
Of reality and coincidence

“The sculpture is real, it is made of bronze and it exists near the harbour of Eyemouth - literally, that town which is located at the mouth of a river called Eye Water, in the Borders Region of Scotland.”

The above words are isolated (being written in italics and contained in quotation marks) because I want briefly to consider the relationship between physical reality and the linearity of the written and spoken languages we use to describe reality. The reason I want to do this is because the sculpture of these tearful widows and bairns is located at the mouth of a river called *Eye Water*. A small coincidence perhaps that would normally pass unnoticed, had it not been that the sculpture itself seems to insist on deeper interpretation - and we have to start somewhere.

Each word presents the average - or *mean* - of an array of possible ideas, which in the word are abbreviated to the condition of one single idea, ideally accessible, that can be re-presented in the text as required. For example, trawler, drifter, ketch, seine netter and skiff all present themselves in the background in the words ‘fishing boat’. And it is not until the word is surrounded by other words or in an physical situation that its meaning is [more] precisely defined. There is no word that speaks in isolation; the meaning of a word is in the context of its use.

But the problem is that in shaping the awkward things around us (*things which are actually the context of **our** own meaning, and for which we are as a symbol*) so that they fit neatly, as objects in a line of text, we lose contact with what they and we actually are. For example, I can write, ‘the mothers and children watched helplessly as their menfolk drowned’, and although the line of words perhaps evokes some emotion, it can only ever be like an item of news, a smoothing over of actual events. Whereas the sculpture of widows and bairns - also in a line - is a symbol that transmits powerful emotions which would otherwise have been lost in the text. Why is this? What is emotion? What is a symbol? Would a new way of speaking in symbols prevent us from losing emotional touch with what we actually are? Would it help us to survive?

On the other hand, the coincidence of ‘people crying’ and ‘Eye Water’ and ‘memorial artwork (without which I would not be writing this)’ is a fleeting, subtle and awkward idea which refuses to become an object for re-presentation in lines of text. Yes, it can be described in the text, just as I did above, but the actual coincidence can never be a linguistic object, because although they appear to be different from each other and from different times, *its constituents are actually the same thing*. Com-prehending what that statement actually means will be the central task of this work.

Nevertheless, for now, coincidence must remain as an unresolved thing, hovering above the real objects of the text. But this is not to say that we cannot access that unknown coincidental thing; for if we imagine each of its constituents *as a symbol* of its relatedness with the other two, then we may be given access to the apparently timeless state that coincidence implies.