THE TURING TEST

Nick Totton

It is within language that the world speaks to us in a voice that is not our own. This is, I believe, a first and fundamental experience of dictation and correspondence - the dead speaking to us in language is only one level of the outside that ceaselessly invades our thought.

(Robin Blaser, The Practice of Outside)

This sort of thing is more difficult to do than it looked.

(Professor A.W. Verrall, posthumously)

Dead Authors

In the early years of the twentieth century an unusual literary project was initiated, which continued for over thirty years: a project known generally as the 'Cross Correspondences': a collaboration between a number of authors and/or transcribers, some of them friends and relatives, others complete strangers, and in widely varying circumstances.

These variations include important factors like class and education; but most striking, perhaps, is that several of the more prominent figures involved were dead at the time.

The project[1] consists of a number of separate texts, no one or several of which contains the work itself. The work - like the structure of a myth - emerges solely from the relationship between these different texts: it is a second-order reality, an epiphenomenon. One could appropriately say that the work itself is incarnate in the texts, though identifiable with none of them, nor yet with the sum of the parts.

In one sense the Cross Correspondences are very much of their time: a strikingly Modernist texture, inhabiting the same world as Joyce and Eliot, as a small sample of the enormous material will show:

> *Lots of wars - A Siege I hear the sound of chipping. It's on stone...*

> *What is a tyrant?*

> *Fin and something gleba. Find - Oh it's got to do with the serf. It's about that man who said it was better - Oh! a shade among the shades. Better to be a slave among the living, he said.*

> *Oh, the toil - woe to the vanquished.*
> *That one eye has got something to do with the one ear. That's what they wanted me to say. There's such a mass of things, you see, rushing through my mind that I can't catch anything.*

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[1] My main source for the Cross Correspondences is Saltmarsh (n..d.); see also Tyrrell (1946) 144-50

He was turned into a fountain that sort of Stephen man, he was turned into a fountain. WHY? that's the point: WHY?

(Saltmarsh 111-2)

Irresistible as it is, though, much of this avant-garde, stream-of-consciousness texture is an artefact of the mode of production: the scripts are mainly transcripts, dictations at one remove. They are recorded from the speech of individuals who are repeating to the best of their ability what they perceive themselves to be told by other, discarnate individuals. The channels or mediums sometimes find it hard to catch what they are being told ('Fin and something gleba'). They add their own comments on the process ('That's what they wanted me to say'). As other parts of the text show, they make mistakes and are corrected ('The Stag not Stag, do go on/Stagyr write rite' - Saltmarsh 115); sometimes their sources throw up their hands in exasperation, talk among themselves ('Try her with the David story. She might get it that way' - Saltmarsh 116), use sensory images to fill out the words ('I hear the sound of chipping'), and complain about the difficulty of the process. The overall picture we get is well summed up by one of the channels: ' I can see Edmund as if he were working something; and the thing he is working is me' (Saltmarsh 116).

What is the purpose of the immense amounts of labour expended in the production, transcription and analysis of these texts (to which, of course, I am also contributing)? As a script asks in a quite different context: 'WHY? that's the point: WHY?'

The intention is to produce 'evidence of survival' - survival of physical death. How hard it is, in fact, even to state the issues without prejudging them! - This intention, purportedly, is that of a group of discarnate entities: friends and colleagues in life, distinguished scholars and researchers who also shared a deep involvement in psychic research: Messrs Sidgwick, Gurney, Myers, Verrall and Butcher.

Their procedure - purportedly - was to weave a complex and elaborate web of classical and literary references, essentially a set of puzzles with solutions, like huge multi-dimensional crossword puzzles (the 'solutions' depending on information closely and specifically linked to one or more of the discarnate collaborators); then to break these into pieces, and distribute the pieces systematically between a number of 'mediums' - all people of the greatest probity, as one would have said, some them known or related to the purported originators, some unknown either to this group or to each other. Included with the first scripts were instructions to send the texts to someone in a position to grasp what was going on; before long, intensive and systematic collaboration was established from both sides of the fence, as it were. Some living collaborators died during the years of the project, and 'reappeared' as transmitters of scripts.

My interest in this material is double - and the two interests ultimately interlock. First, there is the fascinating texture of the scripts themselves, and the rather unique way in which both form and content arise out of function. Second, there is what they tell us about how spirits communicate with the living (what they purport to tell us about how purported spirits purport to communicate); and what they suggest in general about the nature of identity, and authorship, just by the way in which they assert and attempt to demonstrate certain specific identities.

The Modernism of the material can perhaps be seen as a case of parallel evolution. In their different ways Joyce and Eliot, Pound and Woolf, are concerned to reproduce the texture of mind in action, thought as it takes place; here we have a transcript of the same thing, as nearly as it can be voiced. The decomposed, associative texture of Modernist writing is here generated by the apparent sheer technical difficulty of 'picking up' the information being transmitted, so that it must be done in several different ways at once (that is, with high redundancy), by reminding the channel of what is to be conveyed, by inducing the relevant associations ('Try her with the David story'). As 'Myers' describes it,

> I appear to be standing behind a sheet of frosted glass which blurs light and deadens sound, feebly dictating to a reluctant and somewhat obtuse secretary.
>
> <div align="right">(SPR Procs 20, Part 50 [1906], 66)</div>

Another participant who started on the 'earthly' team and then joined the 'astral' one after his death complains 'This sort of thing is more difficult to do than it looked' (Saltmarsh 108).

The Modernists I mention also use a net of classical and literary reference very close in nature, if not intention, to the Cross Correspondences. This is the upper class intellectual currency of the period, a code which is being used to identify the communicator not only as a person, or even as a specific individual, but as 'one of us'. The parallelism of evolution is clearly not a matter of chance. Spiritualism, the channelling of material from the purported dead, was a significant feature of the period, with resonance throughout the literary scene; both Joyce and Eliot refer to it in significant ways in their own texts, while the surrealists make it a central feature of their own project. And it is precisely these features of channelled material - its associative texture, its composition from fragments of reference, and above all its multiplicity of voices - which make it so attractive to Modernist and surrealist writers who are centrally concerned with the representation of human subjectivity.

A Whispering Gallery

One example out of the mass of material - one generally considered among the most 'evidential' (i.e., most difficult to interpret as the result of telepathy among the living) - is the 'Ear of Dionysius' case[2]. The 'goal', as it eventually emerged, was to allude from a number of directions to the obscure story of Philoxenus of Cythera, a poet of antiquity imprisoned by Dionysius, Tyrant of Syracuse, for writing satirical poems against him. The allusions involved mentioning the following, over a series of sessions:

> The 'Ear of Dionysius'
> The stone quarries of Syracuse
> The story of Polyphemus and Ulysses
> The story of Acis and Galatea
> Jealousy
> Music
> Something to be found in Aristotle's Poetics
> Satire.

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[2] See Saltmarsh 106-23; Tyrrell 146-8; Proceeding SPR xxix, 197

It would take us too far afield to explain the relevance of all these topics; but we can look at some examples. The 'Ear of Dionysius' was a grotto in the quarries at Syracuse (where Dionysius made his prisoners work), so called both for its shape and because it functioned as a whispering gallery. Dionysius was identified with Polyphemus, the one-eyed giant, because he was blind in one eye; Polyphemus also loved the nymph Galatea, and crushed her lover Acis to death with a rock; Dionysius' mistress was named Galateia. And so on.

But for the reasons described above, the 'communicators' couldn't simply name all their allusions; they had to go through a laborious and complex process of trying to work their mediums round to the point of 'getting' the relevant name. So, for example, when the 'communicator' is trying to put 'Dionysius' across, the medium writes

Dy Dy and then you think of Diana Dimorphism

(Saltmarsh 107)

Acis is referred to as 'that sort of Stephen man'(Saltmarsh 112)because he was stoned to death like St Stephen; and a number of pieces of only secondarily relevant myth and poetry (especially by Tennyson, who was so famously concerned with death and survival) are used in the same sort of way. The whole process of communication, in other words, is remarkably like psychoanalytic free association (the communicators actually refer to 'a Literary Association of ideas pointing to the influence of two discarnate mainds' - Saltmarsh 112); and, as with free association, there are 'nodal points', concentrations of connectivity which draw our focus to the central theme.

There seems to be another, subterranean set of associative themes in the material, though, which was not identified at the time: concerned, appropriately enough, with questions of identity and communication. The 'Ear of Dionysius' is a whispering gallery, where speech from one position is deceptively translocated to another. Polyphemus, the one-eyed (one-I'd?) giant ,whose name means 'famous', is told punningly by Odysseus that 'Oudeis', 'Nobody', has blinded him; then 'Nobody' and the other sailors vanish beneath the rams of Polyphemus' flock (See Graves 1960, 355-7). Acis is given 'a kind of immortality', as Saltmarsh puts it, by Galatea when she transforms him into a stream (of consciousness?) - according to the scripts, a fountain(of information?) (See Saltmarsh 115). And, of course, the other Galatea in classical mythology is Pygmalion's statue, imbued by him with deceptive life. (See Graves 1960, 211).

At the same time as they try to 'prove survival', then, the scripts are ('unconsciously'?) subverting themselves: suggesting that their authors are images, deceptions, translocations, misnamings; showing that survival, communication, identity are all infinitely problematic and ambiguous concepts.

Shew Stones

The material we have just been examining used a relative simple form of production: the channel would either engage in automatic writing, or speak out loud, relaying what they were 'hearing' or 'seeing', along with side comments of their own, all which material would be written down by a witness (who occasionally interposed their own questions and responses).

Doctor John Dee, Elizabethan magus and polymath, employed a vastly more complex procedure for his own communications with discarnate beings - purporting, in his case, to be not dead people, but angels[3]. Dee's channel, Edward Kelly, saw images in a 'scrying glass' or 'shew stone': rather than a crystal ball, a piece of black obsidian plundered from the Aztecs (and probably used by them for the same purpose, as a 'smoking mirror', the Aztec term for a scrying glass). Within the glass, the angels showed Kelly images: great tables of letters and unknown symbols, which Dee and Kelly reproduced. The angels then communicated by pointing to one square after another in their own tables; Kelly would announce the number of the square by rank and file, Dee would note the letter which was in the transcribed square in front of him, and so on.

This process, though - and I have actually simplified it - was only the beginning. The words formed(backwards) by the angels were not in English, but in their own alphabet and language, 'Enochian' (so named by Dee after the apocryphal Book of Enoch. in which the protagonist is taken up into other planes of reality to meet and converse with angelic powers). What I want to get across is the utter, effortful perversity of the form of communication We should note that some musicians, painters and writers employ almost equally complex methods of generating material - perhaps for similar reasons.. Enochian, though probably not a bona fide language (and by 'bona fide' here I simply mean consistent with the recognised qualities of a natural language, and independent of English structure), is internally consistent, complex and strikingly bizarre. It seems to tease us with its apparent random combinations of letters, which then turn out to be both pronounceable and rule-following. Where did it come from? Where did the statements made in it come from?

An anecdote is illuminating (Casaubon 1659, 158-9). One day, Kelly stormed off in a sulk (his and Dee's relationship was complex and conflict-filled). He returned some hours later in a furious rage, brandishing a copy he had found in Dee's library of Cornelius Agrippa's magical work 'De occulta philosophia'. In it, he pointed out names and descriptions of various countries and provinces which paralleled what the angels had just been telling him. Kelly denounced the angels as 'cozeners' who had plagiarised Agrippa's book.

This is reminiscent of the entities who dictated to W B Yeats his system of Gyres (see A Vision) - and who insisted to him that they were in fact not separate from his own psyche. There exists a tremendous range of channelled and dictated material, exhibiting many variations of author-status - in fact, offering the basis for an entire taxonomy of authorship: including, for example, *The Last Words of Dutch Schultz*; the poetry of Jack Spicer; *From India to the Planet Mars*; the work produced by Breton and the other Surrealists; and much, much more. At the other extreme from Yeats or Dee stands something like the attractively titled *Talks With The Dead*. If you leave a tape recorder running in a quiet, empty room, then play the tape back at high amplification, you may or may not conclude that you can hear faint voices. Betwen long intervals, these voices may say things like

> *Hans Stouffer confesses something.*
> *Hans Stouffer confesses.*
> *Sleep for a week ...Mojave Blonde.*

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[3] See Regardie (1984) Vol X, passim; Suster (1986) 138-9; Turner (1989) 21-8, who argues that the system was yet more complex, and still unknown in detail.

Bless
Heather
Let's go, Billy-o. Is your automobile safe? Is it?
Mother
Ted loves you
Hypnotise
Hey, Big Bill... Big Bill ... Stop right here.
Dora Snylie
William ... Kitty ...don't wait. Come with us.
We love you ... Harry

<div align="center">(Welch 127)</div>

Does the fact that several of these names were recognisable to those who pored over the ultra-amplified tape-deck help to give credence to the 'message'?

Codebreaking

Dee's work with the Enochian material is part of an enormous field of Renaissance activity, which displays a curious, repeated linkage between espionage and occultism. From Trithemius onwards, Renaissance magicians produced elaborate cryptographic tables and procedures which had a double purpose: to facilitate covert communication, and to work on the psyche itself. Trithemius' systems, for example, seem to have been intended for the sending of clairvoyant or telepathic messages, using scrying glasses - pretty much exactly Dee's procedure; but also for encoding espionage messages. Giordano Bruno takes up the same sorts of combinatorial systems as tools for working on the structure of the psyche itself, merging this tradition with that of artificial memory. Oddly, three senses of the word 'intelligence' are touched upon: concerned respectively with espionage, with mental capacity, and (in science fiction) with nonhuman entities - 'alien intelligence'.

In the twentieth century, this particular set of concerns is taken up again by Alan Turing. During World War II, Turing was a central figure in the successful Bletchley Park project to develop a decoding-machine which could break the German encoding-machine Enigma - a project which, it has been claimed, won the war. Both machines, encoding and decoding, were essentially combinatorial - rotating alphabetical arrays much like those of Trithemius or Bruno. As we shall see below, Dee's procedure could be expressed in the same terms.

What is now well-known as the 'Turing Test' derives from a 1950 article by Alan Turing, 'Computing Machinery and Intelligence' (Turing 1950). Seeking to answer the question 'can machines think?' Turing describes what he calls an 'imitation game': a human interrogator questions an unseen subject in another room, and tries to deduce from the answers whether they are communicating with a human being or a computer. Obviously, the computer will be programmed to imitate human abilities and behaviour, positively and negatively (for example, not to be too good at sums). The question of whether the interrogator can distinguish between human and computer, Turing argues, can replace the question of whether machines can think, which he sees as largely a question about the use of words.

There are many interesting aspects to the Turing Test (which, by the way, is actually conducted each year, with a still-unclaimed prize for the first machine to successfully impersonate, so to speak). The question with which Turing is really replacing his original 'Can a machine think?' seems to be 'What are the criteria for being a person?' There is much confusion among later commentators about what the Turing test is testing - consciousness, intelligence, personhood.... This may reflect different views as to the defining qualities of personhood.

This emerges very clearly in the original article from some of its more marginal, and indeed highly subversive, features. The 'imitation game' as Turing first presents it is very different from the version which has been taken up by artificial intelligence theorists. It involves an attempt to decide which of two hidden subjects is a man, and which is a woman. The man lies (sic), the woman tells the truth (equally sic). How is the questioner to tell which is which? (An imaginary game in both the Lacanian and the ordinary sense.)

This at first sight irrelevant complication takes on considerable meaning in the con-text[4] of Turing's homosexuality (he killed himself in 1954 while embroiled in a sexual scandal, which in that period made his position intolerable - certainly made him a security risk in cryptography circles). Right at the start of the argument, the focus is on personhood rather than intellectual capacity[5] - and, by implication, on the relationship between biological and cultural criteria, between sex and gender. In a curious way, Turing's 'other room' is accessed through the two doors of Lacan's famous example - doors labelled 'Hommes' and 'Femmes'. (Some of these themes, together with the issue of class which links back into the Cross Correspondences, are well taken up in Ian McEwen's TV play about Bletchley.)

Having introduced the machine into the 'imitation test' (by a gradual slide in which it first replaces one of the two subjects, and Turing asks 'Will the interrogator decide wrongly as often when the game is played like this as he does when the game is played between a man and a woman?'), Turing proceeds to consider objections to the idea of 'thinking machines'. He begins with the 'theological' objection, based upon considerations of the 'soul'. Here again, Turing's biography provides a powerful and ironic meta-context: his lifelong concern with questions of identity and personhood is deeply influenced by the death of a close male friend when they were both teenagers, and Turing's questions about what of his friend might survive physical death.

The Turing Test, in fact, can and must be applied to the sorts of mediumistic texts examined above - to the purported persons communicating from the 'other room' of death, behind the 'frosted glass', from inside the 'cabinet' of the early mediums. The Cross Correspondences, certainly, give every appearance of 'passing' the test; many observers who questioned 'Myers' et al emerged convinced. On Turing's argument, this would compel us to allow that 'Myers' is a person, or can think, or is conscious; but not, of course, that 'Myers' is the same person as the living Myers.

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[4] By referring to the 'con-text' I want to imply that there is nothing 'extra-textual' in bringing Turing's paper into contact with the biography: simply a meeting of two texts, which always implies a question (a struggle) as to which will become the context, the environment, for the other.

[5] Although, of course, many male intellectuals of the era were reluctant to ascribe full intellectual capacity to women - an issue which came up at Bletchley Park (see Hodge).

Influencing Machines

There is another profoundly subversive feature to Turing's paper. Suddenly, near the end of his discussion, Turing introduces the question of ESP. 'These disturbing phenomena seem to deny all our usual scientific ideas. How we should like' - he echoes Freud – 'to discredit them! Unfortunately the statistical evidence, at least for telepathy, is overwhelming.' Superficially he treats telepathy and other ESP phenomena as simply a complicating factor, making it 'necessary to tighten our test. The situation could be regarded as analogous to... [one in which] ...one of the competitors was listening with his ear to the wall.' Yet clearly, telepathy undermines the whole basis of the Turing test - the whole notion of 'another room', of the solipsistic isolation of identity on which his article, his predicament as a human being, and the predicament of scientific culture, are all based. Turing drastically subverts his own position; places himself, instead, in the position of one 'listening with his ear to the wall' between subject and subject.

I am reminded of Jacques Derrida:

> The truth, what I always have difficulty getting used to: that non-telepathy is possible. Always difficult to imagine that one can think something to oneself, deep down inside, without being surprised by the other, without the other being immediately informed.

(Derrida, Telepathy, 1988, 13)

And in fact there are deep occult correspondences between Turing and Derrida - in particular, over the whole notion of the reading/writing machine. Turing's major innovation in mathematical logic is the 'Universal Machine': a wholly conceptual device which, simply by moving its reading-head from one place to another on an endless tape, using what it finds at each point as an 'instruction' on what to write and how to move, is able to reproduce the behaviour of any other machine whatsoever. (Hodges 96-107). Including, as Turing specifies in the 'imitation game' article, the human nervous system; even though this is a 'continuous' (analogue) machine, it can still be mimicked by a 'discrete state' (digital) one to any specified degree of accuracy.

The digital computer is an instantiation of Turing's universal machine: an instantiation of Mind. It is an actual example, in other words, of Derrida's 'writing machine':

> Let our reading be guided by this metaphoric investment. It will eventually invade the entirety of the psyche. Psychical content will be represented by a text whose essence is irreducibly graphic. The structure of the psychical apparatus will be represented by a writing machine. What questions will these representations impose upon us? We shall not have to ask if a writing apparatus - for example, the one described in the "Note on the Mystic Writing Pad' - is a good metaphor for representing the working of the psyche, but rather what apparatus we must create in order to represent psychical writing; and we shall have to ask what the imitation, projected and liberated in a machine, of something like psychical writing might mean. And not if the psyche is indeed a kind of text, but what is a text, and what must the psyche be if it can be represented by a text?
> For if there is neither machine nor text without psychical origin, there is no domain of the psychic without text. Finally, what must be the relationship between psyche, writing, and spacing for such a metaphoric transition to be

possible, not only, nor primarily, within theoretical discourse, but within the history of psyche, text, and technology?

> (*Freud and the Scene of Writing*, Derrida 1978,199)

Turing points out that the machine can be represented by a table:

> If all this information, defining an automatic machine, were written out, it would form a 'table of behaviour' of a finite size. It would completely define the machine .... From this abstract point of view, the table was the machine.

> (Hodges, 98)

Just such a table seems to be what Dee was given by his angels:

> The explanation...that the dictated numbers simply refer to the 'rank' and 'column' of a given square will be seen to be meaningless in the face of Angelic instructions such as: 'R the 43th. from the upper left angle to the right, and so still in the Circumference, 34006' or 'A 24th from the centre ascending to the left angle, 25000'. The most likely explanation is that some sort of grid-system is involved ...

> (Turner 1989, 23)

According to Turing, the writing-machine itself can be written - can be represented as a text. A text that writes itself; a text that is its own author, its 'onlie true begetter'.

[table turning, turning tables]

Out Of My Control

Turing, one might say, is a rather tragic example of a human 'discrete state machine': disconnected from other human beings in a particularly extreme fashion, by the twin factors of sexual orientation, and a character structure which hugely privileged the intellectual and rational over all other functions, in an almost autistic fashion. His biographer compares him with Orwell:

> Much of what Alan Turing wanted - both in science and in sex - could hardly be described in Oldspeak, while George Orwell's idea of truth required a connection of the mind with the world that the Turing machine did not have, and the Turing mind did not entirely want.

> (Hodges 1992, 527, my italics)

He goes on to point out that

> the study of Alan Turing's life does not show us whether human intelligence is limited, or not limited, by Godelian paradoxes. It does show intelligence thwarted and destroyed by its environment.

> (ibid 540)

It is the ambivalence of Turing's desire that stands out - the interrogator of reality 'listening with his ear to the wall', straining to decode the primal dialogue between 'Person A' and 'Person B'.

> The walls of this hotel are paper thin
> Last night I heard you making love with him.....
> A heavy burden lifted from my soul
> I knew that love was out of my control

Freud points out in several communications that questions of telepathy are always Oedipal; points out, also, 'the feeling of repulsion in us which is undoubtedly connected with the barriers that rise between each single ego and the others' (Freud 1972, 42). It is the ego, in other words, which places both itself and the other/s in 'a room apart' (with paper-thin walls, and separate doors for men and women); which creates the non-issue of 'communication' by stuffing the cat, I, into the bag of communion. And the full sentence from Freud brings us back helpfully to questions of textuality.

> The essential ars poetica lies in the technique of overcoming the feeling of repulsion in us which is undoubtedly connected with the barriers that rise between each single ego and the others.

Literature, Freud suggests, is a machine for reconnecting human subjects: a continuous machine.

There is a profound interplay here between literature and telepathy. (One thinks also of the omniscient author.). Telepathy is, of course, the fundamental means whereby communication occurs - or purportedly occurs - between the living and the dead. It is also - in Turing's crude version - a definitive way of telling the spirit from the phantasy, the computer from the human. But as the living Myers realised in his great work Human Personality and Its Survival of Death, the true situation is more complex. Isn't it through telepathy that we communicate with ourselves, between our different subroutines, the disparate elements of our subjectivity? Isn't telepathy always here, everywhere, within and between humanity? One should note the constant connection between telepathy and paranoia: that other people, or one's own thoughts, come too close. And what does it mean, finally, to speak of 'one's own thoughts', as opposed to some other kind of thoughts? Where is outside?

Pure excitement

In 1973, Patti Smith published a book of poems, Witt, which included the following (in the poem also called Witt):

> I am experiencing courtship with the angels. instead of
> caresses they beat their pure feathers. rapid wing move.
> vain-o-bleach peacock. more incredible than the prized
> chinese fans.

> (Smith 1973, 13)

In the same year I published a book of poems called *Scarcity* (written in 1971-2), including the following:

> pure excitement, angels covered
> in feathers with their little greedy hands make vain
> & peacock gestures
> & before our eyes
> the pain of
> vision opens like a fan.
>
> it is the diagram of
> our loss, & like a

petty Chineses emperor
        the spite of my visions appalls me -

<div align="right">(Totton 1973, 7)</div>

This happens all the time, presumably; in fact, in my first meeting with the poet Neil Oram, he pointed out a correspondence between a piece of his own and this same passage of mine. There seems no theory possible, or needed, of why these particular words should resonate through the ether (what Patti Smith would call 'Radio Ethiopia'). But it happens; what we write is collective, not ours; and consists primarily not of meanings, but of words.

> That the unconscious of the subject is the discourse of the other appears even more clearly than anywhere else in the studies that Freud devoted to what he called telepathy...It is a case of resonance in the communicating networks of discourse....The omnipresence of human discourse will perhaps one day be embraced under the open sky of an omnicommunication of its text.
> <div align="right">(Lacan, Function & field of speech & language, *Ecrits*, 55-6)</div>

'Resonance in the communicating networks of discourse'.... 'Text', as we know, has a root meaning of 'web'. But isn't there always a question of who, spider- or fly-like, is pulling the sticky threads? The thought transference we seek or fear in analysis, Lacan says, is not just (or at all) something outside language; it is an emergent property of language itself. Language itself is a telepathy-machine, a reading/writing machine, an influencing machine; it is through language that we are, as Breton says, 'vases communicants', communicating vessels (Breton 127).

But it is dreadfully easy to go astray here. The poet Jack Spicer insists that
> Creeley talks about poems following the dictation of language. It seems to me that's nonsense - language is part of the furniture in the room. Language isn't anything of itself - it's something which is in the mind of the host, the parasite that the poem is invading....
> <div align="right">(Spicer 1975, 292)</div>

He stresses that
> there is an outside to the poet. Now what the outside is like is described differently by different poets ... I think that the source is unimportant, but I think that for the poet writing poetry, the idea of just what the poet is in relationship to this outside - whether it's an id down in the cortex - which you can't reach anyway, it's just as far outside as Mars - or whether it's as far away as those galaxies that seem to be sending radio waves to us with the whole galaxy blowing up just to say something to us, which are in the papers all the time now ...
> <div align="right">(273, my italics)</div>

... And the syntax fades away.

Spicer is writing about the Muse, as ghosts. (The plural is important, and present in all my examples.) He makes clear that he is not concerned to name the ghosts. Being dead, or an angel, or a computer, are unusual subject positions (though all three appear regularly in the context of psychosis). But they *are* subject positions; and it is fairly clear that the question 'Who is occupying this position?' is recursive and vacuous.

The Cross Correspondences do not succeed in demonstrating survival. In fact - and this is the key point - nothing *could* succeed. Or in a sense - the sense of the Turing Test - they do succeed, but trivially. What, after all, is the difference between a discarnate spirit, and a perfect imitation thereof? Only the same difference that exists between myself and a perfect imitation thereof; and what we take this difference to be is already one of the great questions of our era - and likely increasingly to be a crucial political decision.