blur, traversing the landscape

Like a current of authentic delusion; like the concentric real

●

Eyes suffer the void of passion, lament, and organic attachment.

And memory arises like fallen stanzas from a dagger; like the crumbs of a collage.

○

The echoes of gardenia in the poem

Are ripening like a stillborn dawn

●

Ripples of reality and smokes of eternal mirage

Rest on a hesitating green

○

The wilted song of waterwheels is in a poised spiderweb

Spreading the sonorous past of the next sun

●

A poem wheels through my eyes

Its furrows are the footprints of my vision

○

Longing has peppercorns in it, shuffling through the barren fullness

And nettles and murky alphabets

The Lawn Mower

The lawn mower chews the flesh

Of the grass and the depth

Of tender memories

In which the timeline is bent.

The lawn mower licks the veins

Of smudged footprints and the root of stones.

It trims and reshapes the contour

Of the present and the weather.

The lawn mower picks at the scab

Of the soil and time. The stings

From the recollections return

Like sun glare in the left eye of reality.

The lawn mower, a ruminative time eater,

Moans and coughs a sonorous story

With nettles in it. It zigzags in asymmetric rhyme

And regular routes with a single twist when it returns.

‘You remember that old town we went to, and we sat in the ruined window, and we tried to imagine that we belonged to those times—It is dead and it is not dead, and you cannot imagine either its life or its death; the earth speaks and the salamander speaks, the Spring comes and only obscures it—’

— George Oppen ‘Of Being Numerous’ in New Collected Poems

The Overweight Reality

The rented room cannot hold the weight
Of tendril-like purrs and the vision of security

Retinas are dipped in ripe grey
They swim in a home-shaped mirage

Which curdles at sunrise. There
Are wakeful longings that embedded in elasticated emptiness

In closed figments and free verses.
An open circle of meows cannot be completed.

A voice full of burning barks
That jarred the radiance and orientation of Orion

Is brushed aside by the dense coldness
Of paperwork with a disdainful grin.

Adoption form is filled in with self-shame.
A cat with a mineral sound

Is chasing a shooting star.
No wishes are made under another moon.

A Poem –

a memory of tomorrow

– sifts through

the stars which are limpid as the eyes of a dead fish

the canary in those stanzas – wrung mute

– drops like a dim buttercup

on the quills of a sleeping porcupine; a metaphor slides

off a wishbone – smooth as moonlight –

to mosaic transparency; synapses of syllables

snag loose

the individual letters of the poem talk of

– in lunar dampness –

their stories in new languages

in decipherable footprints

on a road which

– stretched far & taut

lost its elasticity and eyesight of yesterday –

parallels to a non-tapered night

Halcyon Days

A Chinese burn on my vision

Lays out like a discreet and bulging wound:

The same open-armed water recurs

With dispersive beauty of repeat

I'm standing like a plant.

Time looks at me with a four-leaf clover in it.

The tree and time, both, immovable

In reachable distance.

There are — islands of sonorous thoughts,

Pellucid desperation and teleportation,

A clean jumble of wishful connotations — in between

The poetics of the past

Embedded in a starry patchwork

Resides in parallel and isolated proximity.

We must be silently alone.

Integrity on the wound where an attentive and conscious gardenia starts

Landscape

The night woke up cold in
a gauzy dress.

Through the maze of spider webs,
all the children
gaze at the square moon
turn into the scent of buttercups.

Night, stretched far and deep,
lies on the river.
And the shyness of a frog
flows and flicks.

The Irregularity of Seasons

The diversity of colours and voices
In autumn fizzled out and were buried

In thickened whiteness. leaves and flowers
Collapsed like a city, like history.

Vultures gnawed the remaining rays
And the words of the sunset.

The west horizon has now become
A desert, hollow like an ill promise

Like the time of no width and depth.
Only ombré grey prowls

Around the clock which continues
Engraving another tree ring

On a body under anaesthetic.
Daylight saving starts.

Summer is still limping on its way.
Snow has started falling like soulless petals.

Discrete, Deep and Dark in the Past

memory ruptures
drippling a continuous separation
in an aged story:

… another thorn in parent's talks
… or a square slab of spartan and sporadic nostalgia
incognito as a chameleon.

Childhood, the word,
fluid as spring and triangle,
has a dim wound in it.

rain cannot swallow
both serrated voices in which
a glass shattered.

Tired feet again on quarrels,
open and wild as weather. Turbulent air
unobtrusive as the change of days.

the alphabets themselves, after sunset,
thread dazzling, intimate
poems.

so much
depends on
belongs to

An Incomplete Life: Aunty Lian

The sweet corn stalks, patient as a rock cairn,
glance towards the sore direction:

Lian's motionless body dangled, weightless,
from a sycamore like a kite caught on a power line

With her husband's freshly engraved bruises
she was laid down like a rose apple by the trembling of her stepfather's hands.

Her tomb, the closed eye of her mother's days who made
the chafing longing magnanimously accurate and delicate

A phial of weep injected into the
The ear of the nights. She was still awake when the second moon

Came out in the morning. The fresh vividness undulates
Through her eye and trembling shoulders.

There is a full stop in the absolute. Time was gracefully
Scabbing. Some yearnings are uninhabitable.

Redeemed opal energy in the sun
& Salubriously nostalgic non sequiturs may trickle in.

There was a lotus in Lian' name. The onomatopoeia
of the blossoming lotus is rising in the pond and for the past.

The Plasticity of Losing

Along the alley sycamore lichens lie

on aching hours

The tired cicadas

Doze off in a still moment —

The dappled sunlight is eyes —

Investigating the heated waiting

Of my grandmother for her husband to return

a time called *Theirs*

And no return to a hospital.

The new familiar —

Codeines and more codeines

And the tangibility of countdown

hourglass — has lost its meaning and precision

At night geckos continue scurrying around moths

Untranslatable discontinuity interrupts

Vigil

Yet no light could shine
Through those days and the volume
Of starvation.

When a new language charging
Through a village with handsome shin guntō
Shining red.

The shivering figures were
Too alone to rest. Prayers are a
Shipwreck.

The spartan structure
Of nights is straight and intricate,
Relying on waiting.

When Memory Recurs

Ultimately the word sun
Lost its sonorous luminosity
And lyrical vision, falling

Onto the carcass
Of trees, bullet shells & other selves.
The dying air lost its last twitch.

A soldier's swollen insomnia
Joined the density of shadows.
Command, inexhaustible exhaustion

And the redefinition of patriotism,
Peeled the gentleness of wakening next
To his wife's breath.

Trooping
Through Towards
A landscape — blood of debris and overturned wreck

Through
Towards
Recurring

Memory is Liquid

1

Frilly timeline is a river
Memories in water, flowing

In and out the present
In variation and juxtaposition.

Déjà vu stands on the bridge
Looking at the babbling

— so real —
— so metaphorical —

2

Back to the dilapidated house
To the resplendent carcass of a time

To retrieve the recurring floating echo.
There is no echo; it is a fiction word.

Only rapid translation, frisky
fragments and petite wholeness

At the End of the Pier

The clean light of shipwreck
Nibbles nibbles the rusty distance away
From the closed secret to the open sunshine:

The stretched last words of the navy
And the number of fatalities in the cascade of bombs
Of free will drowned and were engraved on the memory

Of sea anemones who were stars in mirror
Seeing the sea turning into red.
Sea anemones' sobbing was cadence on a moonless tongue;

Was a narrator to unlock
An immaculate tragedy
Forceful

City: Familiar and Unknown

I

You remember the city where you lived —

crushed peanuts, in a stone mortar on a rusty food vendor,
ready for green papaya salad while a tuktuk honking by in the afternoon heat

— Yet the city forgot you like distance.

II

The place where monkey bars were
Now stands a zoo with barred monkeys

Sighing is locked
In a pigeonhole of the present.

III

The street, named, altered,
Realtered, renamed

You, confused,
by and *in* familiarity

Here comes an eraser and dust in memory.

IV

Is repetition the synonym of familiarity?

V

You were out of your body when you arrived.
Placed and displaced
Spontaneously.

Solid Memory, Volatile City

fireflies glittering with fragments
through the scrim of memory
loose fraying lingering

the perimeter of desolation
skyline and childhood is now
open volatile scenic

on the edge calla lilies find the bone
of echo from the pristine and returning
waiting and mirage

in an old wheelbarrow's shadow
a black bird pecks the remote hums.
resolute reverberative

time is dressed up
with labyrinth and diplopic shelves.
a snapshot of scent of forget-me-not

Mirror

In lucid confusion

There is a cloudy reflection

And a crisp and moving image:

– A girl in pigtails

Walks in front of me –

Likes a visible dream yet real

As a self-portrait.

She continues walking, I asked “Have we met before?”

She paused. In an alien and intimate

Glancing —

Walking without a word

Walking without a slant smile

No portrait.

Self-evolving, doubly.

A Dog’s Finale in Silent Sonority

Wind entangled by
a tuft of thoughts
quivered the muscles of a bark

Left the brothy bones
for original bonds.
eyes grew the colour of affection

A deep longing
climbing with creeper ivy
weaved into the pulse of a house

A pale bark
yet. the profile of it
remained warm and shaped

His name
reposed and retreated
like a poet

Half Summer Half Autumn in Sonnet

The daylight and ellipsis are as laconic as Haiku
And as subtle as the smell of a wild asymmetry.

The changes are momentary like an accident
Like the mood of weather.

The lukewarm contour of the sun continues westward.
Its refection on the river remains like a suggestion

Of an unfinished story in a closed cloud.
The elegy and the green cadence

Of rustling leaves snap in autumn’s secateurs.
Autumn has albinism.

It blanches the colour of the future tense.
There are splinters in the wind

In its pronunciation
And in the silhouette of sleek silence.

Two Trips to Yesterday

•

The black bird has
A night in it.

It changed into sour drops
Of my sob.

The cadence of my pain
Falls over like a domino row of stars

I swallowed a wounded star
Like a charred word and its translation

•

The distance between the sun
And the moon has a cobweb in it.
It smells a like historical castle.

In the castle, I want to dream that
The laughter and the longing
Turn to a sonnet and a bird of paradise flowers.

I am desperate to dream that a full stop is only
A pause of a pulse
And the shadow is trimmed to the sun.

The River Behind a Closed Door

The river in the shape of meekness
Carries the collage of the reflected time:
The moon on a moor
The dead smell of a young summer
The twitching body of a lost-belonging poem.

The river, like a trembling wrinkle
Flows across time
Across the rugged landscape of the past
Reaching door of the present.

The door is closed.
Neither key nor time can open it.
The river echoes
Knocking on the door
Begging.

Visualising the Past

I

Full of overlapped shades

& slow tears

And full of tufts of the surreal familiarity

& the reflection and residue

Of naked nostalgia

II

Two images burst out of a caged poem:

An Haiko-scented song

& a single-filed shadow

Stay in the distance of an echo

III

Memories zigzag through the

Timeline like a tipsy poet

IV

The hourglass doesn’t have hours in it.

It has a river carrying a ripening autobiography

In a moonlit tone

V

A collage is made

Of an ache and a nougat

Of swimming stars on a retina

Of the profile of mist

VI

The silhouette of the new yesterday

— Sonnet-shaped riddles

Insipid curving water

& silence-scented secretes —

Arises from the next page

VII

The plural form of yesterday

Has eyes and becomes a fortune teller.

Yet its wilted tongue cannot tell all

The persevered new stories.

Only unified fragments

VIII

A song swallows loud clouds

And the lean lyrics, like the twilight, close without a trail.

Each sonorous word has an immaculate memory

X

The weight of reminiscences

Is in the cobwebs in the dense forest

Is in the succulent meaning of poetry and philosophy

Is in the rumination of an open insomnia

All is outrageously beautiful

XI

Two rivers intersect

And part. Intersect

And apart… like the two destined

Senses: the past and the future

A Green Thirst in Barren-coloured Nostalgia

I watched a drunk moon descending like an error.
It fell off the fence motionless.
The carcass of its colour leaked
Like a brook with soundless pebbles.

Its succulently mute voice stayed on my nape
Heavy as the bleached time and its connotation.
The loud whispers with desperation
Became footsteps on my temples.

Its loose bones were an alive poem
With a recurring and diverse echo.
There was a meek screech in the last line
Without a full stop.

From that moment, there was a thirst in my vision.
And the pulses rose
rootless and shapeless
From something breathable yet untouchable.

The dead moon and visible time stirred the air
Chafed the new wrinkles on my forehead
And vein of its metaphorical sensation.
Only dead time lasts.

The purpose of abstraction
is to discover how
two things
can constitute a recurrence.

— Rae Armantrout ‘Light’

A Migrant worker

His words occasionally rise
For stars, for a second moon
For the moonlit scents of morning glories.

More often, hang heavy with bills
And a word called home. He pants like a wet match
At a sweltering construction site.

His breath in a makeshift room
Tired as a dead drum.
Yuccas in his throat.

Overripe grey grows on his temples
On a table stands a slim wad of notes
A family photo

And Nurofen tablets.
He slumped and slept.
No dreams interrupt his night.

Quicker than dawn, the rent arrives
On his eyelid.
He is awake; but eyes remain closed.

$D^{A}R^{K}\ N^{E}S^{S}$ in $M^{o}t^{I}oN$

in a plantain-coloured somnolence
the rain clicks the vocal terrain
of the blue-scented past tense

like the cadence dripping
through an off-centred storyline
to an unbreathable pause in shade

where the dead wisteria petals
and the capricious line of the present tense
fall on the lilac and fatigue teeth

the cold feet of the homeless words in the future
rub against the dawn-hued whistle
like a blooming dream nudging a closed eye

Stranded Belonging, Thus

Her cracked ribs talk.
Image of a recuperated voice
Discolouring again

Undertow of the unheard
Deepens like footsteps
Like moors.

Her sleep tender—
A petal on a placid river—
Yet wind is always awake

Rest no more.
Thistles speak into her fine eye
Intrepidly persistent

A day of clusters
Of undisciplined shades
On a wide-open retina

Her dawn is not up.
The returning yesterday
Walks in settling down

The Birth of Death

Your bone is a pen
Not held by you
Writing another self's story
Using your fresh blood.

Each page is shade in shade.
The singular light is given off
By your childhood
And by your beloved parents' names

Which are inscribed in gravestones. Buried in wind.
The bruises wheel upon your spine.
The tooth of nights climbs quickly up to your nape.
You are knocking on the door of dawn

With your forehead.
You breathe the dead dust of pages.
It burns the chest like bleach
In the wild shadow of a closed wood.

The wrinkles on your forehead
Hardened by the tongue
Of others whom
You listen to like religion.

Your body is a book
In which you are absent
From inventing a word.
You are timid as a hush.

Afterlife is an Invisible Amulet

Her temple and grey hair
Are a tender narrative
A babbling forest stream

There are ripples
In her dimples and
Gravestones.

She went
With the incompletion
Of her belongings.

As the pair of earrings
She wore continues in me.
Dainty and heavy

Like an orchid-scented Haiku
Like the density
Of full and dispersed recollections

It grows in my hearing
And palms. It tickles the plump sensations
And redraws the assorted contours of my time.

No the hereafter.
Only extension of the present
Continues with a gentle slant.

Grave has a Vivid Reflective Tongue

A plant grows on a grave
Which cannot be closed:

The landscape
Of a porous voice-over

Has a Haiku and memory
Circulating. Orienting.

Grave, not a sense
Of place

Is a visible
And suggestive voice

In a silent
Unrimed autobiography:

Page turning
Unstoppable.

Meow

, as warm
as the petal
of a red rose

without the sense
of chronology
… it echoes

bring in a mouse, a sparrow,
and clear sincerity

in excitement
in admiration

with belly rubbings
uncurls
luscious voice

in the sun
tender as the connotation
of a fig

the image
of his last purr
a pause
— a spread—

his past tense
continues, repeats:
— Unstill—
— Unfinished—

Aftermath: Too Barren

To Belong to

No chirps and semantics grow
On this map

Of lack of oxygen. No potatoes
To peel. A canary and a babbling brook

Of lilac rhythm
Flow out of an ear.

A gunshot—the second moon
Falls like non sequiturs in which

The curtain sweats. The gravel,
As warm and naked as the new corpses.

The gunpowder stands straight
Like an apparition, watching and permeating

Before the pride of rosemary shrub and dawn
Is rekindled, the old forest

Is coughing up bloodshot news:
Another star was just buried alive.

The Weight of Repeat

Around the rafters
Invisible Indefinite
Repeating and mutating commands and shooting

Full sunrise
Half-full sunset
A yucca-shaped night

Single-coloured sleep
Of altering shades
Lonely and cold as scattered bullet shells

Nerve is taut taut
Further further.
Eye closed with the totality of blankness open

A moment. A full stop
Yet stopped. Long belonged to. Repeat.
Vast Perennial

Through

a plan is pinned
into solid visibility
into a straight line

visibility blurs—
poems fall like deforestation
a clock choked

with a dead sun.
wait still
until alone

words shy and hidden
only a voice
mysteriously explicit

definite continuity
delimiting and refining be-
ing and longing

Discrete Thoughts on the Train

*

The train roars ahead
into extensions, repetitions, or rotating orders
into something unknown

Each whistle is a moment yearning
for a dilated book which is filled with hot semantics
and the sound of tomatoes turning red

*

Sit on the window seat
the fullness of imagination grows out of the frame of
the solar horizon and the lunar rumination

*

A train is a sharp tragedy
in the rain—
It pauses
Motion-emotion
-less

It moves
leaving the terrain behind
fading away

—a terrain standing in the rain
between the suspended and the destined

*

Fog, refined grass dusts, engulfs

the train and tracks tapering
into/out the (sur)real

*

The train is a collector
picking up stars.
stars are dispersed plots of stories.
these stories become a moonlit collage

Something

Self-moving and Self-evolving

I

When the sun stands on the top rung of a ladder
A star descends and dies in a flowerless womb
Naked as legibility.

II

When the horizon pulls taut
The waves walk with songs to the shore
Turning into green leaves of a tree.

III

It is fluid stillness
It is still fluid. The contradictory harmony
Of turning and remaining.

IV

Burrs and verses
With five different colours and a single rotation
Dwell in a prudent drift.

V

The word, its translation and connotation,
Is ripening into dawn-like continuity
Into the smell of hydrangeas.

VI

Each moment is an island
And a collage.

It inhabits in motion.

VII

Petals are shooting stars
Falling like the words of a poem. They land on a pager
Where a new poem and stars are rising.

VIII

The frozen past thaws
Through cracked air, becoming a river that flows
Into the blood of the current hours.

IX

Listen to a spider’s cobweb
In which there are deafening emptiness and the luxuriant fullness
Of a castle of an eye.

X

The full stop is a ripple
Which cannot be closed
And cannot be stopped.

Delicate Dare

Fed on refusal, a seed
Becomes a star, shining
Upon dandelions and uncertainty.

It winks like an echo to a girl.
She needs neither a sundial to
Tell time and age. Nor concentric comforts.

A thawing instinct, suggestive,
In her pocket, moves like that seed
Like fine art. Born like a scarecrow with roots.

Grew like a wheel. Like a poem with wings.
Moving – Searching – Longing for
The language with a heartbeat.

Longing for

trickling
verses

through

complete
fragrance
of fragment

through

complete
fragment
of rocks
thickets
eyes
senses
all and where
belonging
a burr
with a
steering
wheel

Location is Relocating Itself

Both moon and sun are still
young & awake

Pallid prayers are a size of a
Decisive daisy

Crab apples that not picked up early
Are as blind as a promise

They are overripe shadows of tomorrow
Decay yet stay

Rooted rain
Rootless pains

Are nomads
Lurching in wind

With continuity, which
Is already a relocation

So is stillness
Stay and decay

The Thought of a Tree

Town is a rose:
Grow, blossom, wither
And desolate as a lunar voice, limping.

The leafy rustling is
A moment and the volume
Of pauses, untill

Town, rebuilt.
Location— patiently still— is already re-
Location— rotates—

Belonging, ambivalence:
Certain as the mineral sweetness
Of a river in parentheses;

Uncertain as the cumulation
Of the word “deciduous”
Regrow does not repeat.

When Isolated Memory is on the Rise

a cropped timeline is trapped in a pillow
slate-blue suffocation and oblivion

Grows grey like weather and hair

the bone of its shadow
hardened in firm silence

Secluded and Indelible

when it reappears, it becomes
the face of an ombre river

Known and Unrecognisable

clingy as tender lichen—parting
like lurching shadows in wind —

Disappearance is a Return

in the embodiment of multiplicity
dense and spongy beyond

Around and Through

the finished remoteness
resides already in the full future tense

Waiting in Mutation

The Familiar Strangeness

Mother’s quiet wrinkles
  Seem vaguely real
    And clearly surreal.

She looks the same as how she
  Writes her own name
    And different like a second self.

Outside the weather
  The gleam in the old times she played
    With me returns with an echo

That wakes me up
  Instantly.
    I fear and stare.

Multi-Monotony

In black and insipid weather
Chaste line of sun prematurely frays.
My versatile fountain pen
Moves like the homeless

The leaves outside the desk
Rustle like barbed wire
That is wedged into my ear
Into the hourglass of no sand

Tick of clock sings like a blunt thorn in the eye.
And the clock grows in prison-liked dimensions.
My tongue and images are tethered
To its circular and linear shadow.

The kaleidoscope of uniformity is transfixed
Into the sonnets on my desktop.
Into sleepwalking of monologue.
Luminous serenade arrives like a whisper

And quickly blends into the onomatopoeia
Of the washing machine. Inseparable
And untraceable. I'm struggling to
draw the whisper.

Six Definitions of Home

*

A poem has
A house in it.
Home weighs a summer

*

The sun and curdled nostalgia
Search for the root to rise
And for the home to return

*

Home is where the metaphor of night
Has a scent and is scenic.
A dog star on a pillow.

*

Home is a dreamcatcher
That grows on your back. Silence
Has a sonorous voice.

*

Home is a handcrafted library
With weather and lucent words in it.
A honeycrisp has the colour of semantic flames.

*

Home is about the precise tenderness
Of a falcon's grip on the falconer's arm.
Visualised bond and direction.

Fragmented *Forward* is a Verb

Forward is neither “paused”.
Nor “pausing”. It only pauses

Like a cramp in mobility
Like Déjà vu

Hesitant and ambiguous
Tenderly separated from the sun

From the needle of a compass
Yet all is a moment

Of meditative silence:
Suggestive and agile

Only when *Forward*
becomes Forward

It starts hurting
Like a swollen stone

In a breezy voice
Voice in a dried juxtaposition.

Forward belongs to water
Flows freely forward:

Forward is a *verb*
Towards the unknown familiar

When the Temple Bells on the Page Died

•

The green stanzas and stars

On silver branches

Fall like a kite, like fate

With the fullness of the void

Into the headless Haiku

Into the thickets of frozen shadow

•

The snuffed-outed scents of words

And its resonance inhibit

In disjointed water where

Only the shade of the page numbers flow;

Where tears are made of moons

And the reflection of a song

Numerosity

Rescue the dialect and duration

Of the locality

Rescue the similarity and complexity

Of the fingerprint of those deep summers

Rescue the isolation

Of the real

Resue the fullness

Of the abstract

— The unearthly connecting

And distancing —

Like the pulse of a poet’s pen:

Clean obscurity

In new fire

On wild waves

Each Line is a Complete Fragmented Story

Her eyes wallowed in and out

The pronounced ripples and riddles of the past.

Her yellow accent only gives birth

To a mouthful of luxuriant headless lyrics.

The scrabbly memory swallows a rainbow

Leaving a singular trace of gleam to be wrung dry.

The past is brook, flowing back.

It starts congealing and is injected into the blood of “Now.”

The sensation of that voice is a dog

Sniffing the way back, picking the chipped moments.

There is no air in the book of the future

And the sound smells like bleached silence.

This slice of memories has a whistle in it

Flying home where there is a dumb echo.

The succulents accent slips away

From my tongue and its greenness had a Chinese burn.

The hunched house has a gleaming shade and gloomy warmth:

Being lopsided is balanced.

The air is a forest of leafy dream

Where the smell of sugar cane is shrouded in fogs.

Each line above is a fragmented completeness

Of a story and an open sonnet and memoir.

Poetry as Practice: *Belonging is a Prolonged Thirst*

Belonging is an indispensable part of the ongoing search for the relation between poetry and everyday life. It has been subconsciously budding through my overseas experience and urges me to pursue something physical and emotional to attach to. Belonging to the city I live in, to local culture and language, gives rise to a reassuring sense that I am not *out* of where I am, am not *on* the edge of it, but I am *in* it. One of the distinctive features in establishing and shaping belonging, for me, is language. I struggled and failed to develop a deep attachment when I lived in Thailand. Since I spoke little Thai while local people spoke limited English, language erected a visible and impermeable barrier to for me to immerse myself into authentic local life to the full. In *Art as Experience,* John Dewey argues that experience is often inchoate because 'Things are experienced but not in such a way that they are composed into *an* experience' (35). Based on Dewey's insight into experience, my time in Bangkok should be defined as experience not *an* experience. Language, in this instance, creates betweenness — between the outsider and the insider or between placed and displaced — where I am in and out concurrently. Living in New Zealand and the UK, without the barrier of language, provided me with wider access to the extensive engagement with Kiwi-and-English styled everyday life. And pursuing a PhD in poetry in Kent incentivised me to formally explore belonging in the everyday and in poetic language. Since English is my second language, there is often either a slight, and sometimes a significant difference between thinking and writing in English and that in my native language, Chinese. However, the difference is neither linguistic isolation nor removal; on the contrary, it gives rises to new expressions and methods of presenting the everyday. Writing in English is a process of navigating and forming my exclusive belonging *in* English as a language. It is also a form of developing my bond *with* English which enables to articulate my belonging in poetry. In short, language plays an important role in creating *an* experience and linguistic belonging

which flows through my daily experience and consistent emotional pursuit and then flows into words and into my poems.

The collection is arranged through the thread of 'The Raw Present – The Rippling Past – The Ripening Present'. Each section contains recurring daily elements: the hardship of the everyday (job, poverty), war, death, marriage, city as well as emotions influenced by taken-for-granted details (weather, season, pets, etc). 'The Raw Present' not only demonstrates the features of the everyday such as mundanity, repetition, the paradox of certainty and changeability but also reveals the struggles to discover and sustain the sense of belonging. While the first section focuses on the present, the poems in the second section, 'The Rippling Past', trace back to redefine memories and to suggest how contemplation or self-reflection on the past makes an impact on the understanding of the present and on the search for belonging. 'Rippling' not only refers to how the past constructs present experience and belonging but also indicates that memories are not immobilised or confined in the past tense; on the contrary, they flow and extend to the present. In other words, the past is part of the everyday in an intangible form as a result of its tangible forces and influences. After reconsidering how the past and its influence on belonging can be understood, the poems in the third section, 'The Ripening Present', return to the present in a fresh and reflective tone with new meanings. This word 'ripening', in the subtitle, not only aims to reveal my 'ripening' understanding of everyday life throughout the reading of theories of the everyday and the practice of the three poets but also indicates my growing knowledge of discovering belonging and how to recreate this sense while alienation, to some degree, is inevitable. A crucial poem in this section is, 'Six Definitions of Home' and it provides six different ways of interpreting 'home' and how home gives rise to security and belonging. However, 'home' here is not limited to a physical homelike place as it expands to a seemingly intangible yet clearly visible bond as the last stance reads, 'precise tenderness/Of a falcon's grip on the

falconer's arm. /Visualised bond and direction'. The poems in this section not only suggest belonging can be discovered in a concrete and tangible form such as a place and people in a community but also imply that belonging can be searched for through something abstract or sensory, such as a culture or the use of language, as Hejinian suggested. The section (and the collection) ends with the poem titled, 'Each Line is a Complete Fragmented Story'. It suggests who I am and who I want to become as a poet: an observer and a flâneuse committed to attentively capturing daily happenings, to retrieving and re-examining the past, and to searching for new possibilities of discovering and developing belonging. The poem indicates that the section or the collection seems to come to an end as it is complete. However, it is also fragmented as it is part of my life and my search for my belonging, and it is also prolonged, as the collection titles suggests.

Deeply inspired by Frank O'Hara, Barbara Guest and Lyn Hejinian, I draw on their poetic techniques in my writing. For instance, drawing on O'Hara's practice of juxtaposition of diversified images, in the poem of 'Solid Memory, Volatile City', lines like – 'calla lilies find the bone/of echo from the pristine and returning/ waiting and mirage/in an old wheelbarrow's shadow/a black bird pecks the remote hums' – were created. Guest's use of blankness in poetry gives rise to imagination and something hidden and unseen. In the poem entitled 'The Plasticity of Lossing', I came to create large space between words, phrases and lines and arranged them in a free-falling form attempting to more fully indicate a sense of silent and severe pain across the page. The poem, 'The Weight of Repeat', reflects Hejinian's understanding of repetition and variation. Apart from the three poets' writing techniques, their unrestrained aesthetic understanding and innovative experimental poetic practice provides me with freedom to explore and develop my own voice and language in poetry to construct and extend daily experience and belonging.

Apart from the great poetic influence from O'Hara, Guest and Hejinian in writing, the reading of the everyday philosophers deepens and intensifies my understanding of daily experience and poems. Henri Lefebvre, Guy Debord, John Dewey and Ludwig Wittgenstein proclaim that the everyday is in a dynamic process rather than a fixed and monotonous status. This insight not only indicates the variety of daily experience but also inspires me to reflect on and reconsider the nature of 'memory' and its influence on the present. Memories are not only something that happened in the past but also are part of 'what is happening'. As part of daily experience, memories feature repetition. When they recur, they continuously generate new experience and understanding of the everyday and impart new meanings to the present, which is extensively reflected in "The Rippling Past' of my collection. In Hejinian's term, repetition, to some degree, features variety, which I will be discussing in detail in Chapter 4. In other words, memories can be views as a mobile force to integrate into and extend what is happening and what could be happening in the future.

This new understanding of memories and experience is greatly inspired by reading Dewey's theory of the relation between art and experience. He underscores the continuity of *an* experience, as he claims

> In an experience, flow is from something to something. As one part leads into another and as one part carries on what went before, each gains distinctness in itself. The enduring whole is diversified by successive phrases that are emphases of its varied colors. Because of continuous merging, there are no holes, mechanical junctions, and dead centers when we have *an* experience. (*Art as Experience* 36)

Put differently, *an* experience features continuity while remaining its distinctiveness. This encourages me to make writing a poem as *an* experience which 'is a whole and carries with its own individualizing quality and self-sufficiency' (Dewey, *Art as Experience* 35). This approach not only enables me to more freely practice the compositional movement but also

gives me the permission to more fully integrate other daily experience and poetic elements into *an* experience and into a poem which carries both continuity distinctiveness. In this instance, writing a poem as *an* experience, for me, is a process of experiencing writing to the full. In the meanwhile, Debord's practice of dérive focuses on outside experience on street while Rita Felski underscores inside experience at home. Their approach gives me access to the unlimited integration of both external and internal experience to form *an* experience. There is no doubt that *an* experience requires constant and continuous attention. The continuous integrating or blending method is also demonstrated by Wittgenstein in an aphoristic and ruminative way, as he wrote in *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*:

> 2.1 We make to ourselves pictures of facts.
>
> 2.12 The picture is a model of reality.
>
> 2.14 The picture consists in the fact that its elements are combined with one another in a definite way.
>
> 2.15 That the elements of the picture are combined with one another in a definite way, represents that the things are so combined with one another. (6-7)

These propositions concisely illustrate the connection between events and experience and furthermore indicate the significant role an individual can play in terms of shaping daily experience as we are the ones making the picture of reality. One the one hand, it is important to knowledge the feature of the everyday being mundane, repetitive and monotonous. One the other hand, we can seize the initiative to actively exploit a variety of strategies to revivify the quotidian. Wittgenstein's insight into language also draws my attention to the power of language and makes me recognise the great possibility of reconstructing daily experience as well as belonging through the new use of language in poetry.

In addition to the influence from the three poets and everyday theorists, I have also been inspired by Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams, and Wallace Stevens in terms of the use of image. Their works not only draw my great attention to daily images but also give rise to my experiment with juxtaposition of concrete objects to impart new meanings and features to images and to generate fresh associations among images. I have also analysed how O'Hara, Guest and Hejinian employ juxtaposition in their poetry from different perspectives in Chapter 2, 3 and 4. As a translingual writer, juxtaposition not only means juxtaposing a diversity of concrete images but also juxtaposing texts between languages and worlds. Although I write poems in English only and the writing process does not seem to engage with translation, I reckon translingual poetics, to some degree, transforms the way how I read and write, and lays the foundation for originality and vividness in my writing as Sarah Dowling lucidly articulates in *Translingual Poetics: Writing Personhood Under Settler Colonialism*

> Poetry's capacity for extreme forms of juxtaposition and parataxis means that sharp contestations between the monolingual paradgdim and the linguistic gestures that transgress it are conveyed with a particular vividness in poetry… This poetry points to alternative structures of thinking and doing, to other ways of describing the social, and to underexamined relationships between present and past. (5)

Put differently, translingual poetics not only is a linguistic investigation between languages and a poetic strategy of examining languages but also a method of discovering different social activities, contexts and realities. My translingual position, on one hand, provide me a new dimension to consider and examine the use of language, but on the other hand, sometimes makes the recreation of juxtaposition not so much fresh or original as odd. Therefore, when I edit my poems, I would reexamine, rewrite, revise, or tweak the images, words, metaphors and other element I chose to make them linguistically and semantically vivid yet felicitous.

The collection of my poems not only reveals the poetic strategies I have learnt from O'Hara, Guest and Hejinian to present and transform daily experience and belonging but also reflects the great influence of the everyday theorists and other poets have exerted on my understanding of both the quotidian and poetry.

Chapter 1 Introduction

This thesis is comprised of two parts: one creative and one critical. The creative part comprises a collection of poems entitled *Belonging is a Prolonged Thirst*. And the critical part comprises this introductory chapter, a chapter for each of the three poets, a conclusion, and a bibliography.

The aim of this dissertation is to examine how the poetics of everyday life in America in the period after WWII can be revealed and interpreted through the analysis of the work by three poets: Frank O'Hara, Barbara Guest, and Lyn Hejinian. It is no coincidence that everyday aesthetics has gained growing attention as a sub-discipline of philosophical aesthetics, focusing on everyday experience, activities, and milieux in the post-1945 period. This phenomenon can be viewed as a concomitant response to the social, cultural, and political transformations which are encapsulated by Andrew Epstein in *Attention Equals Life*:

> the shattering effects and aftermath of World War II, Auschwitz, and Hiroshima; the influence of a Cold War culture marked by conformity, material prosperity, and hyper-consumerism, McCarthyism, and fears of nuclear annihilation; the pervasive influence of Buddhism and eastern religions, with their call for mindfulness and attention to immediate experience; and the tumultuous political and social changes of the 1960s …Perhaps most important, the New American poetry's fascination with dailiness can be seen as an early response to the explosion of popular culture, mass media, computers, and other technological changes that contributed to our estrangement from the familiar, forever transformed the experience of daily life, and introduced new threats to our capacity for sustained attention. (8)

Epstein's succinct and insightful account outlines the tremendous changes in the period in question which make the familiar uncanny and the known uncertain. In short, such rapid transformations fundamentally shift the understanding of immediate daily life and create an

increasing urgency to redefine and reconstruct the everyday. In addition to the social, cultural, and political circumstances, Giovanni Matteucci further acknowledges the rising demand for attention to everyday life from the perspective of the status of aesthetics. As he observes in 'Everyday Aesthetics and aestheticization: reflectivity in understanding', factors in this renewed attention include:

> the crisis of the modernist paradigm of art as an autonomous field of experimentation and research on purely defined or definable symbolic and expressive languages; … the increasing dissatisfaction for the disciplinary restriction of the realm of aesthetics to the field of art, with the consequent tendency to go back to and draw from the problematic conceptual bundle implied by the term "aisthesis" in its original meaning, in order to define the domain of aesthetic research broadly speaking; (Matteucci 207-208)

This recently developed aesthetic orientation requires formal theoretical awareness and innovative practice to radically disengage from preestablished aesthetic restriction, and to expand and intensify philosophical aesthetics by assiduously incorporating the quotidian. Therefore, by reason of the social, cultural, political, and aesthetic factors and forces, formal examination of and experiment with the everyday is pressingly required in order to more fully review and reconstruct daily experience.

I. The Interaction between Everyday Life Theory and Poetry

Against the background of the unprecedented postwar climate, contemporary theorists of everyday life sought to offer a variety of methods of critiquing, presenting, and transforming daily experience, while poets were creatively experimenting with new contents and forms to reconstruct the quotidian. For example, it is no coincidence that in the 1950s, Guy Debord developed the concept of the dérive, a strategy of rapid passage through varied ambiance, to

expand daily experience, while O'Hara, stimulated by his walking during his lunch hour in New York, had been composing his *Lunch Poems* so as to capture the happenings. Theories of everyday life thus contextualise a reading of poetry, and the poetic presentation of the everyday further illuminates and broadens the theoretical framework. Since theories of everyday life and poetry are closely intertwined, this dissertation runs the critical theories in tandem with the poetic experiments of the everyday. In line with this approach, I will pair O'Hara, Guest and Hejinian with the philosophers with whom they share the same or a similar understanding of everyday life.

O'Hara, an originating poet of the New York School, pioneered intense engagement with everyday experience, and earnestly insisted on the urgency of paying poetic attention to the ordinary. For instance, his poem, 'A Step Away from Them' (*The Collected Poems* 257-258), is characterised by a variety of innovative strategies, abounding with common objects and immediate urban experience, including ordering chocolate malted, labours having Coca-Cola and sandwiches, cabs, and bargains. These details do not only infer that his poems undeniably situate the quotidian in everyday life, but also clearly reflect Henri Lefebvre's insight into the evident absorption of commodification and capitalism in the everyday. Such absorption unavoidably leads to alienation from daily experience, which I will demonstrate later in this chapter.

Associated with O'Hara, also a New York School poet, Guest, equally valorises the quotidian and her poetry features a deep sense of the present, as David Shapiro remarks in 'American Poetry Review'. As he puts it, 'When one looks at work Barbara Guest accomplished in the late 1950s and early 1960s, one finds pieces that often seem to have been written yesterday, if not tomorrow' (qtd. in Spaar). Guest calls for imagination in both every day and the practice of poetry to give variety to experience, and this technique echoes John Dewey's understanding of imagination in art and in everyday life. Guest subsequently closely

associated with the Language poets, including Lyn Hejinian, and shifted her attention to the function of language itself, as she mentioned to Mark Hillringhouse in 'American Poetry Review' that, 'My poems tend more to language than to ideas' (27).

Influenced by the New York School poets, Hejinian investigates the everyday from the angle of language, and considers how the use of language alters or more precisely, structures daily experience. This mode of poetic experiment draws greatly on Ludwig Wittgenstein's philosophical work in terms of how language affects the understanding and practice of everyday life. Understanding Wittgenstein's theory of language thus gives a better understanding of Hejinian's poetic development. It is clear, from the above discussion, that aligning the three poets with the related philosophers theoretically and poetically offers a more rounded and comprehensive understanding of everyday life.

As discussed, it is apparent that Lefebvre, Debord, Dewey, and Wittgenstein each explore the subject of the everyday with a different focus. Their far-reaching theories have been extensively examined by Rita Felski, a leading contemporary critic in the field of everyday aesthetics, and she ultimately refines the theory of everyday life. She eloquently articulates the contradictory nature of the everyday in 'The Invention of Everyday Life', observing that it is both self-evident and puzzling, ordinary and elusive, public and private. Compared with Lefebvre, Debord, Dewey, and Wittgenstein, Felski views the everyday from a less-discussed point of view: neutrality, which is neither 'rhapsodically affirmed and painted in glowing colors [nor] is excoriated as the realm of ultimate alienation and dehumanization' (94-95). In short, she neither glamorises nor disparages the everyday but puts forward what Ben Highmore understands as an 'authentic' relation to the everyday. As he puts it in 'Homework: Routine, Social Aesthetics and the Ambiguity of Everyday Life', 'everydayness (habit, routine, the work-a-day world), marked indelibly with the stamp of capitalist reason, has to be transcended and estranged in a bid to recover some sense of

everyday life as authentic and valuable' (320). Repetition, embedded in 'the work-a-day world' and viewed as a threat to or limitation of new experience, however, is considered neutrally by Felski. She not only acknowledges the unavoidable nature of repetition in daily activities such as eating, sleeping, working, shopping, but also considers it a valuable method of organising the everyday as she claims, 'we become who we are through acts of repetition' (Felski 84). Felski's understanding might well elucidate O'Hara's 'repeating' walking which organises his daily routine, captures what is happening and enables him to become a flâneur. She also rejects the predetermined idea of women being enslaved to the everyday because of repetition and proclaims that repetition should be viewed as an objective factor of the everyday, and women are not the embodiment of this feature because 'repetition is not an anachronism in a world of constant flux, but an essential element of the experience of modernity. Rather than being the sign of a uniquely feminine relationship to time, it permeates the lives of men as well as women' (Felski 85). Felski's understanding of repetition chimes with Hejinian's practice of repetition as she also recognises that repetition is one of the features of the everyday and should not be considered a negative force. On the contrary, it can be viewed as an artistic technique for generating new meanings of the quotidian, on which I will expound in Chapter 4. Acknowledging the feature of repetition and its comparable influence on gender reveals Felski's objective approach to reality. Unlike Debord's practice of the *dérive*, focusing as it does on the outside world, Felski focuses on the internal or domestic world, 'home', and reveals its seemingly simple yet complex features. Contrary to the long-established perception of home being a static and stale place, she radically broadens its definition by claiming 'it includes any often-visited place that is the object of cathexis, that in its very familiarity becomes a symbolic extension and confirmation of the self' (Felski 88). For Felski, home, instead of being stale or repetitive, is a dynamic and growing place and plays a significant role in shaping experience, belonging, memories, and

the understanding of the everyday. This echoes how Guest understands domesticity as she also acknowledges and valorises domestic experience. For her, trivial activities also require great attention and gives rise to new experience. Home, to some degree, like the *dérive*, embodies mobility and multiplicity, and moreover, it acknowledges the value of authentic domestic experience which is equally as salient as outside experience. In short, Felski's emphasis on neutrality ultimately reveals the complexity and multiplicity of everyday life, and that 'mak[ing] peace with the everyday' (93) is a method of experiencing authentic experience.

II. Theories of Everyday Life Aesthetics

Due to the close interconnection between the three poets and the philosophers with which this dissertation associates them, it is important to outline the different theories of everyday life presented by Lefebvre, Debord, Dewey, and Wittgenstein, theories on which Felski also greatly draws. Their insightful theories are assuredly interrelated yet notably different, which gives rise to a diversity of perspectives and practice on the subject of everyday life.

Lefebvre, as a quintessential critical theorist, pioneered the critique of the everyday including the production of social space, the right to the city, and alienation, and his theory exerts substantive influence on subsequent everyday life philosophers. For him, everyday life aesthetics is not simply about recording or presenting 'what happens'; on the contrary, it 'reveals its profundity to those who wish to penetrate it in order to transform it, who attack it with determination, and a multiplicity of implements' (488) as he observes in *Critique of Everyday Life*. This profundity further implies the vast possibility of viewing and examining the everyday. Similarly, O'Hara, Guest, and Hejinian also demonstrate great multiplicity and depth of daily life by meticulously investigating the value of daily contents and experience in poetry. In Lefebvre's terms, they are the ones who formally 'attack it [the everyday] with

determination, and a multiplicity of implements' (489) to impart freshness and diversity to the ordinary. Lefebvre further underscores the value of the possible in the real:

> The possible is seen as abstract and vague, while the real is seen as thick and weighty, as 'being' or 'existing'. But the possible enters the real. It appears there: it announces and invokes its presence within it, and then sets about destroying it and negating it. As for the real, it is a possibility which has been made effective or actualized… we must conceive of a connection between the actual and the virtual, the potential and the possible. The actual and the virtual have a dialectical relation, even in the case of natural phenomena, but even more so in the case of human phenomena, where a consciousness of what is possible always intervenes. (489)

In other words, the active intervention of the possible extends the scope of the aesthetic investigation of new experience, and its dialectical relation with the real diversifies the forms of reality. Heightened consciousness or penetrating observation is the requisite for this dynamic relation. However, consciousness, for Lefebvre, is not consciousness '"of something", but, "All consciousness is consciousness of a possibility" …Without possibility, there can be no consciousness, and what is more, no life' (491). His understanding – possibility makes life – bears a striking resemblance to the three poets' practice as they also consciously and sustainedly increase the possibility of readdressing and reexperiencing experience through various poetic strategies. In short, Lefebvre formally redefines everyday life and focuses on expanding and diversifying immediate experience.

Debord, whose theory closely examines how urban settings affect and modify daily experience, was greatly influenced by and associated with Lefebvre who recalled their 'warm friendship, free of all mistrust and ambition' (qtd. in Merrifield 32). They shared profound insight into Marxism, revolution, the city, and urbanism which Lefebvre vividly recollected in remarking that 'I remember very sharp, pointed discussions when Guy said that urbanism

was becoming an ideology. He was absolutely right, from the moment that there was an official doctrine of urbanism' (qtd. in Merrifield 32). Like Lefebvre, Debord strives to increase the possibility of expanding daily experience, which is enunciated in 'Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography'

> I scarcely know of anything but those two harbors at dusk painted by Claude Lorrain — which are in the Louvre and which juxtapose extremely dissimilar urban ambiances — that can rival in beauty the Paris metro maps. I am not, of course, talking about mere physical beauty — the new beauty can only be a beauty of situation — but simply about the particularly moving presentation, in both cases, of a sum of possibilities. (4)

For Debord, beauty not only exists physically or situationally, but also exits in the possibility of continuously 'juxtapos[ing] extremely dissimilar urban ambiances', which gives rise to and extensively enriches daily experience. His 'theory of the dérive', instead of being a simple walking or drifting practice, is designed for close and continuous contact between the walker and the city as Tom McDonough eloquently observes in *The Situationists and the City*. As he puts it, 'dérive was "the search for an encounter with otherness, spurred on in equal parts by the exploration of pockets of class, ethnic and racial difference in the postwar city… "the city assumes the guise of a vast storehouse of slumbering memories awaiting potential awakening"' (11). Dérive is a 'potential awakening' technique for staying close to and shaping the everyday by consciously attuning oneself to the real and the possible. Constant encounters with otherness generate emotional orientations or disorientation towards the ambiance and activities of a city. Put differently, dérive is a dynamic process of connecting the inner world with the outer world to re-establish and develop new experience. The theory of dérive echoes O'Hara's practice as a flâneur and further articulates that his walking is both a physical encounter with New York, and an awakening and reflective

psychic encounter with the past and the present. Debord, apart from being an everyday philosopher, was also an innovative filmmaker. Juxtaposition is widely and skilfully employed in his films in order to create new meaning as Xavier Costa observes in 'In Girum Revisited: From Guy Debord's Dérive to the Situationist View of History' that 'The soundtrack is a reading of Debord's script, a text that does not always keep a direct relationship with the images simultaneously projected, yet the meaning of the film results from this special combination of image and text' (80). Like O'Hara, Debord's juxtaposition-driven film-making style serves as a strategy of revealing the possibility of how to understand and present the everyday through art.

Both Lefebvre and Debord underscore the dynamic relations of ordinary activities and urban daily experience. The continuous movement and variation of experience created by dérive is reminiscent of Dewey's concept of rhythm for which Lefebvre shares an enthusiasm. For Dewey and Lefebvre, rhythm offers 'a way of implicitly affirming experience as a dynamic and distributed field of movement that is nevertheless also felt and sensed in moving bodies' (42) as Derek McCormack claims in *Refrains for Moving Bodies: Experience and Experiment in Affective Spaces*. In this instance, dérive, to some degree, can be understood 'as a set of rhythmic relations through which the spatiotemporal turbulence of everyday life registers as so many intensities of feeling' (McCormack 42). Therefore, both dérive and rhythm combat predictable and monotonous experience, and diversify the ordinary through constant and varying spatial and temporal relations. Dewey also requires abstract experience and its relationship with concrete experience in order to further break fixed experience. Prior to discussing Dewey's understanding of abstract experience, it is worth recognising how he defines and differentiates experience from *an* experience.

As discussed in the section of Poetry as Practice, Dewey defines *an* experience and continues to propose that *an* experience is experienced 'when the material experienced runs

its course to fulfilment' (35). He continues to explain that *an* experience is achieved when 'a piece of work is finished in a way that is satisfactory' (Dewey 35) or 'a game is played through' (Dewey 35). *An* experience thus is gained when experience is experienced to the full. However, for Dewey, fullness is not completeness because the end of *an* experience 'is a consummation not a cessation' (35). In short, *an* experience features continuity and generativity, and this quality is embedded in abstract experience, as Dewey illustrates how abstraction accumulates and transfers experience in *Reconstruction in Philosophy*:

> Abstraction is indispensable if one experience is to be applicable in the experiences. Every concrete experience in its totality is unique; it is itself, non-reduplicable. Taken in its full concreteness, it yields no instruction, it throws no light. What is called abstraction means that some phrase of it is selected for the sake of the aid it gives in grasping something else… it represents the only way in which one experience can be made of value for another – the only ways in which something enlightening can be secured. (149-150)

For Dewey, experience is neither fragmented nor isolated; on the contrary, it becomes transferable, generative, and re-energising through abstraction. Put differently, abstraction provokes the neglected and the un-awakened and unifies dispersed experience to re-establish and develop the understanding of the quotidian. Dewey succinctly summarises that 'abstraction means that something has been released from one experience for transfer to another. Abstraction is liberation' (*Reconstruction* 150). In this instance, abstraction not only features the movement of experience but also breaks the timeframe to liberate experience to transfer from the present to the past, and from the past back to the present with renewed and extended meaning. The transfer of experience is not set in a linear or sequential manner since it develops in an open-ended form. Dewey's abstraction reflects Guest's understanding of imagination for which he also enthusiastically calls. Imagination, like abstraction, aims to

reveal the unseen and otherness of the everyday. For Dewey and Guest, abstraction and imagination are not only effective writing techniques, but also a method of becoming unfettered by the predetermined and unvarying view of everyday life and of making daily experience anew.

The practical effect of abstract experience clearly defines Dewey as a pragmatist who views language and art as a way of constructing the everyday instead of mirroring reality. In comparable terms, Wittgenstein explores everyday life by focusing on how language impacts experience. Although Wittgenstein did not claim that he was a pragmatist, there is great historical research about the possible influence of pragmatism on his later work. Robin Haack,[1] Peter Tumulty,[2] and Jörg Volbers[3] elucidate the similarities and differences between Dewey's theories and Wittgenstein's understanding with regard to the everyday. One of the diverging concepts is that Dewey criticises the barriers between theory and practice, believing artistic theory can present lived experience in unlimited forms. Wittgenstein, on the other hand, claims that daily experience is unable to be fully presented due to the limitation of language and knowledge. Wittgenstein suggests that the meaning of language can only be understood in the context of the everyday, and language and the everyday hold an interactive and dynamic relation. He also underscores the evolution and development of language, as he puts forth in *Philosophical Investigation*:

> Our language can be seen as an ancient city: a maze of little streets and squares, of old and new houses, and of houses with additions from various periods; and this surrounded by a multitude of new boroughs with straight regular streets and uniform houses. (8)

[1] See Wittgenstein's Pragmatism
[2] See Recognizing the Epistemic Role of Experience in Ethics: Reflections Inspired by Putnam, McDowell, Wittgenstein, and Dewey
[3] See Wittgenstein, Dewey, and the Practical Foundation of Knowledge

Language, rather than being in a static state, continues to develop new meaning and forms. Since 'To imagine a language is to imagine a form of life' (Wittgenstein, *Investigations* 8), change in language ultimately creates alteration to and diversity of experience. Anna Boncompagni suggests that this claim discourages the reader from considering the completeness and fixation of language. As she observes in *Wittgenstein on Forms of Life*:

> we would not say that the city was incomplete before it included the suburbs. Similarly, the primitive language of the builder and the assistant should not be considered incomplete before the introduction of other elements. The possibility of extending language is always open and does not entail a language being incomplete before the extension. (11)

This is to say that language extends continuously, and the development of language is an incomplete activity as the 'multiplicity is not something fixed, given once for all; but new types of language, new language-games as we may say, come into existence, and others come obsolete and get forgotten' (Wittgenstein, *Investigation* 11). With this in mind, it is useful to view how Wittgenstein uses language in his writing in order to better understand his linguistic concept. As Marjorie Perloff observes in 'Writing Philosophy as Poetry: Literary form in Wittgenstein', 'Wittgenstein's writing has a predilection for aphorisms—terse and often gnomic utterances' (717), but it can also be witty and casual. Aphorism is also dexterously practiced by Hejinian who views it as a provocative approach to the re-interpretation of the everyday. Because of Wittgenstein's predilection in writing, I will demonstrate his own understanding of language by analysing his aphoristic expressions. Unlike the traditional aphorisms, Perloff suggests that Wittgenstein's are

> not characterised by their metaphorical force or their use of the rhetorical figure like antitheses or paralysis, but by what I would call *opaque literalism*. The sentences say

> just what they say – no difficult words to look up! – but they remain mysterious, endlessly puzzling, enigmatic. (719)

Perloff's statement reveals that Wittgenstein's arresting aphorisms are radically different from the traditional style which aims to provide truths while his ones feature great openness for interpretations. After quoting Wittgenstein's observation 'Death is not an event in life' (72) from *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Perloff proclaimed that 'For death (someone else's) could certainly be an event in my life ('Writing Philosophy as Poetry' 719). However, if we look at the whole statement Wittgenstein wrote, 'Death is not an event in life: we do not live to experience death' (*Tractatus* 72), it might be safe to suggest that there are 'no difficult words to look up', does not simply refer to Perloff's argument that 'The sentences say just what they say' as it can viewed as Wittgenstein's possible attempt to invite the reader to ponder what experience is or what we live to experience. Therefore, I propose that both Wittgenstein's and Hejinian's aphorisms denote great complexity and indicate something hidden or unseen which is open for interpretation. I will demonstrate my argument with three statements from the same book to reveal the possible unsaid in Wittgenstein's aphorisms:

> 2.02 Objects are simple.
>
> 2.0232 In a manner of speaking, objects are colourless.
>
> 2.0251 Space, time, and colour (being coloured) are forms of objects.
>
> (*Tractatus* 7)

Instead of just saying what they say, it is likely that these elusive yet suggestive aphorisms urge the reader to attentively consider in what context(s) objects are simple; why the colour of objects becomes colourless in the context of speaking, but it becomes an essential form of objects in another context. The unsaid, on the one hand, as an illuminating gesture of exploring new meaning, generates unlimited rumination and interpretation of daily objects and experience. On the other hand, it makes Wittgenstein's aphorisms 'remain mysterious,

endlessly puzzling, enigmatic'. Aphorism, for Wittgenstein and Hejinian, is not only a figure of speech but also an innovative method of exploring the new possibility of understanding language and the everyday. At the end of Perloff's article, she cogently summarised both Wittgenstein's philosophical and poetic writing style:

> From the gnomic aphorisms of the *Tractatus* to the "common-sense" analogies that multiply and spill over into the next paragraph in the *Investigation* and *On Certainty*, Wittgenstein's writings enact their central motive: words and phrases can be understood only in their particular context, their use. Not *what* one says but *how* one says it is the key to doing philosophy. And that, of course, is what makes it poetry as well. ('Writing Philosophy as Poetry' 728)

Wittgenstein's use of language in his own writing asserts the role of language in shaping daily experience, and his theory exerts profound influence on the language poets.

Drawing on the theories of different philosophers and critics, I have demonstrated a variety of paths for the presentation and transformation of everyday aesthetics. However, the aesthetical search is not always characterised by forward momentum and smooth progress because alienation, like repetition, is part of the nature of the everyday. Put differently, non-belonging is embedded in daily experience. In what follows, I will draw on Lefebvre's theory of alienation to reveal the danger of alienation, and the importance of establishing belonging in everyday life.

III. Belonging, Non-belonging and Experience in the Everyday Life

Alienation, as a negative force and form, disconnects humans' engagement with daily experience and strips them of initiative and freedom. In *Critiques of Everyday Life*, Michael Gardiner views alienation as 'a loss of control over essential human capacities and powers that should be firmly rooted in daily existence' (77). Karl Marx's theory of alienation, which

Lefebvre both draws on and examines, portrays the hostile and self-alienating daily experience of labour under capitalism. He also points out the fact that 'the *devaluation* of the world of man is in the direct proportion to the *increasing value* of the world of things' (68) in *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. Therefore, alienation creates inaccessibility to the sense of being and belonging, which makes 'life itself [appear] only as a means *to life*' (Marx 73). In other words, estrangement or the negation of human value and power is dehumanisation. Lefebvre cogently summarises that 'The human, stripped bare and projected outside of itself, was and remains at the mercy of forces which in fact come from the human and are nothing but human – but torn apart and dehumanized' (269). He further articulates the alarming perils of alienation by revealing its pervasiveness in economics, society, politics, ideology, and philosophy. However, alienation is not in a fixed and static state because 'There is a perpetual dialectical movement: "alienation-disalienation-new alienation". Therefore an activity which is disalienating and disalienated in relation to what has gone before can lead to an even greater alienation' (Lefebvre 502). This is to say that alienation continuously changes or mutates and may lead to greater repercussions for and disconnections from everyday life. This perilous situation 'obliges us to search documents and works (literary, cinematic, etc.) for evidence that a consciousness of alienation is being born, however indirectly, and that an effort towards "disalienation," no matter how oblique and obscure, has begun' (Lefebvre 88). For Lefebvre, the search for disalienation requires heighted attention to even the most mundane daily activities or experience. He further demystifies disalienation and suggests that disalienation, like alienation, is deep-rooted and ubiquitous in everyday life, which implies that disalienation can be achieved by ordinary activities such as reading a book or watching a movie with great consciousness. This also indicates that there is a variety of possible disalienating actions to enable humans to re-belong in and re-connect with the ordinary. According to Lefebvre, disalienation, like alienation, can develop in a perpetual dialectical

movement: ‘disalienation – alienation – new disaliention’. This process may create greater disalienation to enable the re-attachment to the everyday more closely and deeply. To read Lefebvre is to see how the three poets discussed in this dissertation express their alienation in their social and work life. Their radical experiment with various poetic strategies can be viewed as a method of re-entering and re-engaging with the everyday. Following the peril of alienation and the various theoretical accounts of everyday life, I will outline the three poets’ concepts and practices of everyday life and their resolute pursuit of belonging.

IV. Everyday Aesthetics of O’Hara, Guest, and Hejinian

‘It’s my duty to be attentive’

The New York School was an informal community of artists who lived and worked in New York in the 1950s and 1960s. They were greatly inspired by Surrealism and shared similarities in aesthetic styles, methods, and subject matter and formally incorporated the everyday into their works. O’Hara, a leading figure in the New York School, as discussed, consciously and adeptly integrates diverse images, sounds, and activities into his poetry to represent his personal and social experience. His causal yet intriguing presentation of the everyday is precisely captured by Allen Ginsberg in a discussion in ‘Early Poetic Community’:

> His poetry was all gossip, local gossip, social gossip, with sudden “ozone stalagmites,” inspired by images from New York, mixed with blueberry blintzes, also inspired. So that he felt any gesture he made was poetry, and poetry in that sense was totally democratic. So that there were no kings and queens of poetry. (57)

Ginsberg’s account manifests O’Hara’s intensified consciousness of the everyday and poetry, and his poetics is embedded in and inspired by the seemingly mundane yet deeply meaningful daily objects and experience. David Smith also articulates O’Hara’s poetic consciousness. As

he observes, O'Hara poems 'present a total attention, and they are telling you that that is the way to be. [There] is a warning: don't be bored, don't be lazy, don't be trivial and don't be proud. The slightest loss of attention leads to death' (qtd in Berkson 161). Regarding the development of O'Hara's poetics, collaboration plays an indispensable role as David Herd examines in *John Ashbery and American Poetry*:

> It was in the early 1950s that the poets of the New York School were at their closest. They were, as Koch remembers it, 'together all the time, becoming as a consequence, very 'involved in each other's work' O'Hara's occasional poetry was crucial to this sense of intimate community, his constant name-dropping and willingness always to address himself to the given moment adding meaning to the time they spent together. (55)

Herd's account clearly reveals O'Hara's undeniable contribution to the community where he unifies and advances their aesthetic inquiry into poetry. This artistic collaboration also deepens O'Hara's understanding of the everyday and broadens his daily and poetic experience and practice. Similarly, walking, as discussed with Debord's dérive, also serves as an approach to close contact with the everyday. O'Hara's walking can also be interpreted by Michel de Certeau's proposition that 'To walk is to lack a place' in *The Practice of Everyday Life*:

> [Walking] is the indefinite process of being absent and in search of a proper. The moving about that the city multiplies and concentrates makes the city itself an immense social experience of lacking a place -- an experience that is, to be sure, broken up into countless tiny deportations (displacements and walks), compensated for by the relationships and intersections of these exoduses that intertwine and create an urban fabric, and placed under the sign of what ought to be, ultimately, the place

> but is only a name, the City...a universe of rented spaces haunted by a nowhere or by dreamed-of places. (103)

According to De Certeau, walking in a city is a fragmented and displacing process which, for the walker, lacks a sustainable emotional attachment and leads to alienation. In this regard, O'Hara's walking can be viewed as a constant quest for a sense of connection with a city due to non-belonging or the lack of a place. In terms of belonging, collaboration can also be considered a search for his 'place' and the place here, as Herd puts forward, is the 'sense of intimate community' where he belongs and finds his aesthetic and social attachment. Pursuing belonging is also reflected in his 'I-do-this I-do-that' practice. For example, 'Having a Coke with You' and "A Step Away from Them' chronicle O'Hara's mundane activities and experience, and this demonstrates immediate contacts with both his inner and the outer world. It can be viewed an act of mitigating or removing alienation and more fully reconnecting O'Hara himself to everyday life.

Regarding O'Hara's daily and poetic understanding and practice, Bill Berkson outlines that 'the effect of his presence, like that of his work, was to shake us loose from obliviousness and affectation, to prod thoughts (sans hesitation) into gesture, to challenge all tragical conventions' (165). In Chapter 2, I will examine how O'Hara's aesthetic collaboration with other New York School artists builds and shapes his understanding of the everyday and poetry. I will also run – his various poetic strategies and how they align with Lefebvre's understanding of 'street' and Debord's dérive – in tandem to further demonstrate his innovative practice of presenting the everyday.

'I was envious of fair realism'

Guest and her poetry also undoubtedly 'shake us loose from obliviousness and affectation' (Berkson 165) and boldly create a new world which is full of diverse and inventive images

and meanings. This distinctive feature is observed by Jane Sprague when she reviewed Guest's *Miniatures and Other Poems*:

> There is no cogent explanation not readily available in the poem itself. There is the poem. There is the artwork. There is the miniature, multitudinous world. The compact and specific world we move through as humans, as ones who interact with these voluminous and particular aspects of culture: art, in its many manifestations.

Put differently, reading Guest's poems is an action of experiencing something spontaneous, sensory, and mysterious within and beyond the vast scope of reality. Instead of explaining or presenting the everyday, Guest aims to recreate and alter daily experience by exploring the unseen and the hidden. As Ange Mlinko observes in '*Words as Amulets*', realism, for Guest, is 'not its faithfulness to reality, but its unfaithfulness to it'. This is not to say that Guest denies the real; on the contrary, she recognises and is greatly aware of varying lived experience. Mlinko's 'unfaithfulness' implies Guest's refusal to present a duplicate of reality in her poetry. Guest considers reality 'fair' which means '"beauty," but it is also a shining object' as she explained in conversation with Charles Bernstein in 1995. 'Fair' indicates her search for the masked yet shining quality of reality, and for the possibility of what makes an object shine to further reveal something fresh and thought-provoking in both poetry and the everyday. It is worth noticing that Guest's 'beauty' is not the beautification or idealisation of the ordinary; it is an artistic movement or process of searching for the unrecognised, neglected or unexperienced instead. 'Objects' here are not limited to concrete physical objects but also include abstract objects such as emotions, words, and meanings. Guest's poetry, rather than being assertive or certain, is explorative and suggestive in an open-ended form. It rejects the exactness of reality and invites imaginative experience to broaden and strengthen immediate concrete experience.

Like O'Hara, Guest also collaborated extensively with Abstract Expressionist artists and poets, and this aesthetically related inter-arts practice stimulates her poetic experiment in recreating and transforming daily experience. However, as the only female poet in the first generation of the New York School Poets, collaboration does not prevent Guest feeling isolated. And in the meantime, her work is indisputably less acknowledged compared with other New York School members, as Sara Lundquist specifies in 'Reverence and Resistance: Barbara Guest, Ekphrasis, and the Female Gaze'

> Guest has remained strangely elusive, her volumes of poetry often difficult to obtain, reviews of her work infrequent, and academic critical studies sparse. Her name, in literary histories and anthologies, is almost invariably linked with those of Frank O'Hara, John Ashbery, Kenneth Koch, and James Schuyler as a member of the New York school of poets. Yet her poetry has not yet garnered the attention paid to the other four, certainly not the intense interest directed toward Ashbery and O'Hara from academic critics. (261)

With Lundquist's observation in mind, it is reasonable to propose that this well-deserved yet delayed recognition, to some degree, leads to a sense of isolation or non-belonging for Guest. Her poetic experiment with various techniques thus can be understood as a method of discovering her belonging. In this regard, her quest for the hidden and otherness in experience and poetry can be conceived of as a place or space where one may belong. It is noticeable that Guest refers frequently to space and location in her poetry, and the ostensibly physical location or dislocation is ultimately a search for emotional attachments. In short, she is a 'flâneur', walking in the world she creates to situate her everyday life, poetry, and belonging. In chapter 3, I will examine Guest's creative collaboration with some Abstract Expressionist artists and unfold their shared aesthetics in art and in everyday life. I will also demonstrate

how Guest remakes the quotidian and belonging through a variety of poetic techniques, which chime with Dewey's understanding of art and experience.

'I come face to face with a still life, but it isn't even still; even it isn't still.'

The Language poets are an avant-garde group and emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s. They are closely influenced by New American poets including the New York School and focus on drawing the reader's attention to the use and construction of language and the creation of meaning in poetry. Hejinian, as a key member of the Languages Poets, accentuates the power and function of language in the everyday to create new experience and meaning. For her, language is deeply embedded in and intertwined with the everyday, and the use of language shapes daily experience. This close relation between language and the quotidian develops in a dynamic and continuous form. In order to further understand her insight into the everyday, it might be useful to examine it from the opposite: what prevents humans from experiencing authentic experience. For Hejinian, it is anxiety, the repercussions of which she clearly states in 'Wild Captioning'

> Anxiety is more than a symptom of life under the pressure of late capitalism; it is also a persistent contributor to that pressure… Anxiety may create slavishness, but it also creates slave drivers. It dehumanizes, mechanizes. It renders synchronization (the bringing into pleasurable play of numerous faculties attentive to numerous experiences) impossible. It cuts humans off from the medium in which they live—present time. (290)

Hejinian's observation echoes Lefebvre's and Marx's interpretation of alienation. Anxiety, like alienation, not only separates humans from the everyday, but also strips them of possible access to a variety of experience. However, this situation continues deteriorating when

slavishness and slave drivers persist, which leads to greater separation and makes the present more absent. In addition to capitalism, she also demonstrates how pervasive contemporary social behaviour influences daily experience in '*Lola the Interpreter: Book One*'

> The contemporary social world… is one in which people are caught up in circuits of social negotiation, requiring circumspection and, often, some degree of dishonesty practiced behind a façade. One outcome of this is a sense of social alienation; another is complicity with common values that one, in fact, doesn't believe in. Those values cause certain kinds of behavior, shape that behavior, and, ultimately, bring about behavior's failure—and loss of freedom. (6)

The contemporary social world engenders a vast scope of non-belonging, and as an individual, the loss of freedom means the loss of potentiality to seek where true belonging lies. With a strong attempt to avoid alienation, Hejinian consciously creates innovative and rejuvenating language in her poetry to closely situate the reader in the context of the everyday to rediscover the present. She articulates that daily objects contain great value, meaning, and complexity, and their possible associations generate new experience as she wrote:

> Every stone is a faceted fact, a 3-D quiddity, a thing. But a stone isn't a simple thing: for starters there's the gravity that holds it and the fire in which it was forged. It is gray and mottled green—like a frog and its setting shadow… Cat and third-grade teacher, jargon and compass, boeuf bourguignon and screw driver, womanhood and surrealism—manifold differences in a fabric of associations. ('*Lola the Interpreter'* 3)

Hejinian strives to slow the tempo of everyday life to leave time and space for the reader to re-see and re-sense taken-for granted, ordinary objects and experience, which redeems the lost true experience and meaning. This pursuit is also reflected in her poetics:

> I can hardly concentrate on a particular poem at hand, so powerfully does it thrill me with the strangeness and ubiquity of life. The thrill is in the living, without possibility

> of certainty, without possibility of universal assent. “The thought is obscure, the syntax gasps for air.” (‘*Lola the Interpreter’* 5)

In other words, the thrill of a poem arises when lived experience is experienced freely and fully. Hejinian’s succinct yet meditative aphorism, ‘the syntax gasps for air’, indicates that language requires freshness and originality to break fixation and to renew and alter daily experience. In this sense, re-examining language is re-examining the everyday and re-anchoring belonging. In chapter 4, I will demonstrate Wittgenstein’s influence on the development of Hejinian’s poetics, and her great attentiveness to both language and experience. I will also analyse how she defamiliarises the everyday so as to create new experience and meanings in *My Life* in which she makes memory present and the ordinary extraordinary without beautifying reality.

Chapter 2 Dynamics and Images in O'Hara's Everyday Life Aesthetics

The New York School was a group of experimental poets, painters, dancers, and musicians who lived and worked in New York City in the 1950s and 1960s. They built on close camaraderie, aesthetic similarities in experimental methods, and subject matter and drew inspiration from Surrealism and the contemporary avant-garde art movements. O'Hara, a leading role in the New York School, is known for his poetic presentation of daily events and experience in his poetry and regarded as a poet of breathless immediacy. As O'Hara himself asserted in his poem, 'Meditations in an Emergency', 'I am bored but it's my duty to be attentive' (*Collected* 197). His abiding pursuit of attentiveness to moment-to-moment happenings casts him as an exemplary figure in the lineage of everyday-life aesthetics after WWII. In this chapter, I will examine two crucial aspects that exert great influence on the development of O'Hara's poetics. First, I will elucidate the effect of Surrealism since this cultural movement profoundly redefines and revolutionises daily experience, shaping O'Hara's understanding of everyday life in the post-war period in America. Second, I will expound on O'Hara's own artistic collaboration with three leading abstract artists, Jackson Pollock, David Smith, and Morton Feldman, to demonstrate his extensive and active involvement in various artistic fields, including poetry, drama, music, dance, and sculpture. I will further examine how this cross-media engagement influences O'Hara's ingenious experiments with everyday contents and forms in his poetry. In addition, this chapter also argues that the aesthetic camaraderie, or community, gives rise to and shapes O'Hara's sense of belonging in both art and everyday life. Having registered Surrealism's influence and O'Hara's close collaboration with his coterie of artists, I will proceed to analyse two distinctive strategies in his poetry – the poetry's sense of movement and its use of image – to further illustrate how he adeptly and aesthetically employs them to present the quotidian. While examining and revealing O'Hara's presentation of the everyday in his poetry, I will

also evince how his poetic approach aligns distinctly with Lefebvre's insightful understanding of 'street', and Debord's theory of dérive. Interlocking these related philosophical theories of the everyday with O'Hara's poetic presentation provides a rounded and incisive insight into his poetry and belonging.

I. The Context of O'Hara's Everyday Poetics: Surrealism and Mixed Media

Surrealism, established in 1924 and developed in Europe, had a considerable impact on art and literature in America to where numerous main surrealist artists fled during World War II. In *Everyday Life: Theories and Practices from Surrealism to the Present*, Michael Sheringham encapsulates the indispensable role Surrealism plays in everyday life studies:

> Firstly, because through all its switches of emphasis, and even in its dissident forms, the movement always maintained a commitment to the transformation of daily life…Secondly, because in its obsession with precursors, Surrealism retrospectively created a lineage, encompassing German Romanticism, Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Mallarmé, Apollinaire, and Reverdy, in which we can now identify key elements in the valorization and exploration of the *quotidien*. Thirdly, because in absorbing and transforming this lineage Surrealism bequeathed ways of construing, uncovering, and acting on the everyday that have retained their inspirational power until now. (59)

For Sheringham, understanding and presenting everyday life is the essence of Surrealism. James Clifford further expands the meaning of Surrealism to reinforce the connection between Surrealism and the everyday in *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*:

> I am using the term surrealism in an obviously expanded sense to circumscribe an aesthetic that values fragments, curious collections, unexpected juxtapositions – that

> works to provoke the manifestation of extraordinary realities drawn from the domains of the erotic, the exotic, and the unconscious. (118)

Clifford suggests that valorising fragments and presenting the quotidian through 'unexpected juxtapositions' enable the reader to 'see things anew: to make the act of perception performative rather than merely constative' (Sheringham 82). In other words, juxtapositions give rise to new experience and extend the understanding of the ordinary. Clifford's redefinition of Surrealism is in great alignment with O'Hara's formal practice of radical juxtaposition, and I will examine this strategy in detail late in this chapter. In this instance, Surrealism, for O'Hara, is not only an artistic and cultural movement but also a practical technique in poetry to enable reconsideration of the present. In short, Surrealism gives O'Hara the permission to more freely and fully impart various daily contents and experiences in his poetry and in doing so to redefine and re-experience everyday life. O'Hara's poetry thus embodies the quality of making the reader become more conscious of and engaged with what is happening, as Fred Moramarco observes in 'John Ashbery and Frank O'Hara: The Painterly Poets', 'underlying the casual chronicles of everyday events in his [O'Hara's] work is a deep commitment to the transformative qualities of poetry – its ability to open our eyes, sharpen our perceptions, involve us more totally with the world around us' (441).

In addition to the role of Surrealism plays in establishing O'Hara's understanding of the everyday and poetry, it is also important to recognise his close artistic coterie who undeniably exerted great influence on him and his poetic development. This collaborative milieu serves as a pivotal path for O'Hara to steer clear of alienation, as discussed in Chapter 1, and to establish and develop his belonging through art and community. Therefore, in what follows, I will demonstrate O'Hara's great involvement in and contributions to his aesthetic collaboration with other artists, and how his collaboration constructs his poetics as well as his interpretation and presentation of the quotidian and belonging.

Apart from being a poet, O'Hara was also well known as an art critic, an assistant curator at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York, and an assistant for a variety of art exhibitions. Through his work at MoMA, he grew close to painters including Willem de Kooning, Franz Kline, Larry Rivers, Jackson Pollock, and other Abstract Expressionists. However, O'Hara's involvement with artists extends far beyond the painting world as he also had close associations with figures in the world of poetry, drama, music, dance, and sculpture. Morton Feldman recalls that O'Hara 'was able to love and appreciate more different kinds of art than one would have thought possible' (qtd. in Perloff 792).[4] For example, he produced a series of lithographs titled *Stones* with Rivers; made films, *Directions: A Walk after the War Games*, and *The Last Clean Shirt* with Alfred Leslie, a painter and filmmaker; created collages with Michael Goldberg; with Joe Brainard, he created comic strips: *There's Something Very Funny About Us*, *Red Rydler and Dog*, and *Guess Where I Found This?!!*; wrote poems with John Ashbery, Kenneth Koch, and Bill Berkson; and composed lyrics for *Four Dialogues for Two Voices and Two Pianos* with Ned Rorem. This artistic collaboration continued until his untimely and tragic death in 1966, at which point he had begun to plan Pollock's retrospective. O'Hara himself articulates the meaning and influence of this involvement in 'New Directions in Music: Morton Feldman'

> The "climate" for receptivity to the new art has improved correspondingly, and one of the most important aspects of this change has been the inter-involvement of the individual arts with one another…The influence of esthetic ideas has also been mutual: the very extremity of the differences between the arts has thrown their technical analogies into sharp relief. (115)

What the inter-involvement provides is not an artistic imitation but an aesthetic rethinking and practice as O'Hara further claims in 'Larry Rivers: A Memoir', 'The artists I knew at that

[4] Frank O'Hara and the Aesthetics of Attention

time knew perfectly well who was great and they weren't going to begin to imitate their works, only their spirit' (*Collected* 513). This shared aesthetic spirit and pursuit gives rise to the development of O'Hara's poetic style as John Ashbery observes in the introduction of *The Collected Poems of Frank O'Hara*:

> O'Hara's concept of the poem as the chronicle of the creative act that produces it was strengthened by his intimate experience of Pollock's, Kline's and de Kooning's great paintings of the late 40s and early 50s and of the imaginative realism of painters like Jane Freilicher and Larry Rivers. (viii)

With O'Hara's extensive aesthetic bond with various artists in mind, in what follows, I will further explicate his close collaboration with Jackson Pollock, an abstract expressionist painter, David Smith, an abstract expressionism sculptor, and Morton Feldman, a pioneer of indeterminate music, respectively to manifest how their creative practice helps O'Hara construct his interpretation and presentation of both poetry and the everyday. It is through such collaborations, I will argue, that O'Hara developed a sense of belonging both within his artistic community and in the context of the everyday, building on shared aesthetic interests to create new forms of engagement with daily experience.

Abstract expressionism, as an art movement, occurred in the aftermath of WWII. During this period, abstract expressionists such as Pollock, Kline and de Kooning were experimenting with diverse and radical techniques to review the concept of painting and to represent dailiness in their works by re-examining basic materials such as canvas, colour, and other found objects. In *Jackson Pollock*, O'Hara observes one of the distinguishing features, inclusiveness, in Pollock's painting:

> …art for him was not a matter of deciding upon a style and then exploring its possibility. He explored the possibility for discovery in himself as an artist, and in doing so he embraced, absorbed and expanded all the materials which he instinctively

> reached for, and which we later find to be completely pertinent to the work. His method was inclusive: he did not exclude, from one period to another, elements in which he had found a previous meaning of a different nature. Thus it is what we find relationship, however disparate in meaning… (12)

Like Pollock's method, inclusiveness towards daily materials is also O'Hara's approach and is ubiquitous in his poems. He embraces the mundane by enumerating a series of ordinary daily objects in his exemplary poem, 'Today':

> Oh! kangaroos, sequins, chocolate sodas!
> You really are beautiful! Pearls,
> harmonicas, jujubes, aspirins! all
> the stuff they've always talked about
> still makes a poem a surprise!
> These things are with us every day
> even on beachheads and biers. They
> do have meaning. They're strong as rocks. (*Collected* 15)

These provocative claims – banal things 'do have meaning', and the mundane 'still makes a poem a surprise' – not only suggest O'Hara's heightened attention to and re-assessment of ordinary yet meaningful objects but also reveal that his poetry is fundamentally embedded in the everyday. O'Hara concisely observes that, for Pollock, 'Paint is paint, shells and wire are shells and wire, glass is glass, canvas is canvas. You do not find in his work, a typewriter becoming a stomach, a sponge becoming a brain' (*Jackson Pollock* 16). In this aspect, although pollock was influenced by Surrealism, his aesthetic approach, accepting daily elements as what they are, is markedly different from the Surrealists who allowed the unconsciousness and dreamlike mind to express itself, often resulting in the depiction of illogical concepts. O'Hara's concise observation felicitously indicates that instead of

falsifying or transcending the value of daily elements, both himself and Pollock steer clear of transcendence or epiphanies to keep true to the present.

Both Pollock and O'Hara seek artistic freedom to break with the long-established perception of art and its presentation. David Smith, Pollock's close friend, was an avid empiricist and tirelessly pursued freedom in order to bring new meanings to his works, as he observed in 'Statements, Writings', 'I feel no tradition. I feel great spaces. I feel my own time. I am disconnected. I belong to no mores- no party-no religion-no school of thought-no institutions. I feel raw freedom and my identity' (37). Driven by freedom, Smith is not stifled by restrictions and strives relentlessly towards breakthroughs and inventiveness in art, as he claims 'Art is a paradox that has no laws to bind it. Laws set can always be violated…When art exists it becomes tradition. When it is created, it represents a unity that did not exist before' (37). Smith's challenging attitude towards tradition indicates his insistence on innovative aesthetic methods of presenting the everyday, because for him, 'Art is not divorced from life' (37). This belief aligns with O'Hara's understanding that art is deeply embedded in the quotidian. Smith is best known for welding and forging large sized steel abstract geometric sculptures by using various found objects. Apart from the size of his works, Smith unrelentingly examines and experiments with steel element joints, paints, and the interplay of steel forms to recreate an original unification of steels and a fresh perspective of viewing sculptures. Smith's unification, as O'Hara states in 'David Smith: The Color of Steel', 'is approached by inviting the eye to travel over the complicated surface exhaustively, rather than inviting it to settle on the whole first and then explore details. It is the esthetic of culmination rather than examination' (123). Since 'Art is not divorced from life', 'inviting the eye to travel over the complicated surface exhaustively' is not only an artistic practice but also a practical method of inviting the reader to closely examine the mundane yet complicated qualities of daily life. Smith's redefined sense of unification is endowed with

‘motion’ which resonates with O’Hara’s commitment to poetic movement in his poems. For instance, in the first stanza of ‘A Step Away from Them’ (*Collected* 257), there is a strong and palpable sense of movement that invites the reader to travel with the speaker to explore a battery of concrete daily details on a street in New York. For O’Hara and Smith, movement is both an artistic and everyday feature. Moreover, it further implies that daily experience does not have a fixed status; on the contrary, it ‘travels’ and varies.

Like O’Hara and Smith, Morton Feldman, deeply inspired by Abstract expressionism, rejects traditional compositional forms and techniques, and pursues artistic freedom in order to create his innovative expressions. Feldman’s refusal of artistic closure is succinctly captured by Will Montgomery in ‘“In Fatal Winds”: Frank O’Hara and Morton Feldman’, as he sets forth that Feldman’s

> aim in this early work to ‘unfix’ the formal relationships between ‘rhythm, pitch, dynamics’ is broadly comparable to O’Hara’s rejection of a ‘poetics’ of ‘form, measure, sound, yardage, placement and ear’. Feldman too scorns metre, seeking to recover a more complex and subjective experience of temporality: ‘I am not a clockmaker. I am interested in getting to time in its unstructured existence. That is, I am interested in how this wild beast lives in the jungle – not in the zoo.’ (5)

For Feldman, ‘The jungle’ refers to everyday life in which his music develops. This echoes Smith understanding that ‘Art is not divorced from life’ (37). The ‘unstructured existence’ is a resolute refusal of aesthetic tradition and a declaration of remaking artistic and daily experience. One of Feldman’s creative techniques of staving off convention is unpredictability. He adventurously gave his performers the freedom and flexibility to create the entrance into the rhythmic structures or to control the duration within a given tempo. This practice ‘might be described as an art of immediacy, dependent on principles of

‘unpredictability and possibility’ and highly sceptical of theories of art and formal systems’ (Montgomery 200). This aesthetic immediacy or unpredictability is also ubiquitously embedded in O’Hara’s poems since they teem with a chronicle of immediate everyday experience and events. The practice of unpredictability not only challenges the traditional contents and forms of art but also strives against the understanding of the everyday being fixed and monotonous and gives rise to new interpretations of dailiness. In addition to unpredictability, Feldman’s music is abundant in repetition, as he elucidates that ‘The repeated notes are not musical pointillism, as in Webern, but they are where mind rests in an image – the beginning of the piece is like a recognition, not a motif, and by virtue of the repetitions it conditions one to listen’ (qtd.in O’Hara, “New Directions in Music” 118). The fact that repeated notes are where mind rests in an image means that repetition, to some degree, can be viewed as a process of visualising a piece of music since the image travels with the sound and

> we proceed to experience the individual time-responses of the four pianists we are moving inexorably toward the final image where the mind can rest, which is the end of the piece. In this particular performance it is as if one were traversing an enormous plain at the opposite ends of which were two huge monoliths, guarding its winds and grasses. (qtd.in O’Hara, “New Directions in Music” 118)

The synchronous movement of listening and visualising provides the listener with new understanding of the performance, broadening his daily experience. The movement further constructs a tangible and sensuous landscape: traversing an enormous plain and two huge monoliths, winds, and grasses. The harmonious and simultaneous interplay of sound and image strikes a chord with O’Hara’s poetics. For example, in his poem ‘Music’, he wrote

> …my nerves humming.
>
> ……..

and gusts of water spray over the basins of leaves

like the hammers of a glass pianoforte.

……..

Clasp me in your handkerchief like a tear, trumpet

of early afternoon! in the foggy autumn. (*Collected* 210)

The artistic interplay here not only invites the reader to a vivid three-dimensional terrain where it is filled with unexpected and juxtaposed images and sounds but also imparts new features to daily objects, which expands and renews both the reader's daily and poetic experience. It is worth noticing that, although O'Hara later changed his major from music to English, after starting publishing poems in *The Harvard Advocate*, and became immensely dedicated to writing, the influence of music was still deeply applied and experimented in his poetry. As he recalled his experience when he studied piano at the New England Conservatory from 1941 to 1944, 'It was a very funny life. I lived in Grafton, took a ride on a bus into Worcester every day to high school, and on Saturdays took a bus and a train to Boston to study piano. On Sundays, I stayed in my room and listened to the Sunday symphony programs.'[5] As Ashbery recalled, 'Frank also listened constantly to music, not only to composers of the recent past as diverse as Rachmaninoff and Schönberg, but to contemporary avant-garde composer such as Cage and Feldman' (ix). It is clear that his great passion for and knowledge of music enabled him to seamlessly integrate sounds into images in his poetry, which creates new features and meanings of daily objects and further generates fresh poetic and daily experience.

The above discussion comes primarily from O'Hara's art criticism rather than from his commentary on poetry. As such, it not only provides the cross-media context in which O'Hara establishes his belonging to an artistic community and the relationship between

[5] It is recorded in Poetry Foundation

himself and other avant-garde artists but also displays a distinctive practice of him skilfully incorporating a diversity of daily elements in his poetry so as to re-assess the value of dailiness. Geoff Ward observes this interrelation between the cross-media and the everyday in *Statutes of Liberty*: *The New York School of Poets*:

> Alongside the actual mixed-media collaboration in lithograph or film with Larry Rivers and others, his [O'Hara's] constant practice was to bring one form of expression to life by forcing it to abrade or include another from which it is conventionally distinct. (37)

This is to say that O'Hara's collaboration can be viewed as a method of diversifying the presentation of daily life. In other words, O'Hara is committed to experimenting with different techniques in order to better understand and capture the everyday.

To conclude this section of the argument, Surrealism lays the foundation for O'Hara to reconsider and revolutionise the imposed values and norms of both poetry and everyday life. In the meantime, his close association with his artistic coterie deepens his insight into the quotidian and compels him to radically experiment with a diversity of contents and forms to present daily experience. More importantly, this extensive camaraderie, with its mutual aesthetic interests and pursuits, empowers him to establish and develop his sense of belonging through art and poetry to a community in New York. In what follows, I will analyse the poetic techniques O'Hara employs in his poetry to examine how he perceives and presents everyday life and belonging.

II. O'Hara's Poetic Movement in Line with Lefebvre's and Debord's Everyday Life Theory

As discussed in Chapter 1, O'Hara's poetic attentiveness to everyday life echoes Lefebvre's and Debord's pursuit of re-examining and revolutionising daily experience. As Andrew Epstein observes in *Attention Equals Life*:

> It is no coincidence, for example, that in the 1950s, Henri Lefebvre, Roland Barthes, and Raymond Williams begin to assess capitalism's subtle insinuation into the smallest details of everyday life, at the same time as a poet like Frank O'Hara develops a new mode of everyday poetics attentive to acts of consumption and urban experience. (17)

Although no evidence exists to directly attest to the connection between O'Hara and Lefebvre or Debord, the overlapping critical and creative focus on everyday life aesthetics is undeniably manifest. As Andrew Ross concisely points out in 'The Rock 'n' Roll Ghost', there is 'a fresh affirmation of the strange American conviction that solutions to modern cultural problems can always be found in Paris, accompanied, of course, by a fresh elision of native experience, native thought, and native activism' (114). Lefebvre and Debord were keenly devoted to developing their theories to review and re-orientate the significance of the everyday while O'Hara was calling for great attentiveness to the quotidian and experimenting with various strategies to capture and present daily experience. Therefore, the examination of the interplay of theoretical and poetic strands of thought offers an incisive and comprehensive insight into how O'Hara perceives and represents the everyday in his poetry. In order to demonstrate O'Hara's understanding of everyday life, I will analyse one of the key features in his poetry, movement through three interlocking categories: the physical and the affective; the spatial and the temporal; and the real and the surreal. Furthermore, I will argue that O'Hara's employment of movement demonstrates a proximity to Lefebvre's insight into the function of

'street' which is considered as a miniature of a dynamic city. His understanding of movement also shares great similarity with the theory of the dérive that Debord put forward in 1956 as a revolutionary strategy of experiencing, reflecting on, and forming new relationships with varied environments.

Hailed as a poet of flâneuerism, many of O'Hara's poems, in particular those in *Lunch Poems*, embody the immediacy and dailiness of his lunch time walking through the streets in Manhattan. It is worth noticing that being a flâneuer, which is to say, walking freely to explore a city, is considered a privilege of males as Lauren Elkin notes in *Flâneuse: Women Walk the City in Paris, New York, Tokyo, Venice, and London*:

> A figure of masculine privilege and leisure… the *flâneuer* understands the city as few of its inhabitants do, for he has memorised it with his feet. Every corner, alleyway and stairway has the ability to plunge him into *rêverie*. What happened here? Who passed by here? What does this mean? The *flâneuer*, attuned to the chords that vibrate throughout his city, knows without knowing. (3)

O'Hara, as a white male, had the freedom to walk around in a city, which provides him with greater privileges than women or people of colour to explore daily life. A flâneuer's extensive daily experience is vividly illustrated by Lefebvre when he suggests in *Critique of Everyday Life* that a street is 'the microcosm of modern life' (604) and offers a more lived and holistic view of the everyday. In other words, being a flâneuer is likely to enable one to stay closer to and experience true daily life. He further articulates the diversity of a street and the consciousness a flâneuer requires in order to more fully experience the ordinary:

> The street is a spectacle, almost nothing but a spectacle, but not completely a spectacle, because we are in it, walking, stopping and participating. If you are hurrying you will not see the spectacle, even if you are part of it. Almost an absolute

> spectacle, but not completely, it is an open book, or rather newspaper: it has news, banalities, surprises, advertisements. (Lefebvre 604)

Lefebvre's insistence on consciousness of the happenings bears a striking resemblance to O'Hara's walking practice as, rather than hastily passing through the street, he walks with great consciousness of its constant activities. Put differently, O'Hara's seemingly simple yet complex and meaningful walking is an in-depth approach to the re-examination of daily objects, events, and experience intended to establish a better understanding of the everyday. As Lawrence incisively suggests in 'Frank O'Hara in New York Race Relations, Poetic Situations, Postcolonial Space', O'Hara 'uses explorations of New York and its intricate networks of paths, relations, and possibilities in order to both disrupt conventions of perception and further a relationship with walking companions' (95). Therefore, what O'Hara explores or experiments with – daily elements and their relations – are not simply or randomly recorded, but consciously enacted and skilfully recomposed in order to establish a new relationship with varied surroundings and to seek new possibilities of re-re-experiencing the street. However, what O'Hara explores is not a static and separated individual scene in the physical world because it develops through the continuous and connected events of everyday life. This continuous interlocking physical and affective development gives rise to more diversified experience.

To exemplify the physical and affective movement in both his poetry and the quotidian, I will analyse O'Hara's poem 'A Step Away from Them'. Quoted at length, the poem portrays a vivid and vibrant street scene, a mobile tableau of urban life:

> It's my lunch hour, so I go
> for a walk among the hum-colored
> cabs. First, down the sidewalk
> where laborers feed their dirty

glistening torsos sandwiches
and Coca-Cola, with yellow helmets
on. They protect them from falling
bricks, I guess. Then onto the
avenue where skirts are flipping
above heels and blow up over
grates. The sun is hot, but the
cabs stir up the air. I look
at bargains in wristwatches. There
are cats playing in sawdust.
On
to Times Square, where the sign
blows smoke over my head, and higher
the waterfall pours lightly. A
Negro stands in a doorway with a
toothpick, languorously agitating.
A blonde chorus girl clicks: he
smiles and rubs his chin. Everything
suddenly honks: it is 12:40 of
a Thursday. (*Collected* 257)

The street scene moves from 'hum-colored/cabs' to 'laborers feed[ing] their torsos sandwiches and Coca-Cola', from skirts 'flipping/above heels' 'bargains and cats playing' to the sign above Times Square which 'blows smoke over my head, and higher/the waterfall pours lightly'. This smooth movement vividly reflects, and can be seen to be influenced by, Pollock's 'action painting', that pouring, splashing, staining, or dripping of liquid paint on a

horizontal surface. Such painterly activity also consists of the continuous action of the painter's arm and body in the production of brushstrokes. This method enables Pollock to view and move the paint on the canvas more freely from an all-round perspective. Such a sense of movement also applies to Feldman's musical compositions, as discussed, and features great immediacy and unpredictability of creation. The two stanzas not only depict a concrete and lively urban street scene but also articulate a clear poetic movement that synthesises the seemingly individual event. This practice is in accordance with Lefebvre's suggestion:

> the street represents the everyday in our social life. It embodies it almost completely, like a digest which is interesting because it is so condensed…A place of passage, of interaction, of movement and communication, it becomes, via an astonishing volte-face, the reflection of the things it links together, something with more life in it than those things themselves. (604)

In line with Lefebvre, O'Hara truthfully keeps the individual happening while artistically unifying the unrelated events together to present an authentic and diversified social life through the power of the poem's energy or movement. However, the poem is not only about the 'living present', as it expands to examine the past and its impacts on the present. It shifts from the vibrancy of the street scene to the death of his close friends – Bunny, John Latouche, and Jackson Pollock – and his grief in the penultimate stanza:

> There are several Puerto
> Ricans on the avenue today, which
> makes it beautiful and warm. First
> Bunny died, then John Latouche,
> then Jackson Pollock. But is the
> earth as full as life was full, of them?

And one has eaten and one walks,
past the magazines with nudes
and the posters for BULLFIGHT and
the Manhattan Storage Warehouse,
which they'll soon tear down. I
used to think they had the Armory
Show there. (*Collected* 257)

The poem shifts temporally from the past, the memory of his close friends, to the present scene, the magazines, and posters, and then to the future that the Manhattan Storage Warehouse will soon be torn down. The speaker's physical encounters lead to and intertwine with a series of emotional fluctuations. The temporal movement further indicates that the present, for O'Hara, is not limited to what is happening since it expands to both the past and the future. The temporal shift and expansion of the present can be precisely summarised by Sheringham's account of 'the three dimensions of the present (past, present, and the future)', by which he 'specif[ies] the process through which attention grasps the unfolding of existence' (84-85). Sheringham's call for attention also resonates with O'Hara's practice as he proclaims that attention contributes to the realisation of the complexity and diversity of daily experience. The last stanza of the poem – a glass of papaya juice/and back to work. My heart is in my/pocket, it is Poems by Pierre Reverdy – shifts back from the past to the present seamlessly, without transition or explanation, yet with a heavy tone arising from the loss of the past and the loss of the future of the soon-to-be torn down building and the memory it has. Such active and generative physical movement and emotional change, precisely align with Kristin Ross's insightful comment on Rimbaud's response to the Paris Commune in *The Emergence of Social Space*:

> to experience space as created by an interaction, as something that our bodies reactivate, and that through this reactivation, in turn modifies and transforms us. The space of the voyage… merges with a temporal passage…that guarantees that the voyagers will not be the same individuals at the end of the trip that they were at the beginning. (35)

For Rimbaud and O'Hara, the speaker is not the same individual at the end of the walk as he was prior to walking because of the interplay of both the spatial and temporal and physical and emotional fluctuations of experience. This echoes Debord's theory of Dérive, or 'drifting' which 'involves playful-constructive behaviour and awareness of psychogeographical effects, and are thus quite different from the classic notions of journey or stroll'. In *Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography*, Debord defines psychogeography as 'the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behavior of individuals.' This is to say that the goal of dérive includes conscious observation of the happenings and the emotional effects the environments create. The street scene O'Hara displays in this poem exemplifies Debord's definition of dérive. First, O'Hara vividly and consciously depicts the ordinary, including people, their behaviour, activities, busy traffic, cats, buildings, weather, and other daily elements. Second, the speaker's emotion deepens and varies when the avenue reminds him of his friends' passing. In other words, emotions are firmly associated with the development of events, and further intensify and unify O'Hara's experience, as Dewey proposes in *Art as Experience*:

> Emotion is the moving and cementing force. It selects what is congruous and dyes what is selected with its color, thereby giving qualitative unity to materials externally disparate and dissimilar. It thus provides unity in and through the varies part of an experience. (42)

Emotion, as an invisible yet tangible movement or energy, interweaves the external happenings with O'Hara's internal resonances, which ultimately creates *an* experience, as understood by Dewey in Chapter 1. In other words, the constant and continuous interaction between the external and the internal world enriches the everyday and makes it meaningful. It is clear to recognise the close connection between O'Hara's walking and Debord's practice of dérive. However, this does not indicate total similarities due to different social and political circumstances. In 1960s, especially in 1968, Paris was engulfed in widespread protests, strikes, and civil unrest. Initially sparked by university students' demonstrations against university conditions and authoritarian political structures, the movement rapidly escalated into a nationwide strike including millions of workers pouring into the streets to support the students and to claim their own right. This revolutionary period, to a greater extent, ineluctably places Debord's emphases on the reclaim for and the authenticity of the streets and the everyday, which further influences Lefebvre's and De Certeau's understanding of daily life. In the similar period, New York City, characterised by its dynamic urban development and connectivity, vibrant culture, and socio-political activism, had grown to a metropolis exhibiting great innovation, transformation and resilience. Put differently, the city not only strengthened its economic and social development but also became a focal point for cultural and aesthetic evolution. For instance, The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) became a pivotal role in shaping contemporary art, seeking freedom and new expressions in artmaking. This relatively stable social and cultural background is more likely to make O'Hara focus on the conscious presentation of the quotidian.

As discussed, 'A Step Away from Them' features spontaneous movement, and this movement mirrors the characteristics of mobility and multiplicity expressed in Lefebvre's understanding of the 'street', and in Debord's insight into dérive. However, movement not only applies to temporality and spatiality, physicality and emotion but also expands to the

relation between the real and the surreal. I will thus demonstrate this affective movement in O'Hara's poem, 'Music', which archetypally exhibits how dailiness traverses across the real and the surreal world.

'Music', on first reading, seems to be a jumble of images and feelings, detailing the speaker's observation and impressions of the mundane:

If I rest for a moment near The Equestrian
pausing for a liver sausage sandwich in the Mayflower Shoppe,
that angel seems to be leading the horse into Bergdorf's
and I am naked as a table cloth, my nerves humming.
Close to the fear of war and the stars which have disappeared.
I have in my hands only 35c, it's so meaningless to eat!
and gusts of water spray over the basins of leaves
like the hammers of a glass pianoforte. If I seem to you
to have lavender lips under the leaves of the world,
I must tighten my belt.
It's like a locomotive on the march, the season
of distress and clarity
and my door is open to the evenings of midwinter's
lightly falling snow over the newspapers.
Clasp me in your handkerchief like a tear, trumpet
of early afternoon! in the foggy autumn.
As they're putting up the Christmas trees on Park Avenue
I shall see my daydreams walking by with dogs in blankets,
put to some use before all those coloured lights come on!
But no more fountains and no more rain,

and the stores stay open terribly late. (*Collected* 210)

Yet, the 'jumble' is full of smooth motions and activities. As a surreal poem, 'Music' essentially projects the true everydayness. The physical or the 'real' scene in the first two stanzas shifts from what is probably an imagined moment when 'that angel seems to be leading the horse into Bergdorf's', to the fact that 'I have in my hands only 35c'. It then shifts back to the speaker's imagination or illusion of 'the Christmas trees on Park Avenue'. The spatial movement occurs with the temporal fluctuation from the foggy autumn when 'gusts of water spray over the basins of leaves', to a festive time in winter, 'As they're putting up the Christmas trees'; from an 'early afternoon' to a night when 'the stores stay open terribly late'. While the temporal and spatial movements occur, the interplay between the real and the surreal also continues and indicates a great sense of movement and the connection between the inner and external world. In doing so, it creates a blurred sense between reality and fantasy, as Perloff's observation in '"Transparent Selves": The Poetry of John Ashbery and Frank O'Hara', 'O'Hara's empiricism is deceptive for it modulates easily and unexpectedly into fantasy and artifice' (189). The blurred boundary further expands the scope of the present, gives rise to new experience, and indicates that seeking belonging is not restricted to the absolute reality as it can be extended to the surreal which broadens the understanding of belonging.

In this section, I have discussed O'Hara's dynamics in three categories, and they reflect O'Hara's qualities as a flâneur. He is markedly conscious of, and inspired by, the street's happenings, and adeptly captures, selects, and organises them in order to reconstruct the relations of daily elements to create new daily experience. These features strike a chord with Charles Baudelaire's portrait of a flânuer as an artist-poet in *The Painter of Modern Life*

> To be away from home and yet to feel oneself everywhere at home; to see the world, to be at the centre of the world, and yet to remain hidden from the world…we might

> liken him [flâneur] to a mirror as vast as the crowd itself; or to a kaleidoscope gifted with consciousness, responding to each one of its movements and reproducing the multiplicity of life and the flickering grace of all the elements of life. (9)

Movement, applied ubiquitously in O'Hara's poetic exploration of the quotidian, and emphasized by Lefevre and Debord in their theoretical pursuit, is a driving force and has the ability of establishing a strong sense of presence which makes his poems per se a miniature of daily life. In the meantime, as discussed in Chapter 1, walking, for O'Hara, like artistic collaboration, is an active method of searching for belonging. It should be safe to propose that through the various movements, he aims to explore his sense of belonging in three categories – physical and affective, the spatial and the temporal, and the real and the surreal. Because of this diversity of movement, O'Hara further expands the concept of belonging and gives the reader the permission to examine and discover this sense from a multiplicity of perspectives and practice.

III. O'Hara's Poetic Imagery, Lefebvre's Interpretation of Images and Debord's Détournement

From the above discussion of the poetic movement in 'A Step Away from Them' and 'Music', it is possible to recognise another distinctive feature of O'Hara's poetic practice, the juxtaposed images. Therefore, in what follows I will examine the essential qualities of O'Hara's poetic images and how he presents them in order to recreate everyday experience. I will also illustrate how O'Hara's use of images resembles the theory of images proposed by Lefebvre from the sematic perspective, and the method of détournement outlined by Debord.

Before examining O'Hara's poetic images, it might be worth being cognisant of the tone he exercises in his poetry. If everyday life is the ground where his images come from,

the tone would be the atmosphere in which images develop and interweave with each other. Ashbery observes that O'Hara's poetry is in a 'conversational tone' (x), and Ward agrees, stating that 'O'Hara's poems are themselves often affable and warm in tone' (40). This colloquial tone is ubiquitous in O'Hara's works such as 'Dialogue' (*Collected* 240), 'A True Account of Talking to the Sun at Fire Island (*Collected* 306), and 'Having a Coke with you' (*Collected* 360). However, my attention is not to argue that this is the only tone in O'Hara's poetry. Instead, I take this conversational tone as an example to address how tone helps reveal dailiness. O'Hara's employment of conversational tone echoes Lefebvre's interpretation of dialogue, discussion, and conversation which can be grasped at three levels. The first level concerns the most basic form of conversation that

> the language of conversation uses banalities. We talk about neutral things, i.e., really about things and about people seen as things: the weather, the neighbour, friends… However this apparently useless exchange of trivia signifies something. It bears witness to a generalized need. (Lefebvre 607-608)

In other words, conversations at this level only state the most basic and general needs. Whereas the second level of discourse exceeds mere banality to the point where comes

> the long words and the important theories, metaphors and values which play in discourse the role played by monuments in the city: proverbs rich in wisdom, usually of the resigned variety… just as dialogues do when they are extremely trivial, but in this case because it is too rich, and has trespassed beyond the zone of average communication. (Lefebvre 607-608)

Conversation, at this level, features more valuable and comprehensive meanings. The third level of communication 'would have to cross over into poetry or spontaneous lyrism' and 'on the highest level, it is the emptiness of luminous and transparent space... Only poetry has the wings to soar there' (Lefebvre 607-608). Lefebvre thus incisively underscores the important

role of poetry in communication, and the necessity of conversations or a conversational tone in poetry in terms of reflecting and redefining everyday life. O'Hara's poetry portrays banality while progressing to an advanced communication level. And his conversational tone serves as an effective technique of underpinning the motif of everyday life aesthetics, and of creating a sense of engagement with the reader. In Lefebvre's term, O'Hara's poetry 'has the wings to soar' to a place where 'communication shifts between the silence below and silence above. It sets all the levels into motion and change them' (Lefebvre 608). In other words, O'Hara's poetry radically challenges the traditional notion of the everyday and calls for innovative method of re-experiencing dailiness.

In addition to the lightness and playfulness of the tone, O'Hara's ordinary yet markedly distinctive images can also be viewed as an approach to the consciousness of daily experience and to the new presentation of the everyday. As Kenneth Koch observes in 'A Note on Frank O'Hara in The Early Fifties', O'Hara's poetry is filled with daily objects: 'Some of these things had not appeared before in poetry. His poetry contained aspirin tablets, Good Teeth buttons, and water pistols. His poems abound with passion and life; they weren't trivial because small things were called in them by name' (33). What Koch points out is that, for O'Hara, daily objects are salient elements of everyday life becuase 'these things are with us every day…They do have meaning' (O'Hara, *Collected* 15). O'Hara's poem 'Oranges: 12 Pastorals' (*Collected* 5) teems with such an immensely wide range of both natural and manmade, real and surreal, abstract and concrete objects as crows, rice, lavender flowers, horoscope, excrement, chameleon, skull, rickshaw, bridge, holy ghost, suckling pigs, periwinkle iris, god, a counterfeit coin, marine breeze, golden lily, foxglove. This diversity not only displays the feature of inclusion but also demonstrates O'Hara's egalitarianism towards objects. Thus, as Ward asserts, 'the poetry does imply the desirability of a potentially equal attention to all things' (53).

The aesthetics of inclusion and egalitarianism does not mean O'Hara's daily objects are randomly selected and carelessly composed into a poem. To avoid the chaotic scenario of a jumble of objects, it requires consciousness to select and rearrange them, as Lefebvre claims when he observes that 'it is a form of consciousness, or a level, or a modality if you like, but not the emergence of an "unconsciousness" which might resemble a storehouse of images' (581). I will take the poems 'Snapshot for Boris Pasternak' (*Collected* 110) and 'Dialogues' (*Collected* 240) as examples to reveal how O'Hara dextrously suffuses his poems with daily yet fresh images while avoiding 'a storehouse of images'. In other words, apart from the imagery characteristic of inclusion and egalitarianism, I will consider how he arranges objects or what techniques he employs to create inventive images out of daily objects to discover and present everydayness in his poetry. 'Snapshot for Boris Pasternak' starts with familiar words and images yet with two striking and unique metaphors:

> The wrinkled page of the sky swells
> with emptiness like the heart of a man
> imprisoned, and the cloudy paragraphs
> of his prayer beat my forehead as I
> kneel before the translation of your lips. (*Collected* 110)

Unlike traditional metaphors, where 'two terms are combined so as to give the first added emphasis' (73), as Ward claims, the 'page of sky' and 'translation of your lips' are the epitome of Surrealist metaphor. He further articulates that

> In Surrealist metaphor, two terms are juxtaposed so as to create which is more strangely potent than the sum of the parts. This happens because the different resources of the terms are paraded as such flagrantly, rather than smoothed over by context or familiar usage. It could be said that a Surrealist metaphor is a collage in miniature. (73)

Ward's understanding of Surrealist metaphors chimes with Clifford's insight into Surrealism at the beginning of this chapter, as Clifford also proclaims and valorises the meaning of original collections or juxtapositions as a method of revolutionising human experience. The juxtaposition of two irrelevant images, page and sky, and translation and lips, creates a more distinctive and striking effect than traditional metaphors, and surpasses the sum of two single images to generate an original third image. The reader is encouraged to break with traditional and formulaic use of metaphors and invited to examine and ponder what the image of a wrinkled page of the sky looks like. This practice expands the use of metaphor and imparts new features and meanings to ordinary images, which further reconstructs the understanding of daily life. O'Hara's metaphors can also be viewed as an action of searching for belonging as the innovatively juxtaposed images can generate a new sense of belonging in the recreated quotidian. On the basis that 'a surrealist metaphor is a collage in miniature', O'Hara's metaphoric collage bears a clear resemblance to Debord's 'Method of Détournement' in terms of the invention of new images and the value of daily objects:

> Any element, no matter where they are taken from, can serve in making new combinations. The discoveries of modern poetry regarding the analogical structure of images demonstrate that when two objects are brought together, no matter how far apart their original contexts may be a relationship is always formed. Restricting oneself to a personal arrangement of words is mere convention. The mutual interference of two worlds of feeling, or the bringing together of two independent expressions, supersedes the original elements and produces a synthetic organization of greater efficacy. Anything can be used.

Debord's interpretation of détournement is not only in accord with O'Hara's practice of inclusion and egalitarianism but also a way of defamiliarising the familiar and transforming convention of viewing the everyday. As Shawn Wilbur observes 'detournement seeks to push

the quotidian into a space "beyond" …The object subverted becomes both familiar and unrecognizable' (qtd. in Lawrence 98). The objects O'Hara selects are familiar since they are ordinary and ubiquitous, yet they are unrecognisable because: first, the fact they are familiar does not mean people pay attention to the use and value of them, as Lefebvre observes Hegel's tenet that 'The familiar is not necessarily the known' (qtd. in Gardiner 1); and second, that ordinary objects have been consciously and attentively configured, after which an innovative or unrecognisable image, relationship or feeling is formed. Détournement serves as a striking technique of defamiliarisation, relocation, and reconnection to re-examine the everyday and belonging with fresh perspectives.

As Ward notes, the Surrealist metaphor is 'a collage in miniature', collage being another technique O'Hara employs. The poem, 'Snapshot for Boris Pasternak' offers a glimpse of how O'Hara exercises this technique and how collage reflects his attitude towards the quotidian:

> At school in the city my heart fell
> for five & ten cent stores, their goldfish,
> candy, scolding women, orange scarves and
> swinging doors. I was a truant caught
> upon the silver screen, an astrologist
> of that shadowed fame, kissed by millions.
> In interims of tears I strutted Peer Gynt
> through the scared sound tracks of bedroom:
> "Gone the low lying wonder of the prairie
> Looking over a pillow at unbelievable morning.
> From now on the train will slant into my eyes
> green and unzipped, like mountain leaves, (*Collected* 111)

The above stanzas feature a unique collage of separated yet rich fragments. The close-up setting of mundane objects and scenes in city stores – goldfish, candy, scolding women, orange scarves and swinging doors – shifts to the cinema, and then further zooms out to a vast natural scenery, the prairie. It seems that O'Hara collected these random images and threaded them seamlessly and harmoniously through these stanzas. His juxtaposition of daily objects in this poem resonates with Stephen Fredman's comment on William Seitze's practice of assemblage, in *Contextual Practice*, that 'he [Seitz] elevates the term *assemblage* to present not only a technique in the arts but also a complex of attitudes and ideas' (14). Such a 'complex of attitudes and ideas' precisely articulates O'Hara's practice of employment of collage, attesting to Ashbery's understanding that O'Hara's poems can be viewed as 'a bag into which anything is dumped and ends up belonging there' (ix). That 'it ends up belonging there' is because the 'bag' per se is the everyday, therefore 'anything [that] is dumped' in the bag derives from daily life. At the same time, it further demonstrates O'Hara's attitude of egalitarianism to mundane objects. His practice of collage is echoed by Smith in his abstract geometric sculptures. As discussed earlier, Smith uses various found objects and experiments with steel joints, paints, and the interplay of different steel forms to recreate an original unification of steels. In this instance, Smith also technically and aesthetically employs collage in his sculpture-making. This practice further attests to the profound influence of collaboration in shaping O'Hara's poetry and the everyday.

Like collage, metaphor-collage expression, a collage consisting of images from metaphors, is not limited to short phrases – 'page of sky', 'translation of your lips' and 'pull of the moon' – as it also applies to extended phrases which function like near-Surrealist or extended Surrealist metaphors. For example, in line three of the third stanza in the poem 'Dialogue', O'Hara writes, 'I reminded you of a pot in which someone planted a lot of hairs. /And then a small cry! is it me? /Or is it the pot where the nightingale's child lives?'

(*Collected* 240). With respect to the content in the pot, O'Hara suggested two possibilities: hairs or the nightingale's child. These two completely unrelated and isolated words and images are detached from their conventional contexts and become closely associated by another irrelevant single image, a pot. However, this isolation or irrelevance, instead of separating images, gives rise to innovative connections in an original context. The near-Surrealist expression of metaphor-collage propels the reader to pay heightened attention to each image and, moreover, to reconsider the new possibility of viewing words, images and their connections.

The Surrealist metaphor, or a near-Surrealist metaphor-collage, displays a powerful emotional effect since 'the image has an inherently provocative character' (Lefebvre 583). The reinvented juxtaposed images – page of sky, translation of your lips, pull of the moon, as well as the pot, hair and nightingale's child – provoke a new emotional or perceptual effect upon the reader, which cannot be achieved by separated images. The mutual effect between the poet and his reader, triggered by the freshness and novelty of the combined images, strikes a chord with Lefebvre's suggestions that 'the image is an act'. As he puts it:

> the image is the image of an action which it deliberately projects towards the 'subject' – the human being it is addressing who it wants to influence. Touched and moved, this person responds to the effect of the images and projects back towards its initiators. This double projection produces a result which is no longer a projection but a mutual presence, and even an emotional sameness. (582)

Images, as an active emotional catalyst, create a sense of mutual emotional presence between the poet and his reader. In this instance, an image becomes a vehicle of communication, as Lefebvre observes, 'all communication involves images, and the deepest communication of all is achieved through images' (582). Therefore, images, to some degree, can be viewed as 'what Lefebvre calls the "common ground" or "connective tissue"' (Gardiner 2) of

communication. However, because of the ‘permanent lag between invention of images and their use, and between the situation of whoever employs them and whoever is influenced by their action’ (Lefebvre 583), Lefebvre further confirms that ‘mutual presence does not rule out misunderstanding and dramas, quite the reverse: it encompasses their possibility’ (583). This is to say, mutual presence does not mean sameness or similarities; on the contrary, it aims for a diversity of recreations. This bears a resemblance to O’Hara’s poetry since its innovative juxtaposed images provide the reader with vast possibilities of new interpretations of images, objects and everydayness. O’Hara’s poetry might seem puzzling, yet it is accessible as the images are embedded in everyday life.

As discussed in the last section, concerned with the spatial and temporal features of ‘A Step Away from Them’, the movement of the poem is not confined to time and space since it extends to images. The image of the beautiful and warm avenue brought by several Puerto Ricans reminds the speaker of the past: the death of his friends, Bunny, John Latouche, and Jackson Pollock. The image thus retrieves the past and brings it to the present, which reflects Lefebvre’s understanding of the property of images, that ‘[the image] rescues the past from darkness (from “unconsciousness”, to use another terminology) and dispersion, bring it into the light of the present day’ (581). Another image, a poster for the Manhattan Storage Warehouse, takes the speaker to the fact of the future that it would soon be torn down, which indicates that the image not only brings the past to the present but also proceeds to move from the present to the future as ‘it [image] strives to attain something not yet present and to “presentify” or present it’ (Lefebvre 582). O’Hara’s images, on the one hand, reveal what is happening on the street during his lunch hour, but on the other hand, trace back the speakers’ loss of his friends and picture the scenario of a Warehouse being torn down. His images, therefore, travel and unify the past and the future into the present. In this instance, as Lefebvre suggests, images are ‘connective tissues’ traversing and interlacing a variety of

daily elements and emotions, which gives rise to new experience and belonging. This is to say that image does not have a fixed status, but it varies and juxtaposes, and in doing so creates new understanding of belonging, inspiring the reader to consider how to achieve this redefined sense in a broader understanding of the present.

With the breezy and conversational tone, O'Hara's poetic imagery incorporates the key features of openness, inclusivity and egalitarianism toward ordinary element in daily life. He experimented with the techniques of Surrealist metaphor, near-Surrealist expression, and collage to maximise the newness of images. And one way of achieving the newness can be found in Debord's détounrnement: a belief of the proximity between any elements in the quotidian. The strategy of the defamiliarisation and juxtaposition of objects thereby draws attention to ordinary, inconsequential, and overlooked images to renew the perception of viewing them. Defamiliarisation is also a strategy and a process of reassessing belonging. Put differently, it is an action of not-belonging and then re-belonging through images in the everyday. The accessibility of O'Hara images – concrete and abstract, real and surreal – along with image's provocative characteristic bolster the mutual presence and emotional closeness with his reader.

IV. Conclusion

Profoundly influenced by Surrealism, Abstract Expressionism and other contemporary avant-garde art movements, O'Hara's deep passion for and engagement with art extends in various fields. He expressed his unwavering aesthetic devotion and belonging to art in his poem 'Digression on Number 1, 19428', noting that 'I am tired today but I am not/too tired. I am not tired at all. /There is the Pollock, white, harm /will not fall, his perfect hand' (*Collected*

260). As a poet and curator, O'Hara's cross-media coterie plays an important part in shaping his poetics and his innovative methods of presenting the everyday.

By demonstrating O'Hara's poetic movement between the physical and the affective, the spatial and the temporal, and the real and the surreal, I argue that O'Hara's poetry creates a strong sense of presence, and a new interpretation and presentation of everyday life. As a flâneur, O'Hara's walking on the street of New York is an approach to a close relationship with daily life in the unban world and is reminiscent of Lefebvre's theory of 'street', typically conveying great energy of liveliness in daily life. His consciousness of the happenings also reflects Debord's insight into dérive which requires the flâneur to become attentive to the surroundings and their impacts on emotions and behaviours. As Dewey claims 'The career and destiny of a living being are bound up with its interchanges with its environment, not externally but in the most intimate way' (13). And the 'intimate way', for O'Hara, can be interpreted as his continuous search for his sense of belonging to his artistic community, to his poetic pursuit and the urban daily life in New York. Like his poetry, belonging is also a movement, an ongoing process as opposed to a result or destination. O'Hara's poetic images exemplarily feature inclusion and egalitarianism with regard to mundane objects in the everyday. These ordinary and seemingly random images are woven through the techniques of surrealist metaphors, near-surrealism, and collage. The method of creating new images by reconnecting, relocating and reconfiguring ordinary elements aligns with Debord's détournement and further casts light on O'Hara's attitude toward the disruption of the traditional conception of the everyday, enabling him to rediscover and re-examine everyday-life aesthetics. In short, and as Lawrence suggests, writing poems for O'Hara 'becomes a transformative means of creating livable situations rather than simply aesthetic practice; or, to put it otherwise, aesthetic practice itself becomes radicalized, made primary as a mode of living' (94).

Chapter 3 Guest and Her Innovative Practice of Everyday Life Aesthetics

Barbara Guest, like O'Hara, a member of the New York School of poetry, was a prolific poet who wrote more than 15 books and in which, as Anna Rabinowitz observes in 'Barbara Guest: Notes Toward Painterly Osmosis', she presents 'a world of remembering, formulating, inventing mind – unfixed and unpredictable, contingent, open to change, evaluation, reconsideration – an evolutionary world' (95). Over the decades, critics have repeatedly attempted to categorise Guest, as Mark Silverberg elaborately summarises in *The New York School Poets and the Neo-Avant-Garde*:

> She has been claimed as a feminist and proto-Language poet (by Fraser, Keller, DuPlessis, and Welish), a mater familias for "linguistically experimental women writ[ers]" (Kinnahan 229). She has been called a "card-carrying, militant Modernist" (Kaufman 11), of Adornian or Schoenbergian strain (Diggory, Qureshi). Her work as a painterly poet has been much-emphasized (Lundquist, Rabinowitz) and she has been categorized as a cubist (Fraser), a constructivist (Qureshi), a minimalist (Diggory), and a revisionary surrealist (or "fair realist") (DuPlessis). Other essays have placed her as a comic poet (Greenberg, Lundquist's "Two voices") or a nature poet—of the urban pastoral (Vickery) and of aerial (Lundquist "Fifth") or "aqueous" environments (T. Gray). (68)

From Silverberg's careful observation, and notwithstanding the range of approaches that have been taken to Guest's work, it is apparent that little research has been conducted to consider Guest as a poet of the everyday. The aim of this chapter, accordingly, is to consider Guest and her poetry from a fresh perspective and to propose that she should be viewed as a formally experimental and creative poet of everyday life aesthetics. I will argue that Guest's poetry, as

she stated in *The Collected Poems of Barbara Guest*, features 'the power to see what is invisible' (373) in the quotidian, giving a fresh impetus to the practice of creative composition, and to the reconstruction of and the attitude toward everyday life.

Like O'Hara and other New York poets, Guest drew great inspiration from Surrealism and other contemporary avant-garde art movements. In the opening section of this chapter, I will therefore examine how the general artistic climate – Surrealism and Abstract expressionism – shapes Guest's poetry and her understanding of everyday life aesthetics. Since Guest was actively and extensively engaged with her artist coterie, I will examine her close collaboration with Helen Frankenthaler, an abstract expressionist painter, and Laurie Reid, a visual artist, to elucidate how this inter-art involvement establishes and develops Guest's poetics and her approaches to the quotidian. Following this introduction of her artistic context, I will analyse Guest's poetic techniques from two perspectives to demonstrate how they reflect her understanding and practice of the everyday. First, I will illustrate Guest's recognition of the ordinary and how she dexterously uses collage to 'clear the ordinary from the room [reality]' (*The Collected Poems* 499) in order to transform what it is to what it can be. And how her practice chimes with the Surrealists' artistic theory will also be demonstrated. Second, I will examine how she 'invoke[s] the unseen, to unmask it [reality]' (*The Collected Poems* 505) through imagination and poetic mobility, thereby enhancing daily experience. And how Guest's practice of imagination in her poetry aligns with Dewey's recognition of the value of imagination in art and in reality will be examined. While attesting that Guest is an innovative practitioner of everyday life aesthetics, as the only female poet of the first generation New York School of poetry, how she searches for a sense of belonging will also be explicated. I will demonstrate that Guest's compositional strategies not only enable her to renew and transform the ordinary but also are an approach to the recreation of belonging. In other words, composition is a process of discovering belonging.

I. Guest's Artistic Context: Surrealism, Abstract Expressionism, and Inter-art Activity

As discussed in Chapter 2, the influence of Surrealism in American avant-garde poetry is pervasive. At a talk given at Kouros Gallery in New York, Guest acknowledged her debt to Surrealism in 'The Shadow of Surrealism':

> I grew up under the shadow of Surrealism. In that creative atmosphere of magical rites there was no recognized separation between the arts. Those of us who shared this atmosphere brightened by Apollinaire, Eluard, Valéry, Breton, considered ourselves part of a hemisphere where all the arts evolved around one another, a central plaza with roads which led from palette to quill to clef. One could never again look at poetry as a locked kingdom. (*Forces of Imagination* 51)

For Guest, Surrealism breaks the communicative barrier among various artistic fields, laying the foundation for shared aesthetic ideas and revolutionary practice and energies among artists. These free-floating and stimulating aesthetic interactions generated by Surrealism liberate Guest from orthodox expressions of art and encourage her to experiment with diversified poetic strategies in her poetry. As discussed in Chapter 2, Surrealism plays a significant role in recognising and redefining the everyday, and this emphasis enables Guest to develop her poetics in an open-ended engagement with everyday life. Later in Guest's life, she articulately declared herself to be a Surrealist poet, as Andrew Joron records in *Neo-surrealism, Or, The Sun at Night*. As Joron puts it, 'Shortly before Guest passed away in 2006, at a conference given in her honor at the Berkeley Art Museum, she reaffirmed that "I have become a surrealist poet", adding, "Better late than never"' (49). Joron proceeds with an unequivocal statement that 'among well-known poets whose work shows obvious affinities to surrealism (one could name John Ashbery, Michael Palmer, Clayton Eshleman, for starters), none has declared their surrealist identity as strongly as Guest in her last years' (49). It is

important to underline that Surrealism is instrumental in Guest's aesthetic comprehension and presentation, and I will discuss the impact Surrealism has on Guest's poetic techniques in detail, especially the way she practices collage, later in this chapter.

Abstract expressionists, influenced by Surrealism, emphasising immediacy and subconsciousness, adopted spontaneous abstractions in art as a method of exploring and presenting art and the everyday. Guest collaborated closely with playful abstract expressionist painters like Grace Hartigan, Mary Abbott, and Helen Frankenthaler. This artistic interaction lays the foundation for Guest to become, as she said, 'exposed to the temperament caused by the explosion of Abstract-Expressionism, and my personal relationships with its painters certainly influenced the way I observed both nature and the book' (*Imagination* 52). This deep artistic connection may remind the reader of what James Schuyler noted in 'Poet and Painter Overture', that 'New York poets, except I suppose the color blind, are affected most by the floods of paint in whose crashing surf we all scramble' (418). In addition to collaboration, Guest also wrote broadly for painters and about paintings. This is lucidly recorded by Sara Lundquist in 'Reverence and Resistance: Barbara Guest, Ekphrasis, and the Female Gaze'

> A comprehensive list of her [Guest's] ekphrastic poems would require much space, but notable examples include "Piazzas" (for Mary Abbott Clyde), "Heroic Stages" (for Grace Hartigan), "All Elegies Are Black and White" (to Robert Motherwell), "Roses" (about Gertrude Stein and Juan Gris), "The Rose Marble Table" (about Matisse), "The View from Kandinsky's Window," "Dora Maar," "Wild Gardens Overlooked by Night Lights," "The Screen of Distance," "The Nude," and "The Surface as Object." (265-266)

There is no doubt that extensive inter-art engagement with painters had a great impact on Guest's poetic composition, hence her statement in 'Force of Imagination' that 'when I was a

young poet I was immensely influenced, as you know, by painters with whom I circulated. Their ideas of painting took up my young life. I envied their freedom. I began to use some of their methods' (*Imagination* 105). Therefore, in what follows, I examine Guest's exemplary collaborations with Helen Frankenthaler and Laurie Reid respectively, to examine their shared aesthetic spirits in art, and to demonstrate how this inter-art practice reflects and shapes Guest's understanding of everyday life.

Frankenthaler, a second-generation Abstract Expressionism painter, known in particular for soak-stain painting, remained active in painting for over six decades (early 1950s until 2011). Based on Pollock's technique of pouring pigment directly onto canvas laid on the floor, soak stain painting, a refined technique, refers to painting on unprimed canvas with oil paint that is diluted with turpentine. This practice generates a natural painting flow and allows for great spontaneity in Frankenthaler's painting process. As in Frankenthaler's painting, spontaneity is also undoubtedly one of the most pervasive features in Guest's poetry, as for her 'a poem has a secret grip of its own… the poem is quite willing to forget its begetter and take off in its own direction. It likes to be known as spontaneous' (*Imagination* 21). This account of Guest's compositional practice chimes with Frankenthaler's articulation of her process, witness her observation that 'A really good picture looks as if it's happened at once…it is an immediate image…it looks as if it were born in a minute' (qtd. in Rose 85). Both Guest and Frankenthaler thus valorise the practice of spontaneity as it creates unfretted creativity, originality and freshness in their work. Guest wrote that 'I can always tell when I am reading a pre-planned poem; there is no freshness in it. No mysterious element of change…' (*Imagination* 103) while Frankenthaler made a similar comment, 'For my own work, when a picture looks labored and overworked, and you can read in it – well, she did this and then she did that, and then she did that – there is something in it that has not got to do with beautiful art to me' (qtd. in Rose 85).

However, it is important to realise that spontaneity requires great attentiveness and responsiveness in order to capture the happenings in the everyday. It also coexists and revitalises the banal, as Maurice Blanchot claims in 'Everyday Speech', 'The everyday is platitude…;but this banality is also what is most important, if it brings us back to existence in its very spontaneity and as it is lived – in the moment when, lived, it escapes every speculative formulation, perhaps all coherence, all regularity' (13). In other words, spontaneity breaks away from the absolute control of the routine and gives rise to a sense of freshness and vigour of daily experience. Spontaneity, for Guest and Frankenthaler, is an effective technique in both making art and making dailiness anew as it imparts unexpected yet invigorating force to them. In addition, it implies that everyday life is the source or reservoir of creativity. Guest accentuates the salience of everyday life in her poetry and insists on great attention to elements of the ordinary. This feature is poetically demonstrated in her poem 'Quilts'

> Mushrooms on the village green
> some white, some black,
> some high, some short,
> they give a dimension to a pattern
> weaving in and out in streams
> that's Reality.
> Once you start looking at real
> mushrooms
> you see art everywhere (*The Collected Poems* 197)

Guest's and Frankenthaler's call for spontaneity in art creation, therefore a corresponding responsiveness to ongoing occurrences and events, reaffirms that art is firmly embedded in everyday life. Spontaneity, moreover, is reminiscent of Surrealist automatism. Breton defines

Surrealism, in *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, as 'Psychic automatism in its pure state, by which one proposes to express—verbally, by means of the written word, or in any other manner—the actual functioning of thought. Dictated by thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason, exempt from any aesthetic or moral concern' (26). Unimpeded by absolute rationality and reality, automatism affords a radical and provocative method of art-making. Spontaneity, similarly, not dictated predetermined routines and concepts, creates new and different perspectives of viewing and revivifying art and everyday life. However, neither automatism nor spontaneity signifies randomness or inattention. On the contrary, they require great observation and consciousness and enable artists to access dailiness not from a fixed approach but from a broader and more diverse perspective.

Automatism gives permission to Surrealist artists to drawn inspiration from unconsciousness in artmaking, which expands both artistic and daily experience. In what follows, I will discuss how Guest and Frankenthaler skilfully employ unconsciousness in their works and how this practice reflects their presentation of the everyday. Frankenthaler told an interviewer about her painting, 'Mountain and Sea', that 'The landscapes were in my arms as I did it. I didn't realize all that I was doing. I was trying to get at something — I didn't know what until it was manifest.'[6] In 'Vision and Mundanity', Guest shared a similar belief that 'The "Spirits" or the "Vision" of a poem arises from the contents of the poet's unconsciousness. The poet directs this 'spillover' into the poem' (*Imagination* 88). Frankenthaler further suggested, in *After Mountains and Sea: Frankenthaler 1956-1959*, that 'Truth comes when one is totally involved in the act of painting... somehow using everything one knows about painting materials, dreams, and feelings' (48). This statement echoes what Gardiner observes in *Critiques of Everyday Life* about Surrealism, that 'it aimed at collapsing the distinction between adventure and everyday existence, dreams and consciousness, art and

[6] It is recorded by Grace Glueck in 'Helen Frankenthaler, Abstract Painter Who Shaped a Movement, Dies at 83'

life, essence and appearance' (34). In other words, the practice of unconsciousness in artmaking broadens the definition of reality and seamlessly integrates the unconscious or the internal world into the external world to enrich and extend daily experience. Both spontaneity and unconsciousness free artists' creativity from the constraints of total objectivity and rationality and cast 'light upon the unrevealed and yet revealable portion of our being wherein all beauty, all love, all virtue that we scarcely recognize in ourselves, shine with great intensity' (Breton 162). Put differently, Guest's and Frankenthaler's adventurous experiment with various techniques in their works, are not only a method of making and exploring art, but also their search for the unknown and the diversity of the everyday.

Guest's creativity is vividly observed by Rena Rosenwasser in 'A Conversation on "Symbiosis"', when she recalled how Laurie Reid marvelled at Guest's attitude towards daily objects in their collaborative book *Symbiosis*:

> For Laurie, their conversations remain her most vivid memories of the collaboration. Like almost everyone who has known Barbara, Laurie marveled at her creativity in talking about anything: a cup of tea, a door handle, her housekeeper, a neighbor stopping by. It was as if Barbara lived and breathed in a creative way. She used everything in her work. Art and life were a continuum. (Dienstfrey and Rosenwasser 149)

As Rosenwasser details, Reid articulates the close relation between art and daily life in Guest's poetry. In discussing Guest's and Reid's collaborative process, I want to build on Reid's observation by examining two distinct features – the celebration of the unexpected, and the aesthetic freedom between the artist and the reader – in order to demonstrate how Guest defines and practices 'symbiosis' in both her poetic composition and everyday life.

Dienstfrey and Rosenwasser recalled how they wrote 'A Conversation on "Symbiosis"' because 'Barbara preferred open-ended forms that allow room for the

unexpected' (144). This indubitably underscores the significant role of spontaneity and her eagerness for the unexpected or the use of 'accident' in her writing. Reid recalled that Guest wrote a line, 'the furry moment draped over their head,/ light from the transom' (Dienstfrey and Rosenwasser 148). The '"furry" here means fuzzy, undetermined, indicating an opening to creative freedom' (Dienstfrey and Rosenwasser 148). Reid's observation precisely echoes Guest's remark in 'Wounded Joy' – 'I know that I have accidentally typed a wrong word and thought, "well that's a better word, anyway"' (*Imagination* 103). The celebration of the unexpected opens the poem to readerly freedom and suggestion. As Claudia Desblaches observes in '"Something Else is Happening" in Barbara Guest's Poems: the art of creating events', 'Words do not need to be directly apprehended: schooners, hair, threads, ropes or bones have to be loosened to yield to the freedom of suggestion' (4). Therefore, for Guest, freedom not only refers to the poet's ability of becoming unconfined by tradition to be able to compose freely but also enables the reader to more freely interpret poems by incorporating his own experience. Put differently, 'she [Guest] is as concerned with the intensity of the reader's experience of the composition as with her own of composing it (126), as Garrett Caples suggests in 'The Barbara Guest experience'. Apart from inviting the reader's experience, Guest also aims to provoke the reader's active thinking while reading, as Desblaches observes of Guest and Reid's book-making process:

> like the fourth word "fable" drawn on the first page, Guest's poetic lines appear either inside or outside these curves and blots. The superposition of inkspots and words clearly urge readers to process the poem as a meaningful event on both visual and metaphorical levels, literally reminding us of Rosenblatt's argument that "a novel or a poem or a play remains merely inkspots on paper until a reader transforms them into a set of meaningful symbols." (4)

Guest reflects on her commitment to this experimental collaboration, considering it as a 'creative cohabitation' in which 'A writer and an artist working together establish a Symbiosis, as in Nature, where dissimilar organisms productively live together' (Dienstfrey and Rosenwasser 144). Guest thus stresses the value of artistic co-evolution through which both the poem and the painting come to full development. Moreover, she further extends symbiosis from the artistic cohabitation to the cohabitation between the artist and the reader. This redefined symbiosis invites the reader's active involvement, or the 'dissimilar organisms' into the understanding of art which further maximises the reader's experience of both art and the everyday.

Guest's insight into symbiosis is not restricted to 'creative cohabitation' in art, as it extends and reflects her understanding of gender. I propose that 'symbiosis', for Guest, is also a close and interactive aesthetic development between male and female artists. In other words, she seeks a delicate balance between male and female poets in terms of their contribution to poetry. Although Guest was a key participant in the New York School of Poets, compared with other school members (John Ashbery, James Schuyler, Kenneth Koch, and Frank O'Hara), she is undeniably less recognised and excluded from some anthologies of New York School writing, as it well documented by Rachel Blau Duplessis[7] and Sara Lundquist.[8] It cannot be considered entirely clear how this affects her writing and her understanding of gender, however, the fact that she was the only female poet of the first-generation of the New York School certainly tended to isolate her. In a conversation with Charles Bernstein in 1995, when Guest was asked whether she was a feminist, she said, 'In that sense, I feel very lonely. It wasn't until newer generations, younger women came along with whom I could identify, as they could identify with me. Among the New York poets, there were very few women.'

[7] See more details in The Gendered Marvelous: Barbara Guest, Surrealism and Feminist Reception
[8] See more details in Reverence and Resistance: Barbara Guest, Ekphrasis, and the Female Gaze

Before I talk about why Guest reviews herself as a lonely poet, it may be worth noticing her generosity toward younger poets with whom she said she could identify. Kathleen Fraser articulates Guest's prominent contribution to female poets in *Translating the Unspeakable*:

> I would like to note, particularly, Guest's generosity toward younger women aspiring to the vocation of poetry. It was the exception in the Sixties, when the word mentor more than often implied token male sponsorship based on dubious power relations. Her friendship was offered in dignity, assumed reciprocity of value and complementarity of interests…Guest continues to provide a model for those of us engaged in finding full parity for women in the reading/writing community, beyond token representation. (127)

Fraser's words sincerely express Guest's kindness and unreserved support to emerging poets and relate to her early experience as a writer. As the only female poet among the New York School of Poets in 1950s, the sense of loneliness paved the way for Guest's search for belonging. Her engagement with other art forms and her contribution to young female writers can also be understood as a method of finding where she belongs and how to achieve this indispensable sense. While admitting the loneliness, Guest also sees the advantage of being a poetess, witness Duplessis's observation, with reference to the poem 'Poetess', because 'such a figure evinces pleasure, excitement, glee, liveliness' (171). Compared with the male poets of her immediate generation, being a poetess permits her a different perspective on poetry, daily life, and belonging. She acknowledges and appraises poetesses' creativity and their contribution to writing when she claimed in conversation with Bernstein, 'I think I'm a feminist in the fact that I truly believe that women are writing almost the best poetry in America today. I believe that they're extraordinary, that for some reason this has happened. It has not been true forever'. While addressing the powerful influence exerted by female poets,

Guest does not forget to register their domestic role in daily life, which is revealed in her poem, 'The Screen of Distance'

> A woman speaks to a dish, old forks, amid her
> preparations she smiles touched by history.
> Chipped, sundry evidence of temporal life
> hiding in a bush. In formal dress domestic
> remarks reel into a corpus known as stanzas. (*The Collected Poems* 230)**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

For Guest, the household chores, like composing poems, are undeniably a component of daily life. With heightened attention to the ordinary, seemingly trivial domestic work can become an essential element of composition or 'a corpus known as stanzas'. This perception implies that Guest is as eager to belong externally to the art and poetry community as a poet as she is to belong domestically through the identity of a wife or a mother. These two aspects, externality and domesticity, not only provide new angles of searching for belonging, but also enrich and broaden the meaning of it. While praising female poets' role in the everyday, Guest does not deny or downplay male poets' significant contributions as she proposes that there is a symbiotic relationship between male and female poets. Her poem 'Nude' (*The Collected Poems* 238-243) narrates how a painter regards his female model and Duplessis eloquently summarises the interdependent relation between the two roles, noting that 'the model changes, including consciously willed changes, transform the painter and his palette. She "lead him. He interprets her. The relationship is symbiotic. But both figures are powerful"' (179). Duplessis articulates how this co-existence and co-evolvement insight inspires Guest 'to neutralize either-or gender assumptions and moralized assessments by her both-and-but-and elaborations of the gendered marvelous' (183). In other words, Guest calls

for a harmoniously co-evolving and inter-dependent attitude towards both female and male poets' contribution to the development of poetry and art.

In this section, I have discussed how the artistic climate, Surrealism and Abstract expressionism, and Guest's inter-art coterie influenced her poetic thinking and creation. As with O'Hara, inter-art collaboration enables Guest to establish and develop her aesthetic belonging. Her collaboration with Frankenthaler and Reid demonstrates the feature of spontaneity and unconsciousness in Guest's poetry as well as the celebration of open-ended suggestions and interpretations of poetry for the reader. And this aesthetic pursuit indicates Guest's attitude towards the everyday as she claims that 'The fiction of the poet is part of relentless twentieth century perception based on the discovery that reality is a variable, and is open-ended in form and matter'(*Imagination* 27).**Error! Bookmark not defined.** Put differently, Guest aims to discover the different aspects of the everyday in an open-ended manner through poetry. As a feminist, on the one hand, she greatly supports young poets and enables female poets' contribution to poetry. On the other hand, she equally acknowledges the significant role the male poets play in poetic practice, even though she is less recognised compared with other male poets of the New York School. In other words, Guest holds a well-balanced and symbiotic gender view. She strenuously searches for belonging as a 'poetess' and as mother and wife. This approach gives permission to other female poets to freely seek belonging in both the field of poetry and, from a broader point of view, the quotidian.

II Guest Presents the Evident of the Everyday and Creates a New Reality

From the above discussion, it is apparent that Guest valorises daily experience. However, this should not be simply understood as affirmation or celebration as her experiment with poetic contents and forms provides the reader with fresh insights into the creative unknown and the

new possibilities of the everyday itself. In what follows, I will examine Guest's practice of everyday life at two levels: level one, her recognition and acceptance of the everyday; and level two, her 'reconstruction or resettlement of the everyday' (to borrow Stanley Cavell's term, 176),[9] and how this reconstruction shifts the way of viewing the everyday though the practice of collage.

Regarding Guest's consciousness of the everyday, her poem 'Activities' distinctly revels her great attention to a diversity of events and elements of the quotidian:

> Grain Belt Beer, He Who Gets Slapped, Vikings vs Dolphins, ice skating, fishing, Japanese food, meat, square dancing, collage, Rimbaud, New York painting, Showboats, Baskin-Robbins ice cream, La Strada, Basement Studios, renting a house, visiting lectures, tourist flights to Scandinavia, Crystal Court lunches, Dayton's cotton undies, leather shops, Indian crafts, jazz blizzards, mosquitoes, Berry Crocker recipes, Lake Superior Poetry, silos, covered bridges, Artichoke Hall, brawls, aftermaths, forecast, illegal turns, incontinent highways, building, building, building, razing, razing, razing, Milwaukee complexes, abandonment, lost frontiers, height, girth, pride, prejudice, toughness, agoraphobia, agoraphobia, alewifehood, navigation, symphonies, tornadoes, sauna constrictions…(*The Collected Poems* 163)

This stanza seems to be a straightforward catalogue of daily activities: drinks, food, sports, books, various locations, events, feelings and emotions. However, this seemly 'unpoetic' listing of ordinary objects and happenings not only displays Guest's poetic attentiveness to daily existence and experience but also suggests the great value and importance of the mundane, as she concisely notes in her poem 'The Luminous', witness, 'a tap on the shoulder or a first grasping that/object full of sparks' (*The Collected Poems* 379). That 'object full of sparks' also reveals Guest's radically inclusive attitude towards the familiar and the ordinary.

[9] In Quest of the Ordinary: Lines of Skepticism and Romanticism.

Her careful and respectful attentiveness bears a remarkable similarity with Wittgenstein's claim in *Philosophical Investigations* that the familiar is unrecognised yet powerful:

> The aspects of things that are most important for us are hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity. (One is unable to notice something – because it is always before one's eyes.) The real foundations of his enquiry do not strike a man at all. Unless *that* fact has at some time struck him. – And this means: we fail to be struck by what, once seen, is most striking and most powerful. (50)

As Cavell observes in *Themes Out of School*, Wittgenstein's emphasis on the power of the familiar and the obvious aims to awaken 'our stupefaction [which] results from an insufficient capacity to cleave to the everyday' (192). In 'Circassians', Guest depicts a casual and familiar daily scene:

> I put down my pen
> and I have found a pencil
> not any pencil
> but this one fabricated in Germany
> I bought it in France.
> Caroline has asked me to lunch.
> We eat a steak
> cucumbers
> radishes
> we drink vodka. Polish vodka.
>
> I look at photographs.
> They are her grandparents in front of their tent.
> Grandfather

is dressed in his tunic and pants.

His belt carries a knife.

His blouse and his blossoming pantaloom

is the way I should describe them.

His wife is shy and she too billows. (*The Collected Poems* 124-125)

The unpretentious description of daily details – pen, food, her friend Caroline's photographs – illustrates Guest's close attention to the mundane. Her emphasis on the special pencil and photograph implies the meanings or stories these items carry. In other words, daily elements are not only what they are but also embody great meanings and memories. These trivial yet vivid details further reveal Guest's understanding that poetry is embedded in the everyday. In 'Another July', she recorded her friend, James Schuyler's morning routine in his kitchen:

Gorgeous morning cakes

Air without stripes.

Under the eyes a new fragrance of shine:

Blossoms and tints at someone's doorstep

(Schuyler eating a salami in his kitchen

thinking of the empty ghost of Clare,

extending his hand with a little mayonnaise

towards it) (*The Collected Poems* 126)

In this stanza, Guest not only details Schuyler's casual yet congenial morning activity, which further ascertains the importance of the ordinary but also imparts new features to daily elements. For instance, air, being invisible and shapeless, now features a tangible pattern, without stripes. And the unscented shine embodies delicate fragrance. These innovative features co-exist with concrete details such as a salami and mayonnaise and forms new and extensive experience.

The colloquial and breezy tone of these two poems, to some degree reminds the reader of O'Hara's poetry as discussed in Chapter 2. However, with a close look, there are distinct differences. With regard to setting or environment, O'Hara, as an urban flâneur, writes poems that contain spontaneous reactions to happenings that occurred during his walk on the street. However, Guest's compositional process is more domestic, without immediate response to what is happening, as she recalled in the interview with Mark Hillringhouse in 'The American Poetry Review'

> On 94th Street, I wrote *The Countess From Minneapolis*. It was written entirely on Manhattan's 94th Street. In *Fair Realism* "The Screen of Distance" has parts that are written on 16th Street. A large section was written there but I know that there are certain parts of "The Screen of Distance" that come from living here (Long Island) … When I first moved to 16th Street, it was very stimulating to be in a new place. The whole idea of clear space was very thrilling to me. On 16th Street, the light filtered through the room and I got very excited and it did affect my work and so I wrote a lot there and then I would come out here occasionally and a little piece of Long Island came into it. "The Türler Losses" was written out there. (25)

In terms of its presentation of daily life, Guest's poetry adopts a suggestive and abstract approach compared to O'Hara's more resolutely specific and precise practice. For example, 'A Step Away from Them' not only presents the concrete street scene and activities but also cites the exact time, 12:40, when the event occurred. In 'Rhapsody', O'Hara pinpoints the precise location, 515 Madison Avenue, and a doorway linking 53rd with 54th the east bound. In contrast to O'Hara's precision and directness, Guest escapes detailed dailiness and practices evocation and implication. Her refusal of absolute dailiness and a fixed gaze at daily experience is lucidly presented in 'A Burst of Leaves'

> A disappointed generation, words collapse around us.

Like the one who jumped into the sea. But the seas disappoint us, also.

We do not like to walk on their beaches, lined with laboratories and formula.

We are ready for a new orientation. (*The Collected Poems* 496)**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

The line 'their beaches, lined with laboratories and formula' connotes that the everyday can be filled with stagnation, total repetition, and prediction. In favour of oblique or evocative practice, Guest therefore re-arranges and reconstructs dailiness to discover 'a new orientation' of the quotidian or to create a new reality. With this in mind, I will examine the second level of her approach – reconstruction or resettlement of the everyday – to discover how Guest employs collage in her poetry to renew and transform daily experience.

In 'The Rose Marble Table', Guest wrote about an oil painting created by the renowned French artist, Henri Matisse in 1917. The poem starts with an archetypal example of collage:

Adoptive day replenished by shadow
chooses octagonals such as chatter
and swimsuits at an angle
where smiles become orange.

Sea whose translucence disturbs inferior atoms,
that passage from ice to shallow removes familiars
as glass changes to foam, the parallel lake diminished,
combs drop into fur. (*The Collected Poems* 224)

These two stanzas vividly reflect Dienstfrey's remark that 'She [Guest] was a skilled collagist. Color, shape, verticality, horizontality are always at hand in her poetic images and framings' (150). The lines, 'swimsuits at an angle/where smiles become orange', signify the urgent necessity of re-viewing or re-considering daily elements and images from a new angle,

imparting new qualities and meanings to them and to the everyday. This feature is well expressed in the comment Guest made on Frankenthaler, that 'her eyes focused differently' (qtd. in Bernstein, "Composing Herself"). Her comment also precisely describes her own poetic practice. Guest's inquisitiveness towards reality brings forward an original and distinctive presence – octagonals such as chatter, glass changes to foam, combs drop into furs – and this strange yet fresh presence 'removes familiars'. The juxtapositions – from shadow to octagonals, and then to chatter, from swimsuit to smiles, from ice to shallow, and from combs to fur – are created in an affirmative tone without using any figures of speech. The collage of unrelated images shakes fixed expectations and gives rise to the unfound and unnoticed value of daily images and experience. Put differently, Guest's adept use of collage can be perspicuously described by Lautréamont's oft-cited phrase, 'As beautiful as the fortuitous meeting of a sewing machine and an umbrella on an operating table' (qtd. in Gardiner 37). Guest's practice of collage in terms of shaping day experience, as discussed, is under the profound influence of Surrealism, as Ben Highmore articulates in *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory* regarding how collage renews the everyday:

> Collage (or montage) provides a persistent methodology for attending to everyday life in Surrealism. In its juxtaposing of disparate elements (umbrellas, sewing machines, etc.) it generates a defamiliarizing of the everyday. If everyday life is what continually threatens to drop below a level of visibility, collage practices allow the everyday to become vivid again by making the ordinary strange through transferring it to surprising contexts and placing it in unusual combinations. (46)

Collage enables Guest to create a new world that is filled with surprising combinations of daily elements, making the invisible of the quotidian visible. However, Guest's juxtaposition is not simply a listing of disparate images since her collage generates a metaphorical effect. For instance, in 'A Way of Being', the lines read, 'the light enters through one window/like a

novel' (The *Collected Poems* 82); in 'Santa Fe Trail', 'the motor pants like a forest' (42); in 'Nine', 'Fictions dressed like water' (188); and in 'Passage', Guest wrote, 'your umbrella colourings/dense as telephone/voice/humming down the line/ polyphonic' (130-131).This metaphorical form connects two totally unrelated images without transitions and explanations, seamlessly interlocking colours with sounds, manmade products with nature, and the abstract with the concrete. This distinct and metaphorical juxtaposition can be viewed as Guest 'wake-up' call in order to defamiliarise dailiness:

> Baudelaire tells us that a poem should have within it "a dose of the bizarre." This can be wake-up call within the poem…I suppose it is the basis of Surrealism, but in Surrealism *everything is bizarre*. I prefer this little dosage. When one is nodding or recapitulating events of daily life and we become mundane, then this little "*dosage of the bizarre*," *like holding a minnow in your hands, or a feather of a riotous color, not too much, or the bizarre will overwhelm the poem and to have nothing but a bizarre account can be very boring.* (*Imagination* 101)

Guest imparts a balanced 'dosage of the bizarre' into her poetry to subtly yet powerfully defamiliarise mundane objects and divert attention away from long-established conventions of viewing dailiness. In *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, Breton articulates how Pierre Reverdy, a French poet, considers the connection between images and reality:

> The image is a pure creation of the mind. It cannot be born from a comparison but from a juxtaposition of two more or less distant realities. The more the relationship between the two juxtaposed realities is distant and true, the stronger the image will be – the greater its emotional power and poetic reality. (20)

For Reverdy and Guest, the juxtaposition of disparate and distinct images reveals a different reality. A newly found reality, to a great degree, also contributes to a fresh and inspiring perspective on the understanding of and search for belonging which might not be able to be

discovered in the already-known reality. Put differently, juxtaposition and collage are not only techniques in poetry but also poetic methods of re-gazing or re-locating belonging. Breton later claims his own understanding of images:

> It is, as it were, from the fortuitous juxtaposition of the two terms that a particular light has sprung, the light of the image, to which we are infinitely sensitive. The value of the image depends upon the beauty of the spark obtained; it is, consequently, a function of the difference of potential between the two conductors. When the difference exists only slightly, as in a comparison, the spark is lacking. (37)

For Breton, the 'spark' is created when two different images depend on each other and give rise to new meanings. This perception not only echoes Guest's insight into symbiosis as discussed but also shares a similarity with her goal of remaking and reconstructing ordinary images and daily experience. Her call for collage deepens in the last stanza of 'The Rose Marble Table'

> Supple nature declares texture lends
> formality to words a flight of marble
> can rearrange the speed of waters,
> we pass hands upon its surface and embrace
> the creative object throbbing waves fly over. (*The Collected Poems* 225)

The line, 'a flight of marble/can rearrange the speed of waters', affirms that everyday life, far from being led and dominated by sameness, is a terrain of indeterminacy, possibility and diversity. Guest's practice can be well elaborated by Wolfgang Paalen's argument about being 'realistic'

> The true value of artistic image does not depend upon its capacity to *present*, but upon its capacity to *prefigure*, ie., upon its capacity to express potentially *a new order* of things.…All realistic propaganda painting is reactionary…Everything that opens the

> way for new possibilities of experience is revolutionary – without the need of superimposed *finalities*. (qtd in Belgrad 21)

In Paalen's understating, Guest's collage of images thus is innovative and generative. Rather than introducing or providing daily experience, it features continuity and engenders new possibilities of re-arranging daily objects to re-experience the everyday.

In this section, I have observed that Guest, like O'Hara, pays close and poetic attention to dailiness, acknowledging the value of the mundane. In addition to the recognition of the everyday, she employs poetic techniques to uncover and transform daily experience. It is important to recognise that Guest's transformation of daily life, instead of being a transcendent method or an epiphanic moment, is a new reorientation of viewing everyday life, aiming to broaden and renew daily experience. What Guest bespeaks is 'an aura of suggestion rather than assertion, possibility rather than certainty, excited discovery rather than orderliness or deliberation' (Lundquist 271). Guest's adept practice of collage has a close affinity with Stephen Freman's perception on the principle of collage in *Contextual Practice: Assemblage and the Erotic in Postwar Poetry and Art*:

> Of necessity a vernacular procedure tied to the everyday and the overlooked, contextual practice works by uncovering new energies and images through juxtaposing found materials or by directing aesthetic attention to an existing but previously ignored context. With its juxtapositional bent, contextual practice applies the most far-reaching formal innovation in the arts of the twentieth century—the principle of collage—in striking and unforeseen ways to the conduct of life. (3)

Guest's poetry discovers 'unforeseen ways to the conduct of life', extends the boundaries of daily experience, and further enlightens a new reconfiguration of the meaning and interpretation of language and daily life. In other words, her poetry creates a newly developed reality or context, as Peter Gizzi lucidly puts in 'Fair Realist'

> Her poems begin in the midst of action but their angle of perception is oblique. In this way, the poem, like the world, exists phenomenally; it is grasped as it is coming into being, and she records the outer edges of the context of this movement, placing the poem at the horizon of our understanding. (*The Collected Poems* xvii)

Gizzi's observation, that 'The poem, like the world, exists phenomenally', can be understood as signifying that writing a poem, for Guest, means creating a world where she belongs. Therefore, composing is a continuing process of perceiving and exploring belonging in the everyday. Guest is what Breton defined as a true poet, capable of transforming 'the mediocrities of daily life into a zone of illumination and poetic infusion' (35).

III Guest 'Scrolls out of Reality' 'to Invoke the Unseen, to Unmask it'

In addition to the recognition and reconfiguration of the evident, Guest reveals another dimension, '*the power to see*/*what is invisible*' (*The Collected Poems* 373) in the everyday. As Gizzi observes, 'one doesn't think of Guest as a narrative poet, but her poems are laced with dramatic tensions and an engagement with visible, imaginary, phantasmagorial elements, inexplicable turns in the path, and a mysterious sense of inevitability' (*Collected* xix). Therefore, in this section, I will examine two key techniques, imagination and poetic mobility, that Guest employs in her poetry to discover how she unveils the invisible of the everyday. The exploration of the unseen or hidden will also further reveal her diverse approaches to the search for belonging.

In her essay, 'Poetry the Truth Fiction', Guest strongly articulates the importance of imagination in poetry:

> I must speak about it [Imagination], because for me it is the single most important element of poetry and it is my touchstone. When I examine a poem it is not for its form or style or even gravity but I look for its imaginative powers. I find that

> Imagination comes before style or technique. How empty all the dazzle of style is without the immediacy of the touch of Imagination. (*Imagination* 31)

Since imagination plays an indispensable role in Guest's poetry, I will analyse how Guest employs it in her poem titled 'An Emphasis Falls on Reality' to demonstrate how this practice affects and reflects her understanding of the everyday. This poem begins with an unexpected process of transformation through imagining:

> Cloud fields change into furniture
> furniture metamorphizes into fields
> an emphasis falls on reality.
>
> "It snowed toward morning," a barcarole
> the words stretched severely
>
> silhouettes they arrived in trenchant cut
> the face of lilies... (*The Collected Poems* 221)

Cloud fields, amorphous and capricious, are metaphorically converted to furniture which is solid with certain shapes. In the second line, furniture is expeditiously and imaginatively transformed back to fields again followed by a lucid and concise line, 'an emphasis falls on reality' which poetically infers that the imaginative transformation is part of reality. In other words, imagination, for Guest, is an indispensable component of the everyday. A barcarole, a traditional folk song sung by Venetian gondoliers, is reminiscent of flat-bottomed rowing boats on the Venetian lagoon. Through this musical form, the images – boats, lagoon, water movement – are created and connected through imaginative power. The lines shift from a barcarole and the images it arouses to a dark image silhouette and to an abstract image of 'the face of lilies'. These transformations – from the concrete to the abstract, from the fixable to

the changeable, and from images to music – are smoothly threaded and coalesced by imagination. Guest's poetic conjuncture compelled by imagination resonates with Dewey's cogent remark in *Art as Experience* that 'Not even a useful object is produced except by the intervention of the imagination' (273), and 'Imaginative vision is the power that unifies all constitutes of the matter of a work of art, making a whole out of them in all their variety' (274). For Dewey, imagination has the power of connecting fragmented objects or experience together to generate and extend immediate experience. In Guest's interview with Bernstein, Guest stated she did not believe in pragmatism, and she was 'not John Dewey'. However, I have little interest in arguing whether Guest is a pragmatist; instead, I posit that both Guest and Dewey share similar understanding in terms of the values of imagination in art and everyday life.

The poem continues as if Guest is traveling constantly between the real and the imaginative which is shown in the flowing stanzas:

> The wall is more real than shadow
> or that letter composed of calligraphy
> each vowel replaces a wall
> ---
> willows are not real trees
> they entangle us in looseness,
> the natural world spins in green. (*The Collected Poems* 222)

Guest seems intentionally to blur or collapse the boundary between the everyday and the imaginative world, by virtue of which, she steers clear of reality of being overly real or objective. Since she agrees with Delacroix that

> painters of marine life do not represent the sea satisfactorily. "They want to show too much science, make portraits of waves, as landscape artists make portraits of trees."

> His argument is that these seascapes do not concern themselves with the effect on the imagination, they are absorbed by details, "turning the mind away." (*Imagination* 86)

For Guest, imagination is an effective method of turning everyday life away from being formulaic, which features the absoluteness of the real. Guest further elucidates the flaws of this science-like dailiness:

> a planted tree is seen as planted with roots in the ground, perhaps a nearby trowel and a parent or child further off to the left watching the clearly delineated leaves, and the moral is an esteemed one placing value on the absoluteness of growing things…In conservative poetry the poets live in a complementary world, without being aware of what surrounds them. They exist in a space hemmed in by other trees that are called "real trees." This poetry offers the promise of reality, yet in a defined space the poem, itself, is never free. (*Imagination* 11-12)

As Guest views it, imagination effectively steers away from the unduly real to allow the reader freely to explore the 'real trees'. This method invokes a striking similarity with Dewey's insight into the relation between imagination and reality, as he sets forth in *Reconstruction in Philosophy*:

> As imagination becomes freer and less controlled by concrete actualities, the idealizing tendency takes further flights unrestrained by the rein of the prosaic world. The things most emphasized in imagination as it reshapes experience are things which are absent in reality. (104)

For Guest and Dewey, imagination, a vehicle of creativity, has the power to make an absent image present, by virtue of which it creates a smooth connection between the fictional world and the real world. This smooth transition is astutely grasped by Gizzi:

> Her [Guest's] most recent poems in Rocks on a Platter (1999), Miniatures (2002), The Red Gaze (2005), and after, take the reader quietly from one realm to another, as

> evidenced in one of her last poems, "Shelley in the Navy-Colored Chair" (dedicated to her editor Suzanna Tamminen). As in Wallace Steven's late poems, the relation between reality and imagination has become seamless. (*Collected* xix)

In order to step out of the defined space hemmed by 'real trees', a poem is required to maintain obscurity or mystery because 'Ideally a poem will be both mysterious (incunabula, driftwood of the unconscious), and organic (secular) at the same time' (*Imagination* 20). The feature of being mysterious can be clarified by Guest's definition of imagination, that it 'lives with the visionary. When you touch its glass there is a ring. The French have a phrase "*clair-obscur*" which translates as obscure light and means the mysterious side of thoughts… Imagination is a clair-obscur' (*Imagination* 32). Imagination enables reality to grow out of the past and the already known territory towards a world not previously thought of or entered. I posit that, instead of looking for what exactly the absent is, what Guest suggests is to retain an abiding attitude to the exploration of new experience from different viewpoints and experiments. The appears to echo Guest's 'little ghost' or a hiddenness which 'is the *obscure essence that lies within the poem that is not necessary to put into language, but that the poem must hint at, must say "this is not all I can tell you. There is something more I do not say"*' (*Imagination* 100-101). The 'little ghost' further reconfirms Guest's suggestive and abstract approach to poetic process, and the obscure feature retains the richness of mystery in order to enlarge both poetic and daily experience. The poem ends with a phantasmagorial image of trees:

> The necessary idealizing of your reality
> is part of the search, the journey
> where two figures embrace
>
> This house was drawn for them
> it looks like a real house

perhaps they will move in today

into ephemeral dusk and
move out of that into night
selective night with trees,

The darkened copies of all trees. (*The Collected Poems* 222)

Guest continues puzzling the reader between reality and the imaginative world: the drawn house looks like a real one, and 'the darkened copies of all trees' to achieve the 'balancing act between reality and the imaginative force at work within the poem' (*Imagination* 106).

Imagination, for Guest, is a creative technique in her poetic composition as she claims, 'without Imagination the poem is only words on a page' (*Imagination* 31). Imagination also prevents everyday life from becoming unduly 'real' and 'detailed' in order to retain vitality and mystery, which permits Guest to create an imaginative space in which she develops her own language and constructs belonging. Serving as a visionary connectiveness, imagination constructs and unifies different elements – the tangible and the intangible, the real and the surreal – to exceed and intensify both aesthetic and daily experience. Put differently, Guest's practice of imagination can be understood by Breton's suggestion in *Manifesto of Surrealism*, that "Imagination alone offers me some intimation of what *can be*' (5). The possibility of what reality can be also suggests that belonging can not only be explored or discovered but also can be created or recreated in different manners.

In addition to the significance of imagination in poetry, reality, and belonging, it is undeniable that Guest also values movement in poetry as she proclaims a poem should be considered 'plastic. It is movable, touchable. It is a viable breathing substance. Nothing is more useless than a poem with a dull sheen that refuses to move, that is inert. This is the essence of dullness and our eyes run quickly past it' (*Imagination* 30). In what follows, I will

elucidate how Guest employs mobility to steer clear of dullness and stagnation in both her poetry and everyday life. Mobility is poetically imparted to images, colours, and shapes, time and space 'In Slow Motion'

Melting, the melt of snow into midnight,
Preoccupied, half alive, an activity in slow motion
still attached.

Moves outside of the text into the dark *under text*
with closed eyes, detached, unmodified.
A starry adultness
Took other means

to lengthen the text,
by emotion,

and arguably noise
wooed in this chapter and
each page of,
O real life. (*The Collected Poems* 371)

This motion or energy – melting into night, an activity in slow motion, moves outside, lengthen and wooed – not only horizontally establishes a natural flow through the poem on the page but also vertically elevates the poem outside of the text to become engaged with everyday life, since as Guest states, 'Poetry extended vertically, as well as horizontally' (*Imagination* 51). What elevates a poem is considered as 'spirit' by Guest, as she elucidates that

> I am using the word “spirit,” “vision,” “halo” because I wish to lift us upward away from the desk of a projected poem. I want to empathize that the poem needs to have a spiritual or metaphysical life if it is going to engage itself with reality. (*Imagination* 27-28)

This is to say, ‘spirit’ plays a crucial role in integrating poetry with reality and Guest further illustrates that

> They [words] are inorganic unless there is a spirit within the poem to elevate it, to give it “wings,” so that the poem may soar above the pages and enter our consciousness where we may if we wish give it a long life, a longer life would occur when the poem lies without elevation on a piece of paper. (*Imagination* 29)

The elevating movement from a poem to reality also reflects and illustrates the inseparable relationship between art and everyday life. Moreover, Guest paradoxically adopts visual disruption and linguistic fragments on the page in order to intensify this mobility, which is vividly reflected in ‘Geese Blood’

height of trees

the papered chamber ——

a breathy click —— low volumed ——

the stalking men ——

outer motions

leading to holes —— unstable lacing ——

an elevation ——

controlled surface ——

seizures —— the fallow lining ——

a bird interrupts ——

groping for layers ——

lip fold ——

loosed on the hillside —— dun panorama

continues a secondary

reliance on ledge —— the nearest forest —— reversed

kilometres —— a brusque rim —— the outer motion ——

as figurative ——

extension of features ——

leading to holes —— an elevated fissure;

these intervals control —

in bold gaps —— marked by flaking —— The empty lining ——

The bird in fallow sky —— the motion (*The Collected Poems* 268-270)

The landscape-like presentation generates a visual disruption – constant line breaks, frequent use of dash, blankness on the page, and the continuity of motion – while the images continue various forms of motion – 'outer motions', 'an elevation', 'fold', 'reversed', 'extension' and 'the motion'. The visual and syntactic format of the poem makes the reader attend to the page and move with the images while interlocking his poetic interpretation with everyday experience. This poetic mobility therefore enriches and reshapes daily experience and further enables the reader to resee and reexperience belonging in new dailiness. In this instance, belonging not only exists in poetry or in reality but also develops in the transition or the elevating movement between these two.

In this section, I have discussed Guest's employment of imagination and mobility in her poetic creation, which broadens the understanding of everyday life. In terms of

imagination, it is crucial to recognise the creativity activated by imagination in her poetry as 'it resists clear and absolute meaning. If unrestricted, we are welcome into an activity that guides us into the realm of the self, the oneself where creativity breathes' (*Imagination* 16). Put differently, imagination mitigates absolute actualities to permit the imaginative world to integrate with reality to expand daily experience. Aside from imagination, through motion, Guest aims 'to *delimit* the work of art, so that it appears to have *no beginning and no end*, *so that it overruns the boundaries of the poem on the page*' (*Imagination* 100). The continuity also gives rise to the presentation and creation of belonging in an open-ended manner. Guest displays that imagination and mobility are not only effective tactics in poetic practice but also are constructive approaches to everyday life and to a new sense of belonging.

IV. Conclusion

Through the above discussion, the crucial influence Surrealism and Guest's inter-media collaboration exert on her development of poetics is evident. I have also examined how she presents and reconstructs the present through collage, and how she reveals the hidden and the known in everyday life by employing imagination and mobility in her poetry. By virtue of searching for the seen and the unseen, Guest attains what 'Coleridge said that a poem must be both *obscure and clear*. This is what we research for in our poem, the beautiful balance between *the hidden and the open*' (*Imagination* 100). Such emphasis on '*the hidden and the open*' also indicates that belonging can be felt strongly but can also be hidden in the everyday. Guest's poetry, made up of a strikingly eclectic array of examples and perspectives, is often elliptical and elusive, and the everyday reflected in her poetry can be understood as both suggestive and evocative. Guest is not simply presenting or celebrating the ordinary, but instead she practices and 'construct[s] a kind of magnifying glass that imbues mundane

experiences with the intensive awareness of art.'[10] This further demonstrates that Guest should be viewed as a formally radical poet of everyday life aesthetics. She focuses on what Stéphane Mallarmé pursues, 'Underneath the surface of the poem there is the presence of "the something else." "Not the thing, but its effect"' (*Imagination* 84). One of the effects that Guest's poetry brings forth is the continuous urge and potential to seek new and various dimensions of the everyday, and it precisely through the variety of dimensions Guest creates that her writing gives rise to a multiplicity of approaches to the search for belonging.

[10] Borrow Stephen Fredman's comments on styles of Williams, Zukofsky, Oppen, Reznikoff, Lorine Niedecker, and Carl Rakosi regarding early-twentieth-century urban and suburban activity in Form and Experience: Williams, Dewey, and the Origins of American Postmodernism

Chapter 4 Hejinian's Reconstruction of Language and Everyday Life Aesthetics

The Language poets (Bruce Andrews, Charles Bernstein, Ron Silliman, Carla Harryman, Lyn Hejinian, Steve Benson, and others.) emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Influenced by such American poetic groups as the New York School, the Black Mountain School, and the San Francisco Renaissance, they actively drew the reader's attention to the use of language and the creation of meaning in poetry. Their heightened attention to language is precisely captured by Bernstein and Andrews in 'Repossessing the Word', the introduction to *The L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E Book*, where the authors claim that 'we [the language poets] have emphasized a spectrum of writing that places its attention primarily on language and ways of making meaning, that takes for granted neither vocabulary, grammar, process, shape, syntax, program, or subject matter' (ix). In terms of this thesis, this is to say that language, as a crucial element of the everyday, is taken for granted and requires renewed attention and re-examination. Moreover, as Bernstein and Andrews imply, such heightened attention to language and its function in creating meaning gives rise to new understanding and experience of the everyday. In other words, there is an inseparable relationship between language and the everyday. In this Chapter, I will demonstrate that, on the one hand, language is profoundly embedded in the everyday, and on the other hand, that the innovative use of language revitalises the ordinary and imparts new meanings and experience to the quotidian. Or as Wittgenstein argued in *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 'The limits of my language mean the limits of my world' (74). The chapter examines how Hejinian uses the poetic text to articulate the relation between language and the everyday and to reveal the power of language in

constructing daily experience. This discussion will underpin a consideration of Hejinian's search for a sense of belonging through language and in language itself.

Hejinian, as a leading member of this avant-garde movement, not only experiments with various compositional techniques to provide a fresh and distinctive approach to the understanding and practice of language but also investigates how language shapes daily experience. As Juliana Spahr observes in 'Resignifying Autobiography: Lyn Hejinian's My Life', 'An unusual lyricism and a descriptive engagement with the everyday establish Hejinian as a contemporary poet of some force' (141). Like O'Hara and Guest, Hejinian, a formal practitioner of the quotidian, demonstrates a keen interest in paying attention to everyday life. However, unlike O'Hara, who focuses on presenting what is happening, and unlike Guest, who explores and remakes the connections of daily elements to re-envision reality, Hejinian seeks the reconstruction of the everyday through the re-invention of language. Put differently, everyday experience is embedded in the use of language, as declared in *The Language of Inquiry*: 'Vocabulary and grammar are themselves an intense examination of the world and of our perceptual relations within the experience of it' (139). Hejinian eloquently reveals the inseparable relation between language and the everyday and evince that the examination of language means the examination of the everyday, and the innovative use of language means the re-experience of dailiness.

Deeply concerned with the theory, politics, and practice of the everyday, the Language poets were extensively engaged with and influenced by a wide range of philosophers and poets, including Ludwig Wittgenstein, Walter Benjamin, Stanley Cavell, Gertrude Stein, as well as New York School poets such as Ashbery, O'Hara and Guest. Such a blend of influence is palpable in Hejinian's *My Life* which can be viewed as a comprehensive integration of an aesthetic, philosophical, poetic, and everyday investigation. In order to better understand *My Life*, it is useful to examine how this philosophical and poetic context

establishes and shapes her attention to and practice of language and its relation between everyday life. Therefore, in the first section of this chapter, I will examine Stein, who Hejinian frequently mentioned in essays, notably in *The Language of Inquiry*, to illustrate how she shaped Hejinian's understanding and practice of language. I will also discuss Wittgenstein's everyday life theory, with which Hejinian seems to concur. It is undeniable that Hejinian is also closely associated with Russian formalism, which I will discuss in detail in the third section. After recognising the poetic and philosophical context in which Hejinian develops her poetics and its crucial relationship with the everyday, in the second section, I will analyse two distinctive aspects of her poetry, connections and repetition, to exemplify her linguistic practice and understanding of everyday life. This poetic development also recreates her sense of belonging in daily life. In other words, belonging is embedded in language, while the use of language reshapes our sense of belonging. In the final part of the discussion, I will illustrate how Hejinian adeptly employs the compositional techniques of juxtaposition, aphorism, and metonymy, to display the key features of the everyday and how language reconstructs the ordinary and belonging.

I. The Poetic and Philosophical Context of Hejinian's Everyday Aesthetics

In considering Stein's influence on Hejinian, instead of specifying compositional techniques, I would draw attention to her poetic insight into language and the everyday. As Peter Nicholls eloquently observes in 'Numerousness and Its Discontents: George Oppen and Lyn Hejinian',

> the importance of Stein to Hejinian is not that her scepticism about knowledge and memory produces a simply autonomous poetic language, but rather that her resulting

> rejection of an instrumental language of means and ends makes possible a new kind of encounter with, and address to, a world that exceeds the self. (76)

Nicholls reveals that both Stein and Hejinian engage in constructing rather than presenting language and reality. They use language to construct daily experience, which transcends a simple recording of what is happening. In this instance, language is not only closely intertwined with daily life but is a method of re-approaching and re-discovering the quotidian so as to encounter new and varying experience. With this in mind, in this section, I will analyse how Stein and Hejinian reconstruct everyday experience through two specific poetic strategies, poetic association and repetition.

*Tender Button*s, one of Stein's most notable books, consists of three everyday subjects, Objects, Food, and Rooms, exhibiting an impatience with conventional grammar and narration while valorising the feature of being disparate and dispersed. Stein articulated this practice in conversation with Robert Hass, in 'Transatlantic Interview', observing that 'I used to take objects on a table, like a tumbler or any kind of object and try to get the picture of it clear and separate in my mind and create a word relationship between the word and the things seen' (25). This statement bespeaks her pursuit of imparting innovative features to language and to daily elements so as to reveal the infinite possibility of making new meaning in poetic texts and the everyday. For instance, in her poem titled 'A Carafe, that is a Blind Glass' in *Tender Buttons*, Stein wrote:

> A kind in glass and a cousin, a spectacle and nothing strange a single hurt color and an arrangement in a system to pointing. All this and not ordinary, not unordered in not resembling. The difference is spreading. (3)

These four concise and distinctive lines not only depict concrete details – glass, objects that are made of glass, and the possible contents in them – but also indicate that the re-

arrangement of disparate objects gives rise to new meaning to both language and reality. That 'The difference is spreading' is achieved through the reorganisation and reconnection of words in language which further generates different semantic and daily experience. Another poem, 'Sugar', ends with a series of non sequiturs:

> A white bird, a colored mine, a mixed orange, a dog.
>
> Cuddling comes in continuing a change.
>
> A piece of separate outstanding rushing is so blind with open
>
> delicacy.
>
> A canoe is orderly. A period is solemn. A cow is accepted.
>
> A nice old chain is widening, it is absent, it is laid by. (Stein 29)

These disparate, heterogeneous, and recontextualised images and the innovative use of words create a generative force in this text and engender fresh meaning in the mundane. This artistic association also challenges convention and encourages the reader to reconsider the known and the familiar. Such organic and inventive association is also discernible in *My Life*, witness, for example:

> The pair of ancient, stunted
>
> apricot trees yielded ancient, stunted apricots. What
>
> was the meaning hung from that depend. The sweet
>
> aftertaste of artichokes. The lobes of autobiography. (Hejinian 27)

These independent syntactical units not only create a diversity of associations: ancient, apricots, the sweet aftertaste of artichokes, and the lobes of autobiography but also provide the reader with the permission to inventively review and re-examine language grammatically and semantically. Poetic association allows the order of words or images to be disordered or re-ordered, which contributes to invigorating language. This is to say, association, as both a poetic strategy and an experience-transforming approach, staves off the humdrum status and

indifference, and continuously makes the mundane anew. Perloff wrote about Stein, in '"Gramma in Use": Wittgenstein/Gertrude/Marinetti', that '"Dislocations" of specific words and phrases are, after all, ways of *locating* others' (42). Dislocation is resonant with Hejinian's incisive statement in *The Language of Inquiry*, 'Poetry plays with order, makes order of disorder, and disorder of order' (17). The experiment with dislocating/disordering is a poetic technique of renewing language. The practice of dislocating words and phrases can also be viewed as a process of discovering belonging in the newly created language. In other words, dislocation is a method of establishing and developing a sense of attachment to language. In Perloff's term, dislocation of words is way of *locating* belonging which is part of what Perloff indicates 'others'. Since language is a crucial element of the everyday, dislocation can be considered a method of searching for a sense of belonging in both language itself and in the everyday. Both Stein's dislocation and Hejinian's practice of order strongly infer that examining and experimenting with language is a continuous and dynamic process. Instead of accepting the long-established use of language and reality, they focus on challenging and changing them. This practice is articulately summarised by Bruce Andrews in *Paradise and Method: Poetics and Praxis*:

> The point is not to present reality but to change it – by a reordering of the senses, of thought, of language…This involves challenging any normative, controlling conception of reality: at the very least by withholding the usual allegiances of syntax, style, decorum or subject … and by mobilizing forces that can probe how reality is constructed – by being contested. (110 -111)

For Hejinian, 'Language gives structure to awareness' (*Language* 23) of new understanding and experience of the quotidian. This insight bears a striking resemblance to Wittgenstein's remark, in *Philosophical Investigations*, that 'A main source of our failure to understand is that we do not command a clear view of the use of our words…It earmarks the form of

accounts we give, the way we look at things' (49). In this instance, both Stein's and Hejinian's innovative experiment with associations of words re-establishes new perspectives of viewing and experiencing the ordinary. Hejinian further enunciates the inseparable relation between language and everyday life:

> For a writer, it is language that carries thought, perception, and meaning. And it does so through a largely metonymic process, through the discovery and invention of associations and connections. Though it may seem merely technical, the notion of linkage – of forging connections – has, in my mind, a concomitant political or social dimension. Communities of phrases spark the communities of ideas in which communities of persons live and work. (*Language* 166) **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

'Forging connections', for Hejinian, is not simply merging daily objects and events together to create new dailiness; it is a continuous process of extending the integration of language into daily activities to spark new understanding of language and to make the reader recognise how daily experience can be re-experienced through the use of language. The invention of connections is exemplary and ubiquitous in *My Life*. For example, Hejinian wrote 'The horse, too, is a farmer. The/spasm of a restricted smile, a reflected smile. Like/a penalty, the simile. Should they go there they/would not find the little village that I knew and/loved.' (34) These radical associations of words and images may seem devoid of logic or explanation and make sentences less semantically sensible. However, this poetic senselessness is eloquently elucidated by Wittgenstein's much-quoted claim, 'When a sentence is called senseless, it is not as it were its sense that is senseless. But a combination of words is being excluded from the language, withdrawn from circulation' (*Investigations* 139). Therefore, that Hejinian's radical creation of the associations of words may seem senseless is because her language is out of the domain of the 'accepted' or 'preconceived' language. This seemingly senseless yet

intensely meaningful creation provides the reader with experience that is excluded or withdrawn from the everyday. Put differently, the new practice of language staves off preconceived or taken-for-granted dailiness and imparts diversified experience to the quotidian. In the meantime, the innovative association of words in a poetic text gives rise to a new sense of belonging in and understanding of language. In other words, belonging can be recreated and reshaped by the new use of language. For Hejinian, the search for belonging is not excluded from language, and therefore the generative use of language increases the scope and possibility of belonging in poetry and the everyday. Wittgenstein also proposes that 'The results of philosophy are the uncovering of one or another piece of plain nonsense and bumps that the understanding has got by running its head up against the limits of language. These bumps make us see the value of discovery' (*Investigations* 48). His thought-provoking 'bumps' empower Stein and Hejinian to more freely explore the possibility of reconstructing language and to rediscover the value of daily experience. The practice of association breaks off from conventional grammar and advances the understanding of language, since as Wittgenstein suggests 'Grammar does not tell us how language must be constructed in order to fulfil its purpose, in order to have such-and-such an effect on human beings. It only describes and in no way explains the use of signs' (*Investigation* 138). For Wittgenstein, language is not confined to certain roles and uses, rather there are various ways of describing the everyday and belonging. This also anticipates Hejinian's insight into how language is constructed, providing a diversity of perspectives of viewing the everyday and shaping the understanding and experience of belonging.

In the above analysis, I have discussed Stein's great influence on Hejinian in terms of the pursuit of language and reality, while analysing how Hejinian challenges conventional grammar and establishes the pivotal relationship between language and the everyday. I also illustrate, how influenced by Wittgenstein, Hejinian's innovative association of words

transforms the ordinary and provides a fresh angle of redefining and discovering belonging. Stanley Cavell, an American philosopher and influential commentator on Wittgenstein, observes in *Must We Mean What We Say?*, that 'For what Wittgenstein means when he says that philosophy really is descriptive is that it is descriptive of "our grammar," of "the criteria we have" in understanding one another, knowing the world, and possessing ourselves' (52). Cavell's remark also explains Hejinian's aesthetic pursuit of exploiting and extending the connection of words, which is to say syntax, and her commitment to providing the multiple possibilities of understanding reality and belonging through language.

In addition to innovative association, it is important to analyse another distinctive feature of Hejinian's writing, which is to say repetition, a device tirelessly utilised by Stein. As she proclaims in *GERTRUDE STEIN Ultimate Collection*, 'Repeating is the whole of living and by repeating comes understanding, and understanding is to some the most important part of living' (456). In what follows, I will argue that repetition, for Stein and Hejinian, is not so much a compositional technique as a formal and aesthetic approach to the everyday and will thus examine Hejinian's understanding of the role of repetition in both poetic language and the everyday.

Repetition, for Stein and Hejinian, is far from a simple repeating of words or phrases since meaning varies as words recur. As Hejinian claims, a 'Certain "fact" (words or phrases) in a fixed vocabulary may be reiterated, but their practical effects and metaphysical implications differ from day to day, situation to situation' (*Language* 167). Stein's repetition of words seems to be intentionally constant in order to draw the reader's attention. For example, the word 'beautiful' is continuously repeated threefold in the line 'Little sales of leather and such beautiful beautiful, beautiful beautiful' (*Buttons* 14). Compared with Stein's continuity and density in repetition, Hejinian's experiment seems less successive and purposeful and more dispersive and natural. For instance, the phrase 'A pause, a rose,

something on paper' recurs several times in *My Life*, however, each time it is recontextualised and embodies a diversity of semantic implications as it repeats:

> *A pause, a rose,*
>
> *something on paper* (7)
>
> ---
>
> A pause, a rose, something on paper, in a nature
>
> scrapbook. What follows as strict chronology has no
>
> memory. (16)
>
> ---
>
> But, because we have only seven days, the light seems to be or-
>
> derly, even predictable. A pause, a rose, something
>
> on paper implicit in the fragmentary text. (55)
>
> ---
>
> Between plow and
>
> prow. A pause, a rose, something on paper, of true
>
> organic spirals we have no lack…The symbolism of the rose
>
> depends on its purity of color. (90)
>
> ---
>
> Things are different
>
> but not separate, thoughts are discontinuous but
>
> not unmotivated (like rose without pause). (Hejinian 137)

The first example opens the book and stands by itself as an epigraph. It may capture the reader's attention by the rhyme 'pause' and 'rose' and 'something', in the next line, conveys a sense of uncertainty and unpredictability. When Spahr discussed Stein's 'rose is a rose is a rose is a rose', she observes that the interpretation of rose is indefinite as the 'meaning of

"rose" expands, for it can be a woman's name, an action, a flower, a structure ("rows"), a geometrical equation' (150). This echoes Hejinian's poetic claim that 'what was the meaning hung from that depend' (*Life* 20), which suggests her refusal of fixed and absolute meaning, and, rather, advocacy of the vast possibility of meaning-making through the variation of repetition.

The line, 'A pause, a rose', is expanded in the second example, and 'something' here embodies the feature of inclusivity or multiplicity as it is embedded in a new context – a nature scrapbook – which connotes diversity and plenitude. The line, 'What follows as strict chronology has no memory', explains Hejinian's objection to orthodox autobiographical linear structure in order to keep 'memory' and everyday life active in her poetic text.

When the phase appears in the third text, the 'pause' interrupts or pauses the flow of the text and of the mundane and predictable days. This pause allows the reader to have time and space to reconsider the unspecified 'something' in language to make the everyday less orderly. On the contrary, the phrase, in the fourth text, retains the smooth flow of the text through assonance: 'plow' and prow', 'pause' and 'rose', and 'organic' and 'lack'. The phrase is abridged with an inversion in the last example, 'like rose without pause', and exhibits that, for Hejinian, both language and the everyday might be discontinuous from time to time, however, they are 'not unmotivated' and will indefinitely develop, expand, generate new meaning. The above analysis addresses Hejinian's redefinition of repetition:

> Here, where certain phrases recur in the work, recontextualized and with new emphasis, repetition disrupts the initial apparent meaning scheme. The initial reading is adjusted; meaning is set in motion, emended and extended, and the rewriting that repetition becomes postpones completion of the thought indefinitely. (*Language* 44)

Therefore, repetition is not simply repeating, but on the contrary, it is a complex and compound process of revealing and recreating meaning in various contexts. It is evident that

the meaning of rose in a scrapbook in the second example is different from it in the context of colour in the fourth example. In other words, the meaning of a word, instead of remaining in a fixed status, continues to develop and extend grammatically and semantically. Hejinian's practice thus echoes Wittgenstein's viewpoint that 'we *understand* the meaning of a word when we hear or say it; we grasp it in a flash, and what we grasp in this way is surely something different from the "use" which is extended in time!' (*Investigations* 53). He further underscores that 'What is essential is to see that the same thing can come before our minds when we hear the word and the application still be different. Has it the *same* meaning both times? I think we shall say not' (*Investigations* 55). Repetition, to some degree, is a form of variation, and requires great attention each time it occurs as it conveys different meanings. This also implies that searching for belonging in language is ostensibly repeating yet complexly varying since it requires constant reconsideration of context. Put differently, the repetition of words and phrases generates a variety of understanding and meaning of belong.

It is fundamental to acknowledge that Hejinian's understanding of repetition not only applies in poetry but also extend to everyday life because 'from age to age a new realism repeats its reaction against the reality that the previous age admired' (*Language* 148). In her terms, the everyday may seem to repeat, however, it carries new features and meanings when it recurs. In other words, the quotation features great newness and variety. For instance, in *The Book of a Thousand Eyes*, she wrote:

> The spider, when it appears within "a range of alternatives," will be rescued – dished out of the nicked and polished porcelain tub and knocked onto the shrubbery just outside the open window.
>
> Of course, it will not be the same spider each time but one in a sequence of spiders. (80)

Being ‘not the same spider each time’ implies daily experience is set in motion, emended and extended as

> There is nothing to come to there but transformation and tint
>
> Seductions
>
> So we can’t be repeating
>
> What one knows in this state can’t be known in another
>
> Time matches nothing (81)

Hejinian’s philosophical and poetic interpretation of repetition is reminiscent of Felski’s proposition, in ‘The Invention of Everyday Life’, that ‘Repetition is one of the ways we organize the world, make sense of our environment, and stave off the threat of chaos. It is a key factor in the gradual formation of identity as a social and intersubjective process’ (84). She continues to state that ‘The temporality of everyday life is internally complex; it combines repetition and linearity, recurrence with forward movement’ (85). Therefore, repetition, for Felski, is an ongoing activity with forward movement rather than a stagnant replication. This understanding coincides with Hejinian’s suggestion that careful attention to repetition reveals diversity and possibility of the use of language and thus deepens and complicates our sense of belonging and the meaning of the everyday.

In this section, I have analysed Stein’s and Wittgenstein’ undeniable influence on Hejinian’s insightful understanding and practice of association and repetition. Hejinian’s radical practice of the association of words, phrases and thoughts gives rise to new energy in her poetry, and to multiple interpretations for the reader. She accentuates the importance of this in ‘The Quest for Knowledge’, suggesting that ‘It is in and amid the interconnections – or as Tolstoi put it, the “linkage” – between certainties and uncertainties, as between parts and their wholes or, in poetry, between grammar and semantics, that meaning and its concomitant knowing abides’ (*Language* 227). These poetic interconnections also apply to the quotidian as

she reassesses daily elements and reconstructs them in her poetry to generate fresh daily experience and belonging. In other words, the diversity of poetic associations lays the foundation for a variety of methods of discovering the process of belonging to language itself and to the everyday. In addition to interconnections, I also demonstrate how Hejinian views and employs repetition in her poetry. For her, repetition can be interpreted as a process of making the mundane and repetitive experience anew, which is to say, repetition features variety in everyday life. Put differently, repetition, instead of limiting daily experience, broadens and varies the everyday. This diversifying repetition indicates that belonging is not in a fixed but a dynamic state and that it differs and alters with each new iteration. Nicholls's observation insightfully summarises Hejinian's understanding of language and life as her focuses are

> on perception rather than on knowledge, on evaluation and 'testing' rather than on the pursuit of 'truth', on the idea of 'description' as phenomenal rather than taxonomic, on an openness to contingency and unpredictability, and, finally, on what she calls a pervasive 'doubt' which, in formal terms, 'hovers' so that words, as she puts it in the early poem *The Guard*, achieve 'the inability to finish // what they say." (77)

II. Hejinian's Poetic Attentiveness to Language and Everyday Life

Like O'Hara and Guest, Hejinian valorises the everyday in her poetry, stating 'art is inseparable from the/search for reality' (*Life* 119). She further articulates the significant role of poetry in capturing and renewing reality:

> It is the task of poetry to produce the phrase *this is happening* and thereby to provide the sensation that corresponds to it – a sensation of newness, yes, and of renewedness – an experience of the revitalization of things in the world, an acknowledgement of

> the liveliness of the world, the restoration of the experience of our experience – a sense of living our life. (*Language* 344-345) **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

This is to say, acute consciousness of poetic language lays the foundation for more truly and fully experiencing the liveliness of the quotidian. Hejinian further affirms in an interview, 'A Fable for Now', with poet, Kate Fagan in 2017, that she is 'in favour of being conscious, and being conscious that you're conscious. Or as I've [she's] said more than once: experiencing experience'. Therefore, in this section, I will demonstrate Hejinian's poetic attentiveness to language and to the everyday and discuss how she develops *My Life* into a seamless integration of linguistic examination and everyday rediscovery.

My Life was written in 1978 when Hejinian was thirty-seven and it consists of thirty-seven sections and thirty-seven sentences in each section. It portrays a domestically centred and female-based quotidian, including her growing up journey: parents, family activities, study, school, work, and marriage. Unlike orthodox and predictable autobiographical writings, Hejinian's poetic autobiography is not only imbued with provocative declarations, contemplations, and sensory descriptions but also is a stimulating exploration and examination of language and its relations with daily experience. In 'Two Stein Talks', she concisely illustrates why 'events are presences' (Language 114) after following Stein's poem:

> 1. A stain with a lily.
>
> Second. A girl with a rooster in front of her and a
>
> bush of strange flowers at her side and a small tree
>
> behind her.
>
> 3. A guardian of a museum holding a cane.
>
> 4. A woman leaning forward.
>
> 5. A woman with a sheep in front of her small be-
>
> hind her.

6. A woman with black hair and two bundles one under each arm.
7. A night watchman of a hotel who does not fail to stand all the time.
8. A very stout girl with basket and flowers summer flowers and the flowers are in the font of a small tree. (*Language* 114-115)

These ordinary yet concrete events are presences, however, they are often taken for granted or neglected because of the lack of consciousness. Ordinary daily elements and activities, or presences, are abundantly demonstrated in *My Life*. For instance, the anecdote about Hejinian's mother's habit of having puddings is vividly revealed:

> My mother's chil-
> hood seemed a kind of
> holy melodrama. She ate
> her pudding in a pattern,
> carving a rim around the
> circumference of the pudding, working her way
> inward toward the center, scooping with the spoon,
> to see how far she could separate the pudding from
> the edge of the bowl before the center collapsed,
> spreading the pudding out again, lower, back to the
> edge of the bowl. (20)

This concrete description of having puddings further illustrates Hejinian's heighted attention to the ordinary and to the trivial or tedious. And how she depicts the movement – carve, work inward toward, scoop, separate, collapse, spread, lower – discernibly makes the mundane

experience present and memorable. This practice invites the reader to travel back to their childhood to recollect their melodramas. The active engagement with the reader bears a striking resemblance with Guest's approach to the freedom of interpreting poetic text as discussed in Chapter 3. Hejinian lucidly underscores this stimulating and generative practice in 'The Rejection of Closure':

> The "open" text," by definition, is open to the world and particular to the reader. It invites participation, rejects the authority of the writer over the reader and thus, by analogy, the authority implicit in other (social, economic, cultural) hierarchies. It speaks for writing that is generative rather directive. The writer relinquishes total control and challenges authority as a principle and control as a motive. (*Language* 43)

This relinquishing of the writer's absolute control over writing not only invites the reader's own experience and memories but also forms a collaborative process of reinterpreting and reshaping the text and its meaning. Hejinian's heightened attention creates a detailed catalogue of various elements from hair colour, food, and road to nature:

> Her hair is the color of a brass bedstead.
> We were proud of our expertise, distinguishing the
> ripe ears of corn from the green, speaking knowl-
> edgeably of tassels and the breeds of corn: Butter &
> Sugar, Country Gentleman, Honey & Cream, Sil-
> ver Queen. The old dirt road, broken into clods and
> gullies, or clods and ruts, over which I was walking
> under some noisy trees, had been reversed in the
> dark. (*Life* 71)

Banal dailiness, under scrupulous attention, becomes the rich and riveting present as it 'surprises us not in itself but in its coming to our attention not as something suddenly present

but as something that's been near for a long time and that we have only just *noticed*' (*Language* 391-392). For Hejinian, being attentive can be viewed as a prerequisite to a search for 'surprises' that are present yet neglected. As Viktor Shklovsky claims, in '*Art as Technique*', 'if the whole complex lives of many people go on unconsciously, then such lives are as if they had never been' (6). In other words, greater attention or consciousness plays a crucial role in making the everyday meaningful and valuable.

Like O'Hara's poem 'Today', and Guest's 'Activities', Hejinian's poetry also features great inclusivity in terms of daily elements. Such seemingly 'unpoetic' everyday objects are valuable and meaningful as 'The experience of experience [is] in resilience, in shifts, in buttons, in numbers, in mirrors, in rivers, in grasp, in this' (*Language* 224). In *Oxota: A Short Russian Novel*, Hejinian notes that 'Equally marvelous, as Gogol said, /are the lenses that contemplate a star/and those that study a bug…' (193). Not only does this insightful line portray the equitability and inclusivity but also underlines the salience of 'contemplation' or the consciousness as Martin Stephen-Paul suggests, in 'Reading in the Words', that 'language writing is not merely an aesthetic activity. It is a reassessment of consciousness' (20). The exuberant celebration of the mundane and daily events occasionally features precision:

> I got my "in-loo"
> from Mendocino Country, a quarterly check for
> $89.20, since in lieu of having the school bus come
> two miles up our road I drove the kids down every
> morning at 6: 45 to meet it. (*Life* 116)

This accuracy immediately reminds the reader of O'Hara's poetic precision. In his poem 'Music', he wrote, 'I have in my hands only 35¢, it's so meaningless to eat!' (*Collected* 210) and another famous poem, 'The Day Lady Died' starts and progresses with the exact time:

> It is 12:20 in New York a Friday

three days after Bastille day, yes

it is 1959 and I go get a shoeshine

because I will get off the 4:19 in Easthampton

at 7:15 and then go straight to dinner

and I don't know the people who will feed me (O'Hara, *Collected* 325)

The attention to details indicates the influence O'Hara exerted on Hejinian's composition. As discussed in Chapter 2, this is not simply a reporting or documenting of dailiness. As Bronwen Tate observes in 'The Day and the Life', these 'exact sums, and precise times give voice to the granular details of a specific lived experience. These details are not totemic or symbolic, they simply are' (48). However, by contrast with O'Hara's 'I do this I do that' practice, in essay 'Strangeness', Hejinian proposed that 'description [is] as a method of invention and of composition' (*Language* 138). Therefore, for her, description is not a simple presentation of the everyday, but a radical approach to new experience through poetic language. In what follows, I will propose that 'events are presences', and so is language, and that for Hejinian, 'Poetry takes as its premise that language (all language) is a medium for experiencing experience' (*Language* 344). This practice also implies that belonging is presence and that the use of language reshapes belonging.

Hejinian's linguistic investigation is intertwined with and revealed in daily descriptions. The mediative lines – 'A word is an expectation. A shooting star is something happening in the sky, as the lion that finally roars is something happening in the zoo. When you speak you play a language' (*Life* 116) – illustrate her rumination on both language and dailiness. She associates her thought regarding 'a word' with daily events: a shooting star is happening; a lion roars and the back to her undertaking of language. The line – 'when you speak you play a language' – aligns with Wittgenstein's claim, 'Here the term "language-game" is meant to bring into prominence the fact that the *speaking* of language is part of an

activity, or of a form of life' (*Investigations* 11). Therefore, language should be viewed as a continuous and inseparable event of the everyday, and this is clearly exhibited in an inventive collage:

> At the circus only the elephants were greater than anything I could have imagined. The egg of Columbus, landscape and grammar. She wanted one where the playground was dirt, with grass, shaded by a tree, from which would hang a rubber tire as swing, and when she found it she sent me…I don't mind, or I won't mind, where the verb "to care" might multiply. (*Life* 10)

Hejinian dexterously interweaves daily elements: elephants, landscapes, playground, dirt, grass, a tree, rubber tire and swing, with contemplative linguistic observations, for example, the difference between 'I don't mind', and 'I won't mind'. The seamless integration of the linguistic investigation with daily objects and events, and of the concrete and the abstract, provides the reader with unlimited possibilities of viewing language and the quotidian. In addition to collage, Hejinian's skilful employment of sound in her poetry reaffirms her attention to both the everydayness and words:

> Name the dog Two, too. Lucky
> to want without wanting for. A list and against it
> ticks. We call out quit it to quiet the dull dog in the
> dark barking. Words heard with the eyes. Wish for
> road woods, the dark past the trees. Airs for hours,
> quiet, walk it. (*Life* 130)

Hejinian's play of alliteration, assonance, and rhyme threads and unifies separated activities to form a rhythmic and rich moment. The condensed and powerful phrase, 'words heard with the eyes' imparts audible and visual features to words, which demonstrates Hejinian's poetic awareness and re-examination of words and their new features. As Stephen Fredman observes

in *Poet's Prose: The Crisis in American Verse*, for Language poets, 'the critical activity of deconstruction, of investigating a text as an endless play of subtexts, is a means of poetic creation' (135). The process of investigating and practising text is not only a means of creation but also a poetic method of experiencing and broadening daily experience. In Hejinian's essay 'Material', she eloquently explicates her understanding of observation:

> The notion of active observation has an oxymoronic quality that is important to notice. One is engaged in an active mental (intellectual and emotional) operation in which one simultaneously searches for something with active expectation while awaiting for unexpected, unpredicted material. One focuses closely while expanding one's field of vision into the blurred peripheries. One is trying to be precise, to figure things out, while entertaining the incongruous, the out of scale, the excess. (*Language* 166)

For Hejinian, poetic attentiveness to and experiment with language navigates and expands 'what is happening' into blurred peripheries, which reaches something out of the ordinary or, in Wittgenstein's words, 'out of circulation'. In other words, consciousness of language gives rise to the unexpected and the unreached of daily experience and belonging.

In this section, I have demonstrated that Hejinian is a formal practitioner of the quotidian. She poetically states that 'I hear a bluejay squawking between the leaves and suddenly feel the links between the minuscule elements of the smell of gray-green as the rain begins to fall—but the well-known is not necessarily known at all' (*Language* 229-230). In order to make the well-known known, she calls for attentiveness to language, as 'a thing may be present to a man a hundred times, but if he persistently fails to notice it, it cannot be said to enter into his experience', as William James proclaims in *Psychology: The Briefer Course* (159). That making the well-known truly known, or making things present into his experience, is also a process of revealing the sense of belonging. Thus, I also demonstrate the

feature of inclusivity in Hejinian's reader-engaged approach, the aim of which is to more broadly and deeply experience the experience. Her poetry clearly exemplifies What she considers an artistic act:

> The artistic act has integrity to the extent that it is a generally inclusive reckoning, an outlook, taking anything into account, the diverse and disparate… She must be both responsive and responsible, since her work will reflect an intensity of response, reciprocal with the world. (*Language* 20-21)

Hejinian's immediate responsiveness to and responsibility for both language and life not only marks *My Life* as a poetic book of the everyday but also as an illuminating review *of* and signpost to the function of language in the quotidian. In this instance, language not only makes belonging present but also enables the reader to create a sense of belonging in the everyday.

III. Hejinian Alters and Renews the Everyday through Poetic Language

As discussed, Hejinian's language aims to recreate the everyday. As Christopher Beach observes in 'Poetic Positionings', 'her writing attempts not only to transcribe or capture experience, but to interact on a textual or metatextual level with that experience and the process of remembering and re-creating that experience' (59). Therefore, in what follows, I will examine Hejinian's three compositional techniques, juxtaposition, aphorism, and metonymy, in My Life to demonstrate how she transforms routine and banal events into new occurrences through them. I will also compare Hejinian's practice with Shklovsky's theory of ostranenie or defamiliarisation (also translated as 'estrangement'). Shklovsky, a Russian formalist, profoundly influenced the Language poets, and 'Among the Language poets, this theory of poetic estrangement finds no better expression than in Hejinian', as Jacob Edmond acknowledges in 'Lyn Hejinian and Russian Estrangement' (72). I will examine how Hejinian

defamiliarises the familiar through her compositional techniques in order to re-create the quotidian and belonging.

Contemplative statements, for example, ‘acts are links, and likewise ideas’ (Life 100), and ‘arts, also, are links’, (103) cogently bespeak Hejinian’s aesthetic search for juxtapositions in her poetry. This feature is ubiquitous in My Life, from strings of words

Raisins, cheese, the Japanese. (89)

A locked liquid, an egg. (148)

to phrases

The air we breathe: the air we breathe rang-

ing in size contains flakes of sound, dark, silence,

and light. (112)

to lines

Fox-

tails, the juice of a peach, have fallen on the flesh of

this book. The secret of the song was that one

couldn’t hum it; the melody was elusive, or not ap-

parent at all. (52).

These inventive and juxtapositional expressions poetically make the familiar unfamiliar and re-experience dailiness by imparting new features to daily objects. However, it is worth noticing that Hejinian’s juxtaposition does not entail simply or randomly combining elements together, since, as she puts it, ‘composition by juxtaposition presents observed phenomena without merging them, preserving their discrete particularity while attempting also to represent the matrix of their proximities’ (*Language*155). In other words, Hejinian attentively observes and maintains the individual properties of words and images while searching for their artistic associations so as to create new meaning in language and the everyday. Her

juxtaposition is not limited to short lines but extends to long stanzas or paragraphs in a poetically complex and meaningful form:

> He was a
> trainer of falcons, scornful of hunting dogs. The
> body is a farmer. From the beginning, they had to
> drive the plow through stone eggs. She pretends
> she is making popcorn. The boats appeared to have
> stopped on the water, moving only as if to breath…
> In the school bathroom I vomit secretly, not
> because I was ill but because I so longed for my
> mother. Now, bid chaos welcome. It requires a com-
> mittee, all translators. Undone is not not done. (*Life* 26)

This account achieves great intensity by threading and juxtaposing a diversity of activities, from a trainer, the thought on body, driving route, making popcorn, to boat watering, homesickness, and the meditation on the word 'undone'. All the events exceed the past and present tenses and seamlessly converge in a spontaneous and harmonious moment. In addition to intensity, this account also simultaneously achieves significant concentration because of the variety of locations including land, home, water areas, and school. The intensive and extensive juxtaposition consists of non-sequiturs and disjointed life details. As William Watkin claims in 'The poetics of presentation', this practice 'emulates the manner in which memory is not a sequential narrative, but is rather closer to the back and forth hermeneutics of reading a poem' (226). The arduous process of 'the back and forth hermeneutics of reading a poem' is called for because juxtaposition defamiliarises the quotidian. Defamiliarisation, as Shklovsky claims in 'Art as Technique', 'makes perception long and "laborious." The perceptual process in art has a purpose all its own and ought to be

extended to the fullest' (6). Therefore, juxtaposition breaks with unvarying thinking habits and requires poetic attention to and strenuous examination of language as

> *Ostranenie* is an essential literary effect, a defining feature of the poetic…Poetry is literary not by dint of the mellifluousness of its sounds, the aptness of its imagery, the seamless interweaving of its parts, but through "roughening," dissonance, impediments. (Hejinian, *Language* 301)

Defamiliarisation thus is not only a literary technique intended to create new meaning and features but also an attentive and continuously extending process of ruminating on how to defamiliarise expression in order to reconstruct and revivify language.

The description below further exemplifies Hejinian's 'roughening' composition and the 'roughening' process of reading and interpreting a poem:

> A German goldsmith covered a
> bit of metal with cloth in the 14th century and gave
> mankind its first button. It was hard to know this
> as politics, because it plays like the word of one per-
> son, but nothing is isolated in history – certain hu-
> mans are situations. Are your fingers in the mar-
> gin. Their random procedures make monuments
> to fate. There is something still surprising when
> green emerges. The blue fox has ducked its
> head. The from rhyme of harmless with harmony.
> Where is my honey running. You cannot linger "on
> the lamb." You cannot determine the nature of
> progress until you assemble all of the relatives. (*Life* 12-13)

The diversity of contents – situations in history, the colour of green, blue fox, rhyme, honey running – radically disrupts the prefixed orders and categories of daily elements. Juxtaposition not only imparts new features and meaning to everyday objects and events but also redefines and re-experiences the everyday. It also reconstructs and gives rise to unperceived and unexperienced belonging. Hejinian also reveals the openness and possibilities of understanding and constructing reality as 'Realism, if it addresses the real, is inexhaustible' (*Life* 144). She further articulates that juxtaposition's task is 'to restore the liveliness to life. Thus it must make the familiar remarkable, noticeable again; it must render the familiar *unfamiliar*' (*Language* 301). juxtaposition thus can be viewed as a process of defamiliarising, re-familiarising, and varying the mundane.

Hejinian's insights into the function of juxtaposition align closely with Shklovsky's statement about defamiliarisation in art:

> The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects "unfamiliar," to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. (16)

This defamiliarising process, as an aesthetically prolonged and experimental form, disrupts the reader's fixed and habitual understanding of the everyday, making them reconsider and reexamine the ostensibly familiar yet actually unknown. Put differently, defamiliarisation contributes to the reassessment and revitalisation of language and daily life and further diversifies the sense of belonging. As Edmond observes, 'poetic language, through the device of estrangement, can also renew our perception of the world and can thus oppose the dreaded habituation, or "automatization," of language and perception that threatens to destroy any real experience of life' (74). This is to say poetic language has the ability to awake our consciousness of the present and to more truly experience dailiness.

A further aspect of Hejinian's practice that is conducive to defamiliarisation is the use of aphorism. In what follows, I thus, display how aphoristic statements refashion both language and the everyday.

My Life is brimming with concise and witty expressions. For example, 'Anxiety is vigilant' (Life 9); 'Twigs are the many/ sounds of light' (76); 'Soon dogs and sun are bugs and moon' (154); 'eyes are the servants of perception' (149), and 'Yet a word is a buoyant burr' (152). These succinct and engrossing declarations continually motivate the reader to contemplate the associations between dogs and sun, the bugs and the moon, or the essence of a word being a buoyant burr. They also feature an affirmative tone, condensed meaning, and compact yet generative power of revising the taken-for-granted. The purpose of these innovative and suggestive statements is not to search for an absolute answer but to draw greater attention to the text and the possibility of creating new meaning. This aligns with Andrew Hui's lucid observation, in the introduction of his book A Theory of the Aphorism, that 'the very minimal syntax of an aphorism gives it a maximal semantic force' (3), and 'an aphorism is "atomic": it is without parts, but its splitting causes an explosion of meaning' (4). Hui further illustrates the crucial function of aphorism: 'The best aphorisms admit an infinitude of interpretation, a hermeneutic inexhaustibility. In other words, while an aphorism is circumscribed by the *minimal* requirements of language, its interpretation demands a *maximal* engagement' (3). A maximal engagement involves great attention to both text and the reader's various experiential correspondence to formulate 'an infinitude of interpretation'. To some degree, aphorism is not so much a literary technique as a form of inquiry into everyday life. As Hui aphoristically claims, 'when you understand an aphorism, you no longer read but think; you no longer think but live' (175), and 'The interpretation of one aphorism thereby opens a plurality of worlds' (4). These laconic declarations articulate Hejinian's understanding of aphorism, aiming to remove the automation status of the

quotidian and invite the reader to radically reconsider and reconstruct the everyday to be able to truly live. The diversity of interpretations of aphorisms generates a multiplicity of new realities and a fresh sense of belonging. Hui later states that 'aphorisms are transhistorical and transcultural, a resistant strain of thinking that has evolved and adapted to its environment for millennia' (6). Aphorism, interpreted as a resistant strain of thinking, turns away from fixation and constraints in order to activate innovative thinking and revitalise day experience. In the meantime, instead of searching for a sense of existing belonging, aphorism tends to transcend the present and actively re-generate new interpretations of and approaches to belonging. Hejinian's succinct aphoristic texts impart new and unexpected features – anxiety seems to have watchful eyes; twigs are sounds; and dogs are bugs – to common objects. This condensed expression creates fresh and sensory experience and unfolds, as Hui observes, a multidimensional world 'to discover something about their infinite horizons and inexhaustible depths' (21). Hejinian's practice of aphorism is well indicated by his remark, 'One word contains within it an infinite meaning. Finite aphorism, infinite signification' (188). In other words, aphorism is an indefinite and generative process of enriching language, revitalising the mundane, and re-interpreting and rediscovering belonging.

There is no doubt that juxtaposition and aphorism are not only transformative literary techniques but also constructive methods of reforming and interpretating language and everyday life. My Life, on one hand, presents non-sequiturs and disjunctive memories, events and reflections. On the other hand, it features great mobility or continuity to seamlessly interconnect and unify separate events and experience. Hejinian's pursuit of mobility is evident in such lines as 'And I must admit that I find bulldozers beautiful in motion' (*Life* 97); and 'It is hard to turn away from moving water' (49), which recurs throughout *My Life*. She further articulates the important role of motion in poetry:

> the emphasis in poetry is on the moving rather than on the places – poetry follows pathways of thinking and it is that that creates patterns of coherence. It is at points of linkage – in contexts of encounter, at which Andre Breton called *points sublimes*— that one discovers the reality of *being in time*, of *taking one's chance*, of *becoming another*, all with the implicit understating that *this is happening*. (*Language* 3)

The argument here is that motion, in poetry, is a moving energy intended to unify and intensify fragmented elements in order to form coherence; and in the everyday, it constitutes generativity aimed at connecting daily objects and events together, which gives rise to continuous and conscious consideration and examination of what is happening. In what follows, I will examine another strategy, metonymy, to demonstrate how it creates and carries out continuity in both Hejinian's poetic practice and the everyday.

In 'Strangeness', she proclaims that 'Metonymy moves restlessly, through an associative network, in which associations are compressed rather than elaborated. Metonymy is intervalic, incremental – it exists within a measure. A metonymy is a condensation of its context' (*Language* 149). For Hejinian, metonymy has the ability to create a growing connective and complex network of words and objects. It features a continuous poetic flow and this flow, as a poetic energy, extensively and seamlessly associates a diversity of dailiness with language. For instance, words are connected by the feature of generativity:

> But a word is a bottomless pit. It became
> magically pregnant and one day split open, giving
> birth to a stone egg, about as big as a football. In
> May when the lizards emerge from the stones, the
> stones turn gray, from green. When daylight moves,
> we delight in distance. (*Life* 8)

There is a continuous movement from ‘bottomless’, ‘pregnant’, ‘giving birth to’, to ‘emerge from’. These condensed lines are filled with ordinary yet inventive images – a word is pregnant and gave birth to a stone egg from which lizard emerged – and transform smoothly from one into another. Therefore, metonymy not only gives rise to a successive flow of various objects but also evokes a poetic sense that one object, instead of being placed next to another, generates (or is generated by) another, and then coexist and *harmonise* with each other to create new meanings. Hejinian later articulates her interpretation of metonymy in concrete details:

> The
>
> difference between “he presented his argument”
> and “they had an argument.” I still respond to the
> academic year, the sound of the school bell, the hot
> Wednesday morning after Labor Day. Must the
> physiologist stand apart from the philosopher. We
> are not forgetting the patience of the mad, their love
> of detail. The sudden brief early morning breeze,
> the first indication of a day’s palpability, stays high
> in the trees, while flashing silver and green the
> leaves flutter, a bird sweeps from one branch to
> another, the indistinct shadows lift off the crumpled
> weeds, smoke rises from the gravel quarry — all this
> is metonymy. (*Life* 81)

Despite the seemingly fragmentary narration: the comparison of phrasings, the recollection of her academic year, the thinking on physiologist and philosopher, the morning breeze, a bird, weed, smoke, Hejinian cogently claims, ‘Not fragments but metonymy’ (83). Instead of

randomly placing discrete words and objects, she competently employs syntactic strategies to foreground a flow of ideas. She temporally interweaves the past, the time of her academic year with the present, the breeze, and birds, while spatially shifting from a horizontal location, the campus/school to a vertical site 'high in the trees'. That a bird sweeps from one branch to another is more a horizontal movement and this is followed by a vertical upward movement of shadows lifting off and smoke rising. Therefore, the smooth temporal and spatial movement makes separate units connected and cohabited harmoniously. Moreover, for Hejinian, the discreteness is also a device for both the writer and the reader to contemplate and rediscover the meaning of language, hence her proposition in 'The Rejection of Closure', that the discrete fields engender

> the creation of sizable gaps between the units. To negotiate this disrupted terrain, the reader (and I can say also the writer) must overleap the end stop, the period, and cover the distance to the next sentence. Meanwhile, what stays in the gaps remains crucial and informative. Part of the reading occurs as the recovery of that information (looking behind) and the discovery of newly structured ideas (stepping forward). (*Language* 46)

The interruptive 'disconnection', or the deletion of the obviousness, enables the reader to move their attention from one thing to another, and reexamine each element and their associations, which contributes to new meaning-making in poetry. In other words, disconnections intensify continuity. Metonymy, as an expansive force, propels the interactions between language, objects, events, and ideas, and continuously expand the possibility of linguistic reconstructions, and the multiplicity of searching for belonging in daily life. Moreover, Hejinian's radical experiments with newly constructed language and ideas set the rediscovery of the everyday in motion as she underlines:

> Language itself is never in a state of rest. Its syntax can be as complex as thought…The meaning of a word in its space derives both from the word's lateral reach, its contacts with its neighbors in a statement, and from its reach through and out of the text into the outer world, the matrix of its contemporary and historical reference. (*Language* 50)

Therefore, metonymy not only functions as a literary strategy to make a text 'unfinished', to evoke endless reassessment of language and its meaning but, like Guest's perception of mobility discussed in the last chapter, it ultimately extends from language in a poetic text to the outer world to search for the hidden or the unseen in order to expand the everyday.

In this section, I discuss three key features – juxtaposition, aphorism and metonymy – in *My Life*. They share a distinctive feature in that they challenge the prior established understanding of language and make language anew. This *ingenious* approach to language further invigorates daily experience and expands the understanding of belonging. Thus, these techniques encourage the reader to reassess and reconfigure language in order to maximise semantic implications. Hejinian radically breaks with the fixation of language and formally calls for the ceaseless possibility of the new use of language. Her defamiliarised language imparts originality and fresh meaning to poetry, and further shapes daily knowledge and experience. For Hejinian, language and the everyday are not a fixture but a dynamic activity as 'Continuity, not as much of ideas as of assumptions, or attitudes, a style one simply can't break away from' (*Life* 36). This continuity also creates a sense of spontaneity, as when she poetically states, 'Now, here is the sun at noon. It tilts even at the moment of telling of it' (*Language* 16). Her condensed aphoristic remarks, as a form of discovery, impart unfamiliar features to the familiar and diversify daily experience and belonging.

IV. Conclusion

My Life not only denotes the complexity of daily experience, thoughts, and emotions in memory but also reforms new modes of connectivity between the quotidian and language. It is also an exploration of Hejinian's sense of belonging, predicated as that is on her constant attention to changes in the social world. In this chapter, I have discussed Hejinian's continuous practice of her poetics and the impact of language on everyday aesthetics. First, I demonstrate key poetic and philosophical influences on Hejinian and analyse her understanding of the everyday through interconnections and repetition in her poetry. Second, I investigate her conscious observation of both poetic text and language and illustrate how she skilfully employs 'defamiliarisation' in her poetry to re-make language and the everyday. Furthermore, I examine three compositional techniques, juxtaposition, aphorism, and metonymy, to exemplify how she reconstructs language to alter daily experience. Her poetic strategies also serve as a meditative practice of redefining and expanding belonging, revealing that belonging does not exist in a fixed status but in a dynamic and constantly progressing state. The new use of language lays the foundation for unlimited interpretations of belonging. Marjorie Perloff underscores the profound role of language in establishing and developing life in *My Life* in *The Dance of the Intellect: Studies in the Poetry of the Pound Tradition*. As Perloff puts it, '*My Life*, it seems, is not "mine" at all; the emphasis, in any case, is on writing itself, on the "life" lived by words, phrases, clauses, and sentences, endowed with the possibility of entering upon new relationship' (225). Put differently, *My Life* is a comprehensive and conscious examination and demonstration of the great connection between language and the everyday, constantly providing new perspectives for reseeing daily life.

Chapter 5 Conclusion

This dissertation has investigated everyday life aesthetics in America in the period after WWII by examining the work of three poets: O'Hara, Guest and Hejinian. It articulates an increasing commitment to acknowledging the importance of the everyday and enhancing attentiveness to the seemingly mundane yet deeply meaningful activities of daily life. As discussed in the earlier Chapters, both poets and theorists formally develop a sustained engagement with the everyday, and radically explore various methods of discovering, expanding and transforming daily experience. Therefore, this dissertation runs philosophical theories and poetic practice in tandem so as to more fully and truly understand everyday life aesthetics. There is no doubt that the pursuit of the quotidian does not constitute a forward progress due to processes of alienation caused inevitably by capital and other social transformations. This dissertation thus also examines how O'Hara, Guest and Hejinian mitigate alienation, and in doing so, establish and increase their sense of belonging in the everyday through a diversity of innovative strategies in their poetry.

In Chapter 2, with regard to O'Hara's heightened attentiveness to daily activities in his poetry, detailed analysis has been conducted by various poets and scholars such as John Ashbery, Kenneth Koch, and Allen Ginsberg. The chapter not only introduces the Surrealist collaborative context in which O'Hara establishes and develops his poetic attentiveness to

and knowledge of the quotidian but also examines how he employs artistic strategies – mobility and images – in his poetry to reveal his understanding and presentation of the everyday. I also illustrate how O'Hara's poetic presentation of daily experience in his poetry bears a striking remembrance to Lefebvre's insight into capitalism, alienation and attention to the everyday and Debord's practice of 'détounrnement' and 'dérive'. This enables the reader to view O'Hara's poems not only from a compositional perspective but also from a philosophical angle to more fully understand his work. Alienation, as detailed in Chapter 1, is inevitable and causes a sense of non-belonging in the everyday. Therefore, I also demonstrate how O'Hara explores and discovers his sense of belonging in the everyday through his extensive collaborations with a diversity of artists and through his practice as a flâneuer to develop the connection between his inner world and the outer world. This chapter investigates O'Hara's poetic attentiveness to everyday life and bespeaks his claim that the most mundane objects and minor events brim with values and significance. Moreover, it illustrates how O'Hara presents and diversifies daily experience through various techniques in poetry to redefine and broaden the understanding of the everyday, giving rise to methods of pursuing re-attachment to dailiness.

Unlike O'Hara, Guest has not been formally recognised or discussed as a poet of the everyday as I have outlined at the beginning of Chapter 3. Therefore, in Chapter 3, I examine Guest and her poetic texts from the perspective of everyday life and argue that she should be formally viewed as a poet who is poetically conscious of the ordinary and is committed to ultimately extending and transforming daily experience. This chapter not only illustrates how Surrealism and cross-media cooperation contexts shape and develop Guest attentiveness to and understanding of both poetry and the quotidian but also demonstrates how she strives to exploit an array of experimental strategies in her poetry to broaden daily and poetic experience. I've examined Guest's use of collage, imagination and mobility in detail and

these techniques further reflect her refusal of an absolute and fixed reality since she radically explores the hidden and the unknown aspects of the everyday in order to generate fresh experience and transform seemingly inevitable or repetitive routines. Transformation, for Guest, is neither idealisation nor transcendence, but a method of expanding and intensifying experience. This practice can be understood by Charles Bernstein's remark in *My Way: Speeches and Poems*, where he observes, 'I suppose one thing I'm after is the sheer–nonsymbological–viscosity of experience. I want to intensify, not rarify or elevate or moralize about nor transcend or explain (away) everyday experience' (30). In Bernstein's term, Guest's practice of transformation is not to epiphanise, overstate, or justify but to more thoroughly and truly experience daily experience. As the only female poet in the first generation of New York School, I've argued that one of Guest's methods of minimising alienation or isolation is to create a new world or reality in her poetic text in which she can belong. This also indicates the great potential and ability of language to shape experience and belonging, which aligns with Dewey's and Wittgenstein's understanding of the significant role of art and language in terms of altering daily and artistic life.

Hejinian, as a Language poet, staves off the predetermined use of language and is committed to revivifying and expanding the use and the meaning of language in order to give rise to fresh awareness of both poetic text and daily experience. Under the great influence of Stein and Wittgenstein, Hejinian re-examines and re-defines repetition by proclaiming that repetition, rather than being simply repeating, is a form of variation in poetry and daily life, the effect of which is to diversify experience. She also poetically extends the use of association by closely intertwining her linguistic investigation with a multiplicity of aspects of everyday life in her poetry. Chapter 4 also analyses how Hejinian employs juxtaposition, metonymy, and aphorism in *My Life* to defamiliarise and reconsider the familiar and the known in order to break the habit and other factors that lead to the neglect of the ordinary.

Her practice also reveals the inseparable relation between language and the everyday, and the possibility of reconstructing language to improve and broaden daily experience. This chapter not only illustrates how language enables both the poet and the reader to limit alienation and reconnect them to everyday life but also articulates that the new use of language gives rise to more insightful understanding of the meaning of the quotidian.

In this dissertation, I have thus manifested the growing attention to the everyday in poetry in the postwar period and demonstrated the understanding of the quotidian of the three poets and their related philosophers. I have also examined a variety of poetic strategies to present, extend and diversify daily experience in their work. It is hoped that this dissertation helps contribute to a theoretical framework to understand why attention to the quotidian is significant, how everyday life can be viewed and moreover, how to present and transform daily experience in poetry. I also hope this dissertation provides a link between the everyday and poetry and reveals the indefinite possibility of shaping the everyday, which lays the foundation for continuously intensifying and expanding daily experience and belonging through innovative strategies.

Belonging is a Prolonged Thirst is part of an ongoing investigation into the relation between poetry and the everyday, and the sense of belonging. The collection aims to reveal what Ted Kooser, writing in *The Wheeling Year*: *A Poet's Field Book*, terms, 'this wonderful life: clear jingle of tire chains, the laughter of ice that breaks under our boots. Each hour's a gift to those who take it up' (79). In Kooser's understanding, the taken-for-granted and familiar aspects of the everyday can become valuable and meaningful if we pay great attention. As I have discussed in Chapter 2, Lefebvre proclaims that 'Only poetry has the wings to soar there [the highest level of communication]' (607-608). Therefore, I also want to raise the visibility of poetry and its crucial role in embodying, expanding and diversifying daily experience while exploring, discovering and re-orienting belonging. Questions such as

how important belonging is in the quotidian, what factors and forces may affect it, and how to quench this thirst will be reflected and revealed throughout the collection. The collection also pays homage to the compositional strategies of the three poets studied in my critical dissertation, and to the theories of everyday philosophers reflected through my writing as a whole. For instance, inspired by O'Hara's walking through the bustling streets of New York, the poem, 'Disorientation', is my dérive practice of wandering along The Royal Mile, sensing the hustle and bustle of Edinburgh where a sense of loss and confusion integrates with a sense of the familiar and the known. The most familiar street scenes I observe every day in Canterbury can become disconnected with or distant from me. In this instance, walking can be viewed as a process of familiarising – de-familiarising – re-familiarising the ordinary. Drawing on Hejinian's ruminative and aphoristic poetic texts, 'Dead Dead from Honeymoon' and 'An Ambivalent Surrender', experiment with aphorism while reconsidering how families and marriages affect an individual's identity, security and belonging. 'Memory is Liquid' only pays homage to Guest and her use of mobility and collage in poetry but also is dedicated to my former supervisor, David Herd. His departure makes me reflect on how taken-for granted yet valuable experience can become discontinued. However, discontinuity ultimately continues as it is 'liquid' and flows and integrates into 'today'. The memory of studying with him, recurs and continues to shape my writing as a student and as a poet, hence my observation, 'Memories in water, flowing/In and out the present/In variation and juxtaposition'. Influenced the mobility O'Hara, Debord, and Dewey employ, I underscore that memories feature new and varying meanings and values when they recur only if we pay close attention. In other words, the critical section has contextualised and laid poetic and theoretical foundation for the development of my creative section, and in the meantime, my poetic practice not only further demonstrates the compositional techniques and aesthetic spirit

I have learnt from the three poets but also reflects and deepens the understanding of everyday life theorists.

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