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Poetry, the *I Ching* and Synchronicity: Reflections on Richard Berengarten's *Changing*

In his erudite and illuminating 'Postscript' to *Changing*, Richard Berengarten states that the *I Ching* served him not only as a source for his poem, both its 'compositional structure' and many of its themes, but also as 'a ground for poetry' more generally.[1] He notes in particular how the *I Ching* [*Yijing*][2] underwrote his use of a variety of '"connecting" principles',[3] and in relation to this he makes the following, to my eyes, pregnant statement:

> As for associative, analogical or correlative thinking, sometimes also known as 'correlative cosmos-building', this is not only the mental foundation for poetry, ritual and magic in all societies, but specifically underpins the holistic vision of the universe that runs through all traditional Chinese thought – most evidently so in Daoism. It also gives rise to C. G. Jung's theory of synchronicity, which is itself rooted in the *I Ching*.[4]

Among other things, Berengarten seems to be implying here that Carl Gustav Jung's (1875-1961) concept of synchronicity (1) is a modern expression of correlative thinking and, as such, both (2) underpins a 'holistic vision of the universe' and (3) provides 'the mental foundation for poetry, ritual and magic'. These three far-reaching implications could be important for understanding not only Berengarten's *Changing*, as well as poetry more generally, but also the cultural significance of Jung's concept of synchronicity. In this essay I shall focus on the first part of the third implication: the possible relevance of synchronicity for poetry. Such a focus seems particularly justified in view of Berengarten's acknowledgement that synchronicity is one of the factors that both motivates and underpins his own poetry and informs his view of the task of contemporary poetry more generally.[5] In order to explore the relationship between synchronicity and poetry I shall first clarify what Jung meant by synchronicity, including what the concept entails philosophically, and then attempt a reading of one cluster of seven poems in *Changing*, with the concept of synchronicity in mind.

Synchronicity

Jung defined synchronicity in several ways and illustrated the concept with a wide range of examples.[6] On the one hand, synchronicity was for Jung a kind of experience – 'meaningful coincidence'[7] – in which an inner psychic state is connected with an outer physical event not causally but through the meaning that the events jointly express. In such meaningful coincidences, the connected physical event may be perceived either simultaneously with the psychic state or only later because it occurs at a distance or in the future.[8] Jung's examples include, among others: the case of a patient who was telling him her dream about being given a jewel in the form of a scarab beetle, when an actual scarabaeid beetle appeared at his consulting room window;[9] the story of how Emanuel Swedenborg, in a visionary state, described the course of a fire hundreds of miles away in Stockholm, all the details of which were subsequently confirmed;[10] and an anecdote told to Jung by a friend, who dreamed of certain scenes and events unfolding in a

[1] Berengarten 2016: 525.
[2] Like Berengarten (ibid.: 521 note 1), I use pinyin to transliterate Chinese terms, except in the case of the *I Ching*, for which I use the more familiar Wade-Giles transliteration.
[3] Ibid.: 526.
[4] Ibid.
[5] See Nikolaou and Dillon 2017: 90, 98, 110-114; Burns 1981: 32-38; Berengarten 2008; 2015: 25-31; 2020.
[6] Main 2004: 39-47.
[7] Jung 1952: §827.
[8] Jung 1951: §984; 1952: §§850, 855.
[9] Jung 1951: §982; 1952: §§843, 845.
[10] Jung 1951: §983; 1952: §912.

Spanish city he had never visited, which then occurred exactly as in the dream when the friend did visit the city shortly afterwards.[11]

On the other hand, synchronicity was for Jung the principle – 'an acausal connecting principle'[12] – that explained why these kinds of experiences occur. He argued that this principle was 'intellectually necessary'[13] to account for meaningful coincidences;[14] and he suggested that synchronicity and causality stood in a relationship of complementarity to each other as principles of explanation.[15]

Deeply informed by Jung's studies and practical experience of the *I Ching*, the concept of synchronicity can be seen as a modern Western formulation of correlative thinking,[16] inasmuch as both concepts connect events: (1) independently of external causation; (2) by interpreting events as parts of a larger whole (that is, as 'a pattern' with 'meaning'); and (3) by discerning associations, correspondences, or coincidences among the events. Both synchronicity and correlative thinking, in their different ways, attempt to capture the basic idea of acausal connection through 'meaning'.

Jung considered that the concept of synchronicity opened up 'a very obscure field which is philosophically of the greatest importance',[17] for it implies a range of subsidiary ideas that are deeply at odds with mainstream modern thought in the West. The most prominent of these are the notions of acausality and objective meaning. *Acausality* is the idea that events can come into being or can be connected among one another without causal determination.[18] This notion further implies, as Jung's examples of synchronicity illustrate, that under certain psychic conditions there can be a *relativity of space and time*,[19] making it possible to gain knowledge of spatially and temporally remote events without the need for sensory transmission of information. Jung called such knowledge, unconditioned by the ego and consciousness, '*absolute knowledge*'.[20]

Jung's main argument in relation to meaning was that it was not merely a subjective factor – 'just a psychic product' or 'anthropomorphic interpretation'[21] – but could be objective. While he was aware of the extreme difficulty, perhaps even impossibility, of proving the reality of *objective meaning*,[22] he nonetheless reiterated that meaning, or, more cautiously, 'that factor which appears to us as "meaning"',[23] could 'exist outside the psyche', 'outside man', and that it was 'self-subsistent', 'transcendental', and 'a priori in relation to human consciousness'.[24] For Jung this objectivity of the meaning expressed in synchronicities stemmed from his belief that meaning itself is rooted in archetypes, which he saw as structuring factors of the collective unconscious that are universal, numinous, psychophysically indeterminate (or 'psychoid'), and knowable only when expressed symbolically as archetypal images.[25]

The connection of events through synchronicity implies that the same pattern of meaning can express itself in both psychic and physical events and thus reveals a sense in which at a deeper level those events form a *psychophysical unity*,[26] pointing, Jung argued, towards a fundamental 'unity of being',[27] which he later came to call the *unus mundus* or 'one world'.[28] Finally, the possibility of

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[11] Jung 1951: §973.
[12] Jung 1952: title.
[13] Ibid.: §960.
[14] Ibid.: §967.
[15] Ibid.: §§960-61, 963.
[16] Jung 1930, 1950; Main 2004: 77-79. On correlative thinking, see Smith 2008: 32-36. Jung did not use the expression 'correlative thinking', or a German equivalent, but tended to refer more broadly to 'Chinese thinking' or the 'Chinese mind'. See Jung 1930: §§75, 85; 1950: §968 *et passim*; 1952: §924.
[17] Jung 1952: §816.
[18] Ibid. §§818-821, 965.
[19] Ibid.: §840.
[20] Ibid.: §§912, 923, 931, 948.
[21] Ibid.: §§915-916.
[22] Ibid.: §915.
[23] Ibid.: §916.
[24] Ibid.: §§915, 942, 944.
[25] Ibid.: §§840-841, 845, 964.
[26] Ibid.: §915.
[27] Ibid.: §960.
[28] Jung 1955-56: §662.

transcendental meaning and the unitary nature of reality revealing themselves in empirical psychic and physical events suggests that synchronicity expresses, however momentarily, a *harmony between transcendence and immanence*.[29]

Synchronicity and Poetry: A Reading of (48) 'Welling, Replenishing'

The notions embedded in the concept of synchronicity – acausality, relativity of space and time, absolute knowledge, objective meaning, psychophysical unity, and harmony between transcendence and immanence – can help in attuning to the resonances between synchronicity and poetry. In very general terms, acausality articulates the essential creative moment of poetry. Indeed, one of Jung's pithier definitions of synchronicity was 'acts of creation in time'.[30] As for the notions of relativity of space and time and of absolute knowledge that are implied by acausality, these are evident in the ability and license of the poetic imagination to draw its material from any place or period and to articulate insights based on direct intuition. As Jung's writings show, together these notions also allow for the occurrence of radically anomalous events and altered states of consciousness[31] – the kinds of events and states that have contributed to legendary images of the poet as diviner, magician, or shaman.

The notion of objective meaning, which for Jung was collective and numinous, aptly expresses the qualities of universality and emotional intensity that can attach to poetic insights. Meanwhile, the psychophysical unity through which objective meaning expresses itself is implied in various aspects of poetry: for example, in the attribution of animate qualities to inanimate objects, in the portrayal of emotions through an 'objective correlative',[32] and in the many subtle ways in which heterogeneous domains of form and content, or sound and sense, can correspond to one another. Finally, the harmony between transcendence and immanence that represents the deepest level of unity revealed by synchronicity has its parallel in the conception of poetry as a means of affirming and expressing the numinous while remaining grounded in quotidian realities.

However, rather than discuss the connections between poetry and synchronicity at a general level, in the remainder of this essay I should like to explore these connections by using the concept of synchronicity, with its various philosophical implications, as a lens through which to read closely one cluster of poems in *Changing*. Of the 450 poems that comprise *Changing*, I have chosen to comment on the seven in the cluster (48) 'Welling, Replenishing',[33] which are based on hexagram 48 of the *I Ching*, titled 井 *Jing*/'The Well'[34] I have been influenced in this choice both by Berengarten's identifying the motif of the well as the symbol that for him has most come to represent the *I Ching* itself[35] and by his presenting this cluster of poems as homage to Jung.[36] I also happen to think that the cluster contains some particularly fine poetry.

As for all except two of the sixty-four clusters in *Changing*, 'Welling, Replenishing' comprises seven poems, each of eighteen lines arranged in six tercets.[37] I shall comment on the poems in the sequence in which they occur.

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[29] Main 2007: 53-55.
[30] Jung 1952: §965; also §§967-968.
[31] Ibid.: §§830-840, 846-857, 924-936.
[32] Eliot 1953: 107-108. The connection between synchronicity and the idea of the objective correlative occurred independently to Berengarten, as I learned when I had the opportunity to discuss some of his ideas with him during a conference in Pari, Italy, in June 2019.
[33] Berengarten 2016: 383-390.
[34] Wilhelm 1968: 185-188.
[35] Berengarten 2016: 526-527.
[36] Ibid.: 555-556. As Berengarten notes (ibid.), Jung symbolically associated the *I Ching* with the cauldron ('*ting*'), the central image of hexagram 50. Jung obtained this hexagram when he consulted the oracle about his intention of writing a foreword to the Wilhelm-Baynes translation of the work (1950: §§975-1018; see also Main 1997: 32-34; 2007: 185-187). He interpreted the cauldron, and hence the *I Ching*, as a source of 'spiritual nourishment' (1950: §977), not unlike, as we shall see, how Berengarten interprets the symbol of the well.
[37] The first and second clusters include an eighth poem, reflecting that the first two hexagrams of the *I Ching* have an extra line-reading.

'Consultation of the diagrams'

The first, italicised poem, which Berengarten refers to as the 'head-poem', reads as follows:

> *Consultation*
> *of the diagrams*
> *is helpful*
>
> *in the construction*
> *of hypotheses, buildings*
> *and voyages,*
>
> *in the precise*
> *locating of wells, mines,*
> *bridges, towers, mirrors,*
>
> *in alleviating*
> *insomnia and fears*
> *of death,*
>
> *in the correct*
> *turning of antennae*
> *towards origins*
>
> *and in all forms of*
> *measurement and modes*
> *of harmonising.* (*CH* 48/0: 384)

As can be seen immediately, this poem consists of a single, long but orderly sentence describing a variety of ways in which consulting the hexagrams of the *I Ching* can be helpful (ll.1-3). The ways are predominantly practical but cover physical (ll. 4-9), psychological (ll. 10-12), and spiritual (ll. 13-15) concerns. The concluding tercet generalises the idea that the utility of the hexagrams applies to all tasks involving the creation of measure and harmony (ll. 16-18).

Berengarten explains in his 'Postscript' that each head-poem of a numbered cluster 'is related thematically to its corresponding hexagram title and statement in the *I Ching*'.[38] In the present case, however, there is no textual basis in the *I Ching* itself for relating the hexagram title of 'The Well' to the content of the head-poem, namely, use of the *I Ching*. Rather, the thematic relationship depends, aptly enough, on the 'symbolic resonance' between the well and the *I Ching*,[39] an association that appears to be Berengarten's innovation, at least in the extent to which he has elaborated it.

An immediately striking feature of this head-poem is its understated, matter-of-fact tone and practical focus, which are in tension with the – from a modern viewpoint – extraordinary claims being made for the act of consulting the *I Ching*. For all of the ways in which consultation of the diagrams is said to be helpful in order to achieve the eminently rational objectives of 'measurement' and 'harmonising' involve the operation of divinatory, intuitive, or, as Jung called it in relation to synchronicity, 'absolute' knowledge, transgressing the usual strictures of time, space, and causality.

Also striking is the poem's comprehensive (albeit concise) coverage of content. As noted, the poem covers concerns that are variously physical ('construction […] locating' [ll. 4,8]), psychological ('alleviating' [l. 10]), and spiritual ('turning […] towards origins' [ll.14-15]). And within each tercet the phenomena mentioned reach out orthogonally from one another to capture different dimensions of experience: the 'construction' in lines 4 to 6 is of things abstract ('hypotheses'), concrete ('buildings'), and transitional ('voyages'); the 'precise locating' in lines 7 to 9 is of objects that effect various conjunctions: between ground and underground ('wells', 'mines'), one side of separated space and another ('bridges'), ground and sky ('towers'), and actual

[38] Berengarten 2016: 525.
[39] Ibid.: 526.

and reflected reality ('mirrors'); and the 'alleviating' in lines 10 to 12 is, first, of the inability to escape consciousness ('insomnia'), and then, contrastingly, of the dread of losing consciousness forever ('fears of death'). In the penultimate tercet (ll. 13-15) only one act of 'correct turning' is mentioned, but this simplification is also fitting since what is being referred to here is, as I read it, the finding of fundamental spiritual orientation ('turning of antennae / towards origins'), an idea arguably picked up in the final poem of the cluster.

The comprehensiveness so pithily evoked in this poem can be seen as a microcosm of the comprehensiveness of *Changing* as a whole, as well as of the *I Ching* itself. According to the *Dazhuan* ('The Great Treatise'), one of the early commentaries integrated into the canonical *I Ching*, 'The Changes is a book vast and great, in which everything is completely contained. The tao of heaven is in it, the tao of the earth is in it, and the tao of man is in it'.[40] Inspired by and following the structure of the *I Ching*, *Changing* as a whole is similarly encompassing in the range of subject matter covered by its 450 individual poems. The *Dazhuan* goes on to explain that the comprehensiveness of the *I Ching* stems from its being in a relationship of correspondence with 'heaven and earth', 'the four seasons', 'sun and moon', and 'the supreme power'.[41] As Willard Peterson puts it, the *Dazhuan* would have us 'imagine, or perhaps believe, that the *Change* actually is a formal and processual duplicate of the realm of heaven-and-earth'.[42] In other words, the *Dazhuan* appears to be claiming that the workings of the *I Ching* move synchronistically in harmony with the movement of the cosmos as a whole. The correspondence of *Changing* with the *I Ching* and of '*Consultation of the diagrams*' with *Changing* charges this individual poem, and the cluster of which it is head, with the full potency of such synchronistic relationship.

1. 'Who drinks from an old well?'

The remaining six poems of 'Welling, Replenishing' relate in turn to the six line-statements of the corresponding hexagram in the *I Ching*, and they bear the numbers 1 to 6 in addition to their individual titles. The first of these numbered poems opens with the image of a dried up and abandoned well (ll. 1-3). The central twelve lines depict a society in which administrators, lawyers, politicians, and property owners have all become corrupt, causing ordinary citizens to emigrate (ll. 4-15). The poem ends by asking whether it is possible to find a dowser, presumably in order to rediscover the well or an alternative source of replenishment:

> […] Can
>
> we find a dowser
> with forked hazel
> or willow branch? (*CH* 48/1: 385)

Unlike the head-poem, this first numbered poem begins thematically very close to the corresponding line-text of the *I Ching*. 'One does not drink the mud of the well. No animals come to an old well', reads the line-text.[43] 'Our well has dried / up. Not even birds / circle or settle here', read Berengarten's opening three lines. At this point, the poem abruptly shifts to an account of how society has been corrupted. This connection between the well and society is not without warrant in the *I Ching*. As Berengarten notes in his 'Postscript', the kind of well represented in hexagram 48 is that of the ancient Chinese 'well-field' (*jing tian*) system of social organisation, according to which 'fields or farms were divided into nine equally sized square areas, with eight families tilling one outer area each, while the ninth, the central one that belonged to the feudal overlord [and contained the well], was cultivated by all eight families'.[44] The Chinese character for 'well' 井 (*jing*) is a stylised representation of this arrangement of fields, whose 3 x 3

[40] Wilhelm 1968: 351-352.
[41] Ibid.: 302.
[42] Peterson 1988: 225.
[43] Wilhelm 1968: 187.
[44] Berengarten 2016: 526, citing Fung Yu-Lan, 1983, *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, tr. Derk Bode, vol. 1 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press): 10-13; see also Wilhelm 1968: 185-186.

grid has itself been characterised as 'a sub-set of correlative thinking'.[45] In this context, the implied correlation between the dried-up well abandoned by the birds and the corrupt society abandoned by its members seems apposite and natural enough.

The final lines introduce another seemingly abrupt change of topic in the poem: 'Can // we find a dowser / with forked hazel / or willow branch?' But again this shift makes sense in terms of the cluster's emerging symbolism and correlative logic. The dried-up well symbolises a lack of access to intuitive wisdom, and without such wisdom society becomes corrupt. The renovation of society depends on renovating the well, that is, restoring access to intuitive wisdom. For this someone is needed – a 'dowser' (or diviner) – who has sufficient intuitive technique to be able to locate the lost source of water (or 'water-wisdom', as the fifth numbered poem will put it later). Given how deeply based *Changing* is on the divinatory text of the *I Ching*, it is easy to identify the needed intuitive technique, in at least one of its expressions, as poetry. The dowser-diviner, again in at least one of its expressions, would then be the figure of the poet. In implying this equation between diviner and poet Berengarten is not alone. In his 1974 lecture, 'Feeling into Words', Seamus Heaney, distinguishing technique from craft, characterises the former as involving the poet's 'discovery of ways to go out of his [or her] normal cognitive bounds and raid the inarticulate'.[46] He continues:

> If I were asked for a figure who represents pure technique, I would say a water diviner. You can't learn the craft of dowsing or divining – it is a gift for being in touch with what is there, hidden and real, a gift for mediating between the latent resource and the community that wants it current and released. As Sir Phillip Sydney notes in his *Defence of Poesy*: 'Among the Romans a Poet was called *Vates*, which is as much as a Diviner …' […] The poet resembles the diviner in his ability to make contact with what lies hidden, and in his ability to make palpable what was sensed or raised.[47]

In basing a long poem on what is undoubtedly the world's most revered book of divination, Berengarten seems to be affirming, as powerfully as could be wished, the status of the poet as *vates*.

A last thing to note before leaving 'Who drinks from an old well?' is that not only has the wellhead ceased to flow, but so, correspondingly, has the rhythm of the verse. Where the head-poem consists of a single sentence governed by one main verbal phrase ('is helpful'), this poem includes seven sentences and ten main verbs in the same number of lines.

2. 'Sometimes they answer'

The second numbered poem returns to the diagrams of the head-poem, though without referring to them other than through the pronoun 'they'. The poem describes various ways in which, in the poet's experience, the hexagrams have sometimes operated at a tangent to conscious intention: providing answers when no question has been asked (ll. 1-3), outright disregarding the questions asked (ll. 4-6), or answering unformulated and unsuspected questions behind the questions consciously asked (ll. 7-18).

> Sometimes they answer
> even though I've asked
> no question.
>
> Sometimes they say
> nothing, and appear to
> smile and look away.
>
> Or else they stare, like
> the dead, through me

[45] See Peterson 1986: 659, reviewing John Henderson's *The Development and Decline of Chinese Cosmology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984).
[46] Heaney 2002: 19.
[47] Ibid.: 20.

towards infallible sky

as quietly they pick
out question *behind*
question, before even

any thought lurking under
images and their nuances
or timbres has arisen

let alone right words
to articulate thought have
discovered me and opened. (*CH* 48/2: 386)

What immediately stands out about this poem is its personification of the hexagrams, which are the subject of all the main verbs: they 'answer', 'appear to / smile and look away', 'stare, like / the dead', and 'pick / out question *behind* / question'. They have autonomy and intentionality in relation to the person consulting them.[48] For linear diagrams in a book to exhibit personality in this way breaks down the normally assumed separation between the physical and psychic, 'getting rid', as Jung claimed synchronicity does, 'of the incommensurability between the observed and the observer'.[49] What normally maintains the perspective of the separate observer is a dominant ego, yet here it is precisely the ego's intentions that are bypassed or thwarted. And not only has the expected object, the book, become the subject, but by the end of the poem the expected subject, the poet or inquirer, has become the object: it is not that the poet discovers the thoughts and words in which to formulate a question, but the thoughts and words 'have discovered' the poet.

Nor is it only the normally assumed relationship between the psychic and the physical that is subverted in this poem. So too is the normally assumed understanding of time as flowing straightforwardly from past to present to future, inasmuch as the oracle seems to know what the inquirer will ask before even the inquirer knows; to the *I Ching* the future seems somehow already to be present. The uncanny dimension in which such relativisation of time and such unconditioned knowing ('absolute knowledge') can take place is evoked by the image of the hexagrams staring '*like* / *the dead*, through me / towards *infallible* sky' (ll. 7-9, emphasis added). The understanding stemming from this dimension is non-representational, deeper than 'words', 'thoughts', 'images', and the 'nuances' and 'timbres' of images – a characterisation that evokes Jung's formulations of the irrepresentable archetype itself (as distinct from representable archetypal images), the 'psychoid' archetype, which he saw as the source of the objective meaning expressed in synchronicity.

The concluding lines of the poem – 'right words / to articulate thought have / discovered me and opened' – express the idea that, although the poet is the object of discovery by the words (that is, by the intelligence of the *I Ching*), it is only after that discovery that the words open; however objective the meaning expressed by the oracular pronouncement may be, the poet or inquirer, the 'me', even though de-centred, is necessary for its emergence. In an interview with

[48] The sense of being related to by the *I Ching* as if by a person is a common experience among those who consult the oracle. The translator and commentator John Blofeld, for example, recounts that 'The first time I did this [consulted the *I Ching*], I was overawed to a degree that amounted to fright, so strong was my impression of having received an answer from a living breathing person' (1991: 26). For his part, Jung, when performing the consultation related in his foreword to the Wilhelm-Baynes translation, deliberately 'personified the book' in a manner that he believed to be 'strictly in accordance with the Chinese conception' (1950: §975; see also Berengarten 2016: 1, 534), and he received a response 'as though the *I Ching* itself were the speaking person' (Jung 1950: §977). I thank Richard Berengarten for recalling Blofeld's account to my attention. Berengarten has also pertinently noted in this connection that 'the intimate experience of *hearing a personal voice* that is markedly "other" corresponds to *poetic inspiration* (Muse, Muses) and *theophany* (e.g., the voice of God that appears to prophets in the Old Testament)' (personal communication).

[49] Jung 1952: §960.

Sean Rys in 2012, Berengarten had the following to say, with reference to his earlier poem *The Blue Butterfly*, about the role of the ego in synchronistic experiences:

> I would say that the transcendent experience of synchronicity that we've been talking about in relation to the making of this poem [*The Blue Butterfly*] didn't abolish ego-consciousness but, on the contrary, first consolidated it and strengthened it. My conclusion, then, is that identity, far from being obliterated, gets more firmly rooted, consolidated (grounded) and deepened through this kind of experience.[50]

This is a view that will receive powerful expression later in 'Welling, Replenishing', especially in the fourth and sixth numbered poems.

3. 'From underground streams'

Standing at the centre of the cluster, this third numbered poem provides a vivid description of the hard, physical, co-operative work of restoring the well (ll. 1-16). It concludes by envisaging the repaired well's unprecedented capacity for storing water (ll. 16-18).

Where the previous poem focuses exclusively on the *I Ching*, the present poem focuses exclusively on the well. Its tone, like that of the head-poem, is literal and matter-of-fact. Unlike the head-poem, though, it depicts, in detail, just one enterprise – the restoring of the well. The picture it creates is vividly realised, with sound and rhythm perfectly matching sense in the descriptions of the activities of the workers, the equipment they use, the waste matter that has been choking the well, and the restored well itself. The diction, predominantly Anglo-Saxon rather than Latinate, is heavy with consonants and diphthongs. There is also a density of main verbs: 'clambered', 'let down', 'dredged up', 'Hauled out', 'Separated', 'Hammered', 'Deepened and widened'. And one can almost feel the materiality and earthiness of the objects named: 'ladders and ropes', 'shovels, sieves, / buckets, poles, mallets', 'mud and waste', 'rich stinking vegetable stuff / and rotten wood', 'clay', 'fields', 'brackets', 'walls'. As in the first numbered poem, there are seven short sentences that move with a slow, effortful rhythm. The rhythm only becomes more fluent in the concluding lines describing the capacity of the repaired well 'to hold more / water pooled from underground / streams than ever before' – the abundance of water evoked by the rapidly accumulating water words ('water', 'pooled', 'streams').

Although there is nothing internal to this poem to suggest that it should be read symbolically, its position within the cluster makes it inevitable to read it as a symbol of the *I Ching* and of all that the *I Ching* has come to represent in *Changing*. The restored well could thus stand for a renewed relationship to intuitive thinking – including correlative thinking, synchronicity, and poetry – a more holistic way of knowing, such as might help to mend the corrupted society depicted in the first numbered poem. The hard physical work so vividly conveyed by the present poem could be seen as symbolic of the effort needed to access and secure a stable relationship to such thinking, especially in a culture where intuitive thinking is not highly valued. And the depths of the well fed by the underground streams readily correspond to the collective unconscious and its currents that, in the Jungian framework, are the source of intuitive wisdom.

Seeing the present poem as an answer to the first numbered poem is facilitated by the parallels in their subject matter (a well in need of repair), in their rhythm (slow and effortful), and in the way they both strike a more forward-looking and optimistic note in their concluding three or four lines. There is also an interesting connection to the theme of ego-identity from the second numbered poem. In 'From underground streams', the first person plural pronoun is used at the beginning to introduce the activities described: 'We clambered down […]', 'We dredged up […]'. Thereafter, however, the pronoun is dropped: 'Hauled out […]', 'Separated […]', 'Hammered in […]', 'Deepened and widened […]'. It is as though the sense of self has been supplanted or transcended, or at least forgotten about, by absorption in the sheer activities. There is arguably, too, a subtle foreshadowing of subsequent poems in the cluster, especially in the repeated use of the prepositions 'down', 'up', 'in', 'out', suggesting connection and interchange

[50] Nikolaou and Dillon 2017: 140.

between levels of reality (above and below, transcendent and immanent) and between dimensions of experience (inner and outer, psychic and physical) – themes that are elaborated in what follows.

'4. *I Ching*'

In '*I Ching*', another fluent, single-sentence poem, the poet personifies the divinatory book, addresses it intimately (ll. 2-3), and offers a laudatory enumeration of its extraordinary qualities (ll. 4-13). The poem ends with a double paradox: the act of 'plumbing' the well that is the *I Ching* enables the poet to 'soar' (ll. 14-15), yet in soaring the poet remains securely 'grounded' (ll. 16-18).

Comprising a mere forty-two words and entirely shorn of articles, this is the sparest poem in the cluster. Yet in its brief span, it powerfully expresses, as I read it, several major aspects of the vision of *Changing*, especially as this relates to synchronicity. First, the personification of the *I Ching* seen in the second numbered poem is here even more in evidence, as now the poet is in direct relationship to the book, addressing it intimately as 'friend, companion / and spirit-guide' (ll. 2-3). As in the earlier poem, this transgression of the usual modern view that would maintain an ontological division between physical artefacts (such as books) and psychic qualities (such as spiritual wisdom and capacity for relationship) points to the idea of a unitary psychophysical reality, which is one of the key implications of synchronicity.

Second, the qualities praised in absolute terms in lines 4 to 6 – 'always trustworthy, / never diffident / never irrelevant' – express that the *I Ching* has been experienced as affording access to a kind of knowledge that would be beyond the powers of human consciousness to produce on its own. What is evoked is the 'absolute knowledge' that for Jung is implied in the occurrence of synchronicity.

Third, the paradoxical formulations in lines 7 to 9 – 'solid yet flowing / firm yet yielding / radiating images' – primarily allude to the *I Ching*'s unbroken and broken lines and their creative expression in the trigrams and hexagrams with their associated texts. These generative ('radiating') images of the *I Ching*, internally charged by the interplay of opposites and capable of manifesting in both psychic and physical contexts, are equivalent to Jung's archetypes, the factors underpinning the objective meaning disclosed in synchronicity.

Fourth, in lines 10 to 13, the terms 'self-replenishing' and 'inexhaustible', met already in the base-line to the head-poem but accompanied now by 'fathomless' and 'ever-fresh', evoke ideas of acausality, creativity, transcendence, and eternity. Yet, no sooner have they done so than, seamlessly, the main clause in the closing lines of the poem balances this move towards transcendence with an equally emphatic expression of immanence: 'in plumbing you / I soar // feet still / grounded rooted / in *this here now*' (ll. 14-18; emphasis in original). The repetition of rhythm, absence of connective, and deepening in meaning of 'grounded rooted' and the triplet of stressed and italicised monosyllables '*this here now*' make absolutely clear that the mysterious operations of the *I Ching* do not entail forsaking what William Blake called, in a phrase often invoked by Berengarten, 'the minute particulars'.[51]

5. 'I lower my question'

The penultimate poem of the cluster celebrates the abundant wisdom that can be accessed by consulting the *I Ching* (ll. 1-9), explicitly symbolised by the well:

> I lower my
> question on a rope
> of thought.
>
> I draw up
> water-wisdom. It
> flows everywhere.

[51] The phrase appears in *Jerusalem,* Plate 55, ll. 48–53, 60–6. See Blake 1977: 745-746. For Berengarten's uses of the term, see Nikolaou and Dillon 2017: 52, 84, 86.

I drink from a fund
of deep light. Could
wine be sweeter? (*CH* 48/5: 389)

The poem also expresses the poet's readiness to accept the oracle's responses with gratitude and humility, whether the responses are negative or positive (ll. 10-18):

If its taste is bitter
then I swallow it. Its
bitterness is me.

Is it sweet? Then
I'm thankful – but
keep aloof from

drugs coiled in
sweetness. These ways
I come and go. (*ibid.*).

Like the first and third numbered poems, this poem is concerned with ethical implications of the *I Ching*. In 'Who drinks from an old well?' there is a correlation between the well being dried-up and society being corrupt, with the implication that restoring the well (symbolically, the *I Ching* and the kind of thinking that underpins it) could help to mend society. In 'From underground streams', the laborious task of restoring the well has been taken up and carried through successfully, creating an abundant source of replenishment – symbolically, the implication is, as well as literally. The fifth numbered poem now describes a responsible, balanced way of using this resource: appreciating what it gives, without either avoiding negative ('bitter') outcomes or one-sidedly identifying with positive ('sweet') outcomes. Taken together, these three poems presuppose an ethical dimension to the order of objective meaning that reveals itself in divinatory and synchronistic events.

In 'I lower my question' the synchronistic unity of psyche and matter expressed by the *I Ching*'s being symbolically equated with the well is explicit in the phrases 'a rope of thought' and 'water-wisdom', which combine in single images the psychic ('thought', 'wisdom') and the physical ('rope', 'water'). That the water-wisdom 'flows everywhere' expresses the idea that normal spatial limitations, like normal temporal limitations, can be transgressed by divinatory insights. And the phrase 'I drink from a fund / of deep light', which combines the mundane act of drinking with an image evocative of mystical realisation, recalls the harmony between transcendence and immanence so powerfully articulated in the preceding poem.

6. 'Well, inexhaustible'

This final poem in the cluster is another single-sentence poem, which this time unfolds towards its end without even a main verb. It again addresses the *I Ching*, symbolised by the well, in laudatory terms. This praise is followed by a series of powerful metaphors through which a vivid picture of the well emerges (ll. 3-14). The poem concludes with the image of a star reflected at the bottom of the well (ll. 15-18).

In this poem, the personification that we have seen in the second and fourth numbered poems returns even more emphatically. The *I Ching*, symbolised by the well, is not only directly addressed but also attributed a 'face' (l. 4), a 'mouth' (l. 6), and a 'gaze' (l. 7); and organic and animate features are also attributed more widely: heaven and earth are ascribed 'skin and core' (ll. 13-14) and the sky a 'forehead' (l. 17). Besides this conjunction of the psychic with the physical, other unions of usually opposed ideas are also evoked. In the lines, 'generous // secret, open face / of Underworld' (ll. 3-5), what normally withholds gives and what is normally inaccessible is open and scrutable – paradoxes reinforced by the deft juxtaposition 'secret, open'. The 'rounded mouth // and level gaze' (ll. 6-7) simultaneously build the picture of the round, still well and suggest the *I Ching*'s encompassing powers of expression and imperturbable wisdom. The next pair of metaphors, 'polished mirror and / porthole of night' (ll. 8-9), depict further the smooth,

black surface of the water at the bottom of the well, preparing for the concluding lines of the poem and at the same time evoking ideas of scrying and of seeing through from our cabined existence to an oceanic vastness beyond.[52]

The idea of connection between different levels of reality continues in the lines that conclude the encomiastic invocation of the *I Ching*/well: 'silvery cord / and vertical pipe / invisibly joining // heaven and earth's / skin and core' (ll. 10-14). The 'silvery cord' is what links the spirit to the body in Ecclesiastes 12:6-7, or the astral body to the physical body in accounts of astral projection within Western occultism and studies of out-of-body experiences[53] – associations that are appropriate enough in an invocation that by this point has become almost ecstatic. Calling the well a 'vertical pipe' highlights the idea of conveyance from one level to another, and the extremes between which the conveyance and invisible 'joining' take place are both cosmic ('heaven and earth's' – also suggesting above and below) and intimate ('skin and core' – also suggesting outer and inner). Taken together, all these images of conjunction and unity create an overwhelming sense of wholeness, an impression encapsulated by the image of the well itself, which in this poem emerges unequivocally as circular, mandalic.[54]

Following the fourteen lines of address to the *I Ching*/well, the poem ends with four lines of which the first three begin with prepositions of location ('*beneath* these eyes // *in* your reflection / *on* the sky's forehead –' [ll. 15-17, emphasis added]), which rapidly focus attention in the fourth and last line on a single point, the concluding words and image of the poem – 'a star' (l. 18). In this marvellously realised image of a single star reflected in the bottom of the dark well, the farthest-away object is located in the lowest visible depth, perfectly expressing again the idea of harmony between transcendence and immanence.

The second and third numbered poems hint that engagement with the divinatory process of the *I Ching* is capable of drawing a person into a process of personal transformation. The fifth numbered poem extends this idea by highlighting the ethical dimension of consulting the oracle. This final poem presents a further, perhaps culminating stage of personal transformation. Where first-person pronouns have appeared in all the previous poems of the cluster except the head-poem, here the phrase 'these eyes' is the only hint of the poet's subjectivity. The phrase is included as a single though by no means central element in a wider field in which subjectivity and objectivity are combined, where the well is addressed in the second person ('*your* reflection') and the sky is personified (has a 'forehead'). At the focal point within this subjective-objective field appears a star. In a poem that makes such sparing use of articles and in a phrase from which even the expected main verb ('is') has been omitted, the decision to use the indefinite article 'a' is deeply significant. The particularity brought into focus by engagement with the *I Ching* and all that it symbolises is not '*the* star' but '*a* star' – one realised entity among many potential such entities, an 'individual'. Of course, the individual that might be symbolised by the star is not the poet's or inquirer's ego, which, displaced from centrality, is, as we have seen, merely part of the observing totality. In terms of Jung's thought, the star – or rather, the star and the circle of well-water in which it manifests: a centre and a circumference – here would likely be a symbol of realised wholeness, psychologically of the self, but also, cosmologically, of the *unus mundus*, the unitary nature of reality as a whole.

It is interesting to compare this poem, the last in the cluster, with the head-poem, the first. Both consist of a single, long sentence celebrating the range and power of the *I Ching*. However, whereas the head-poem is practical in focus, matter-of-fact in its use of language, and understated in tone, the final poem is mystical in focus, richly metaphorical in its use of language, and ecstatic in tone. As already noted, the expressions 'self-replenishing' and 'inexhaustible – which for Berengarten appear to be the essence of the correlation between the *I Ching* and the (restored) well – are buried in the base-line in the head-poem, while in the final poem they are the opening words. Finally, while both poems stand out from the others in the cluster for not including any first-person pronouns, in the head-poem the effect is of impersonality, while in the final poem it

[52] On the polished mirror, see also Blofeld 1991: 31. I thank Richard Berengarten for sharing this reference.
[53] Muldoon and Carrington 1969.
[54] For Jung the mandala was the symbol *par excellence* of wholeness, and could refer to not just psychological wholeness, the self, but also cosmic wholeness, the *unus mundus* ('one world'). See Jung 1955-56: §662.

is rather of 'trans-personality', that is, of a field that includes but also transcends ordinary personality.

Conclusion

In his 'Postscript' to *Changing*, Berengarten discusses the special significance for him of hexagram 48, 井 *Jing*/'The Well' as a symbol of the *I Ching* as a whole; and he concludes his comments with the hope that his poem, like the well, might '*reflect and echo itself* to a reader while it is being read, and so enable the reader to reflect *on* it', as well as 'reflect and echo (*and* enable the reader to reflect on) the material it integrates, the processes of its own making, and its own "deep" source, the *I Ching*'.[55] In this essay I have aimed to read the poems specifically associated with hexagram 48 in the spirit of these statements by the poet. What I have seen and heard from my gazing and calling into this well suggests to me that Berengarten's insight that correlative thinking – and by implication its modern expression as synchronicity – is foundational for poetry stands up to scrutiny and indeed is a perspective that can generate considerable illumination both in theorising about poetry and in analysing actual poems. Of course, Berengarten's interest in Jungian psychology and synchronicity, his having based *Changing* on the *I Ching*, and my having chosen to analyse a cluster of poems that is explicitly linked to both Jung and the *I Ching* have all facilitated these observations about the relationship between synchronicity and poetry. But such facilitation, I would argue, only reflects that this relationship is part of what *Changing*, as both a visionary poem and an *ars poetica*, purposely expresses. Through the comprehensive range of its subject matter and the insightful and generative connections of its poetry, *Changing* advocates a holistic, creative vision of reality, in which reality can be divined, read, and written poetically, and in which poetry can be productively envisioned as a form of 'applied' synchronicity.

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[55] Berengarten 2016: 527, emphasis in original.

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