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Dictation, the Outside and the Dead: Elements for a necropoetics.

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Submitted for the degree of MA (Res) in Poetry as Practice

University of Kent

March 2017

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Dictation, the Outside and the Dead:

Elements for a necropoetics

I *Genealogy and outline of the creative writing project*

The primary objective of this creative work is to use a projective test as a starting point for the writing of a sequence of poems functioning together as a whole whilst interacting in such a way as to create a larger meaning. In psychology, a projective test is a personality test designed to let a person respond to ambiguous stimuli, presumably revealing hidden emotions and internal conflicts projected by the person into the test. Such tests need a specific stimulus to trigger emotional reactions, which means that both the body and the psyche are engaged in this experience. Therefore, the process of making the inkblots was a central part of the creative process itself and played a methodological role, acting as a psychophysical stimulus for the writing.

I chose an iconic projective test widely used in applied psychology and psychiatry by medical practitioners: the Rorschach inkblot test. This choice was motivated by the aesthetic qualities of the test (which make the boundary unclear between science and art), as well as for the underlying method in the making. After having done some archival research at the Rorschach Archive in Bern, Switzerland, I became even more fascinated by the poetic and experimental dimensions of this test, firstly, because Rorschach himself was a polymath, considering artistic practices and scientific research as two sides of the same coin; and, secondly, because the idea of the test itself finds its roots in poetry: Rorschach was inspired by a technique used by Justinus Kerner, a German physician, medical writer and poet, who created inkblots in the late 19th century, to illustrate his poetry. His technique, called *Klecksography*, was revisited creatively by Rorschach, which inevitably situates his test in a poetic lineage. Rorschach himself never considered his creation as a test but rather as an experiment (he always used the German word *Versuch*, which literally means experiment). This conception was at the core of his practice, leading him to consider Projection as movement – in a sense, introducing physicality

in the psyche. All these elements spoke deeply to me and were landmarks in the elaboration of this writing project.

In this collection of poems, I used the inkblot technique to create ten inkblots (I kept the same format as the Rorschach test, that is to say ten plates). In reality, I studied several series and I was more inspired by an early and more experimental set of plates: The *stammserie* inkblots of Roemer. His experiments with ink were central in Rorschach's development of his own plates. As I consider materiality and embodiment core elements in my practice, I needed to create my inkblots as triggers for the writing. Therefore, each long poem is a psychophysical response to a specific inkblot in which – *ex post* – two stages of the creative process can be 'carved out': on one hand, the making itself, being a situation conducive to the poetic imagination and on the other hand, the perception of the form inducing the poetic work between meaning and chaos.

Furthermore, some meta-discourse – mainly re-elaborated material from the Rorschach Archive in Bern – to document the historical process of the creation of the test and my take on this experiment is included in a specific section at the end of this book of poems which takes the form of a conversation with the dead Rorschach.

In this part, many issues – theoretical and practical – linked with the creative process are dealt with. The theoretical aspects will appear in prose while the practical aspects, related to my personal experience, will appear in a haiku diary.

The ten full-page Rorschach-like plates play a pivotal role as such, and they will be dividing the book into two parts, being the bridge between our world and the *Other* world.

Therefore, *Speak, Psyche* is a book-length collection of poems whose structure is as follows: ten long poems forming the first part of the collection, ten full page Rorschach-like plates and a second part called *Fieldnotes on the life and works of a Nightwanderer*.

For this dissertation, I am submitting five long poems in the creative part of the work as well as the corresponding Rorschach-like plates:

We Gather the Limbs of Night

Insomnia is a Mantis

Atropos, the Dessicated Outside

Ab Imo Pectore

Spirit Sputum

The five poems submitted for the creative part of the dissertation relate to the main topic of the critical study in the sense that they are intended to be placed in the lineage of a Spicerian necropoetry. Hence, Rorschach material will not be discussed as such in the critical part.

II *The creative writing project, Jack Spicer and Necropoetry*

From the many inspirational poets to whom I feel connected, I chose to focus on Jack Spicer in the critical essay, for several reasons:

He was a poet engaged with methods generating new forms of writing. This is particularly true in *After Lorca*, which I selected as the main object of study (alongside other references and authors) in the essay, as many aspects of this book are highly relevant to this project. In particular, the three following elements:

First, the use of the epistolary poem to engage with the dead Lorca as a highly audacious endeavour, enabling him to produce a dictated poetry, coming from the outside.

Secondly, the use of experimental translation in the lineage of American modernist poets, unexpectedly redefining the temporal–spatial situation of the poet, blurring the boundaries between the living and the dead, past, present and future.

Thirdly, the engagement with the dead in a way that renders visible a queer genealogy in poetry, simultaneously liberating the subject from the personal

and placing the poet in a political lineage.

All the above elements are part of a poetry engaging with the dead in multiple ways, enabling me to call this poetry a necropoetry. Provisionally, necropoetry will be defined as a poetry engaging creatively with the dead and in which the writing tends to produce the 'necrosis' of the text itself. Like Peter Gizzi, I think poets 'must learn how to manage the destructive force of the poem',¹ its thanatopoetic aspects, when they wish to write poetry.

And, finally, I chose Jack Spicer because he is a poet of failure. His attitude was exemplary, especially in a society adulating success, a concept closely related to a globalised, deregulated and now, since the last major financial crisis, unbridled capitalism. Spicer was politically engaged (and this political engagement took multiple forms including the Vietnam war and LGBT rights). In a society considering control and performance as the ultimate achievement for human beings, this political dimension in his life should not be put aside when it comes to analyzing his poetic work.²

Likewise, the current state of things creates a two-tier society in which people who have supposedly failed (according to these implicit but nevertheless dominant representations, notably that everything is a commodity), are stigmatised and silenced, confined to limited forms of already reified subjectivity, imposed by the dominant doxa. Therefore, the battle of ideas, especially in the field of creative arts, is all the more important, to help us resist their increasingly widespread commodification. That's the reason why poetry as it is engaged in the process of producing new forms of subjectivity and 'presence' in the world is presently all the more important.

In short, Spicer's work is a lens through which to understand some intriguing issues raised by the creative process and the role of the poet in the society. I wanted to explore these aspects alongside the writing of my collection of poems. I consider all the above outlined elements as part of a Spicerian

¹ *The House that Jack Built: The Collected Lectures of Jack Spicer*, ed. by Peter Gizzi (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1998), p. 20.

² Michel Certeau (de), *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other*, 'Mystic Speech', trans. by Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 2006): 'At the extremes, they vacillated between ecstasy and revolt – *mysticism and dissent*.' p.85

necropoetics accompanying my writing in this project.

This reflection is developed in the following essay and helped me shape and understand better my own creative work. The way it did so will be detailed in the conclusion.

III Critical study: the Necropoetics of Jack Spicer

We are standing on the edge of an abyss that had long been invisible: the being of language only appears for itself with the disappearance of the subject.

*Michel Foucault, The Experience of the Outside*³

En cambio, al duende hay que despertarlo en las últimas habitaciones de la sangre.

*Federico García Lorca, Juego y Teoría del Duende*⁴

This essay is an attempt to explore and understand the creative process called dictated poetry. In order to provide an analysis of dictation, both as a compositional method and as a situation, it is necessary to contextualise, to place the poet in a lineage and consider the historical aspects of this practice, tracing its genealogies. For that, it will be useful to look briefly at different theories of inspiration across time, to understand how they have been feeding poetic practice, and in particular, how they informed Jack Spicer's poetic practice. From that, Spicer's practice of dictation will be considered in detail, especially his book of poems *After Lorca* in order to extract the substance of interest to necropoetry.

This essay has the following structure:

Firstly, it defines the terminology that will be used throughout. This includes: Dictation; the notion of Outside; necropoetry, derived concept of interest, introducing the useful time-related notions of Death and the Dead (embracing

³ Michel Foucault, and Maurice Blanchot, *Foucault/Blanchot: Maurice Blanchot: The Thought from Outside and Michel Foucault as I Imagine Him*, trans. by Jeffrey Mehlman and Brian Massumi (New York: Zone books, 1987).

⁴ Federico Garcia Lorca, *In Search of Duende*, "Play and Theory of the Duende", trans. by Christopher Maurer, (New York: New Directions, 2010): 'But one must awaken the duende in the remotest mansions of the blood.' p.59.

both the dead and the concept of Death), to understand the peculiar situation of the poet as a 'transmitter'.

Secondly, these notions will be grasped through the lens of the specific use Jack Spicer developed in his poetic practice as it can be considered both as a landmark shift in his writing and as a way to revisit old paradigms – beyond unimaginative and literal conceptions of authorship. As Spicer's poetic practice is complex, multilayered and idiosyncratic, the study will mainly focus on the aspects engaging the Dead, that is to say necropoetry, and therefore, more generally, his necropoetics. Indeed, the *Ars Poetica* formed by the body of fictitious letters (taking the form of epistolary poems) Spicer addressed to the dead Lorca in his book of poems *After Lorca* proposes fascinating explorations for poets to engage with along the 'road of dictation'.

Thirdly, in an attempt to incorporate the practical consequences for poets today in contemporary poetic practice, this study discusses the process itself, as a dynamic relationship between temporal and spatial aspects. In that respect, the body of the poet is at the centre of the practice and may help articulate more clearly political, ethical and aesthetic aspects in the writing. Coming full circle, the body of the poet, as a site of resistance and emancipation, a specific 'location', spatial and physical, is traversed and embedded (as a 'body of evidence') in the existential cluster that produces the situation of the poet. Spatial and temporal dimensions are consubstantial and are part of the paradox at the heart of this compositional method (defined, meanwhile, 'on the road' as an orphic methodology) and this observation may help find a way beyond the old opposition between craft and inspiration, designating a place less passive in the reception and open to communality.

Finally, to give an illustration of what has been discussed in the essay, *After Lorca* is considered as the epitome of dictation, and a close reading of the opening poem *Juan Ramon Jimenez* concludes this short study.

In the conclusion, I will be explaining in detail how this critical study informed my work as a poet.

A. 'Where the road of dictation leads...' ⁵ or the physiology of the creative process

The very process of dictation is one of vigilance ⁶

I mean, the future, the past and the present are in some ways entangled. ⁷

First, the notion of Dictation ⁸ will be considered as a process, a lineage and a method of composition going beyond the old dialectic between technique and inspiration. In a second phase, Dictation will help us clarify the spatial-temporal framework of dictated poetry.

Poetry is both an experience of language *and* an experiment with language, is both glossolalia *and* craft, and is a language-memory ⁹ carrying vestigial forms ¹⁰ buried in the texture of the past (many great poets, such as Rilke, thought childhood as the real fertile ground of poetry; and as Sartre said in *Les Mots*, 'L'enfance décide'/'Childhood decides'). These forms of the past – nevertheless blurring the present and the future – must be defined and articulated clearly so that their role in the writing can be made visible.

The main interest for the theoreticians of poetic inspiration has always been to find and define its origin and to answer the questions 'Where does it come from?' and 'Are there techniques/methods to foster inspiration?'. It is true that over the past decades, within what may be called 'postmodernism' – excessively influenced by the linguistic turn and structuralism, the notion of poetic inspiration became out of favour. Nevertheless, it seemed interesting to explore this old notion in the light of Spicer's work as his poetic practice tends to demonstrate that one can still summon inspiration. A brief review of theories of inspiration across time and how they have fed poetic practice is

⁵ Gizzi, p. 7

⁶ Gizzi, p. 174

⁷ Gizzi, p. 41.

⁸ This essay uses the term 'dictation' and not prosopopeia as, in this context, they do not mean the same thing. Indeed, prosopopeia is a rhetorical device, dictation is a practice, a direct conversation: the practice of dictation being the substratum of the writing itself. See footnote 23.

⁹ Gizzi, *Lowghost and Logos*, p. 25 and p. 29.

¹⁰ Maria Damon, 'Jack Spicer's Ghost forms' in John Emil Vincent, ed., *After Spicer: Critical essays*, (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2011), pp. 138-156: see her notion of 'vestige'.

necessary to contextualise our argument with regard to Spicer's poetic practice.

The Muses in Greek mythology were the nine daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne – the goddess of memory, suggesting that there is a technical dimension to inspiration as well, often stemming from the indissoluble relation between sound and meaning.

In the *Ion* dialogue, for example, Plato proposes a radical theory of poetic inspiration that suggests the poet should be 'inhabited by a God' to be able to write good poetry (at the time, epic poetry; and this 'god' was in fact a Muse). This theory personalizing Inspiration and giving all power to the Muse was revisited by Federico Garcia Lorca in *Theory and Play of the Duende*, abstractifying this force coming from the inner depths of the poet/the artist. Lorca's conception of *Duende*, as well as Jean Cocteau's, both deeply engaged with past traditions, fed Spicer's conceptions of inspiration and can be identified in his strategies of composition. In particular, as Peter Gizzi notes, there are 'communal aspects of composition'¹¹ in Spicer's practice, referring in fact both to the body and the community, that is to say reception comprehended from the point of view of the body of the poet *and* engaging the reader as well. This attributes not only a passive/receptive skill to the poet but also a dimension of political engagement within the community. This notion clearly stems from Lorca's views on Duende, especially understood in the context of Gypsy¹² music, which plays an important role in some of Cocteau's works as well (in particular, his film trilogy on Orpheus and his book *Le Rappel à l'Ordre*).

In that sense, the etymology of the word 'Inspiration'¹³ enlightens our conception of dictation as it is an eclecticism of sources ranging from ancient Greek mythology and philosophy (Plato, Horace's *Nascuntur Poetae*) to Biblical conceptions and the philosophy of the French Renaissance (Michel de Montaigne), more modern conceptions from nineteenth- and twentieth-century poets, and even medical terminology, which gives it its physicality, its

¹¹ Gizzi, p.175.

¹² Lorca, p. 57 and pp. 64-66.

¹³ Centre National de Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales, (CNRTL, 2012), <<http://www.cnrtl.fr/etymologie/inspiration>> [accessed October 2016].

grounding in the body.

As relevant examples, we can consider the Greek word *'pneuma'* meaning both 'soul/spirit' and 'breath' as well as the Latin word *'inspirare'* meaning 'breath' and 'the drawing of air into the lungs' (in French as well, with 'inspiration') to show how mind and body are connected in the act of creation. It sheds some interesting light on how the term 'psychophysical' becomes central in the practice of writing, engaging the 'soul' as well as the body. There are numerous examples of writers and mystics in the history of literature whose writing stemmed from this connectedness such as the French poet Paul Claudel who defined a theory of inspiration rooted in both the spiritual and the physical (*'espèce d'excitation rythmique'/'poussée de l'âme'*)¹⁴ and finds his place in this lineage.¹⁵ In the same vein, critics like Jacques Maritain and Rowan Williams help us understand better these invisible correspondences between poetry and mysticism and why poetry *needs* incarnation.¹⁶ According to Jacques Maritain, poetry is 'Cette divination du spirituel dans le sensible, et qui s'exprimera elle-même dans le sensible, c'est bien là ce que nous appelons POESIE' expressing the fact that poetry is *consubstantial* to the sensible world.

Other authors or critics have seen the work of our sensitivity as a powerful lens to express our human experience in the world (Romanticism revisiting – in France – Diderot's conception of poetic inspiration, taking bodily experience as the indispensable substratum of artistic creation), or they have seen the connection to the unconscious mind and dreams (the surrealist movement in France; Gérard de Nerval; Gaston Bachelard), and finally, others have rejected this supposedly simplistic approach and believed in the power of craft

¹⁴ 'A certain type of rhythmic excitement'/'thrust of the soul'

¹⁵ Paul Claudel was a catholic writer and religion strongly influenced his writing. See in particular Paul Claudel, *Réflexions et propositions sur le vers français, Parole d'Animus et d'Anima*, NRF, Oct-Nov 1925.

¹⁶ On poetry and religious imagination, see: Jacques Maritain, *Frontières de la poésie et autres essais*, (Paris: Louis Rouard et fils, éditeurs, 1935), p.22: 'This divination of the spiritual in the sensible realm, and which expresses itself in this same sensible realm, is indeed what we call POETRY.'

(Nicolas Boileau, Charles Baudelaire, Edgar Allan Poe, Paul Valéry).¹⁷

There is always some presence of dictation in the inspiration of the poet – and we find this explicitly in German with the word *Gedicht* (poem)) – through which the presence of the body is an availability (even in non-religious/atheist conceptions of inspiration): the poet uses a possessed language, inhabited by a daimon¹⁸.

Indeed, dictation is the act of transcribing words *uttered by another*; this means it is related to a sort of otherness, an alterity. In this case, this alterity seems to be impersonal and situated in a non-space, not belonging to the actual world. That is why the outside and the practice of dictation are blurring time and space boundaries: past, present and future; center and periphery/margins. This conception of time and space is crucial and has direct implications when it comes to comprehending the notions of lineage and subjectivity and what they mean in terms of a political genealogy for the poet writing poetry today: working with the outside is a way to escape single-minded creative arts and theories fitting with standardized discourses and practices. It creates a space, an *epistemological insecurity* that makes it possible to truly experiment and poetically articulate intimate and political aspects of our lived experience. And doing so, poetry is fully engaged in the production of new subjectivities. It reminds us of the ‘negative’ conception of inspiration according to T.S. Eliot, ‘the breaking down of strong habitual barriers’ as dictation and the outside are a state of mind and a situation in time and space that fight against ‘obstruction’.¹⁹

In light of this brief genealogy, dictation is seen both as a lineage and a process, engaging past and future in a dynamic relationship with the present, emphasizing the importance of the body of the poet as a medium switching

¹⁷ This is just a brief overview of the notion of ‘poetic inspiration’. For further reading, see: Boileau, *L’Art Poétique*; Baudelaire writings on Poe, Bachelard, *La Poétique de la Rêverie*, Edgar Poe, *The Philosophy of Composition*, Valéry, *L’Ame et la Danse*.

¹⁸ Rowan Williams, ‘*Poetic and religious imagination*’, *Theology* 80, no. 675, 1977, p. 182: ‘No, it is a problem of bridging the space between my speech and yours, my history and yours – the problem of ‘possession’ again. No two person’s languages are occupied by the same *daimon*. It is a problem of availability, how to offer possibilities to other men.’

¹⁹ See T. S. Eliot, *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*, (London: Faber & Faber, 1933), pp. 144-145.

from active to passive and vice versa in the writing.

Furthermore, as the dead are being engaged in the process, both as ancestors placed ahead in time and as part of the creation itself, the notion of *necropoetry* arises as a productive term, as a way to qualify more precisely the writing in this particular context, incorporating the community of the dead as well as the necessary thanatopoetic dimensions of creation (The Dead).

The definition of the outside organically implies spatial notions of boundaries, enclosure and limits, negatively defining space, as well as time-related notions of point of reference and point of *origin*, placing the poet in a lineage. Spicer's genealogy of dictated poetry *needs* an Outside to define a practice, and Spicer defines his practice by negation, which is perfectly consistent with this conception of time and space.²⁰ I would like to use this essay as an attempt to follow the 'road of dictation' Spicer was talking about and understand if the underlying assumption that it possibly may lead *somewhere*, or at least be the basis of a roadmap, literally and figuratively, is to follow.²¹

The poetic inspiration is supposed to come from 'elsewhere' – and in certain cases, this 'elsewhere' can find its power in otherworldliness: this is actually what interests us most as this category implies a specific time and space not being part of our reality, the *real* as we understand it in the actual world.

In that respect, Jack Spicer is an insightful poet who helps us understand the theories of inspiration in the contemporary world. He was a poet who revisited in a fruitful way the 'potentially tired paradigm(s)'²² of 'inspiration' and 'dictation', connecting them to figures such as the ghost and the martian, and consequently delimiting an outside necessary to the very possibility of their existence. The ghost and the martian are artefacts referring to different exteriorities (outer space; the *Other* world) and hence they represent different

²⁰ Certeau (de): 'If the mystics were locked within the confines of a 'nothing' that could also be an "origin", it is because they were trapped there by a radical situation to which they responded with utmost seriousness', p. 86; 'The Beginning, or the Poem', pp. 80-100. Gizzi, p.184.

²¹ Certeau (de), 'It combines unity and plurality of 'dwellings' (*Moradas*) which permit an itinerary to be drawn up;', p. 95. Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. by Alfred Hofstadter, 'Building, Dwelling, Thinking', (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), pp. 143-161.

²² Daniel Katz, *The Poetry of Jack Spicer* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), p. 9.

functions in the act of writing. As Gizzi says:

By placing himself outside the poem, the poet creates a vacuum that draws into the poem both the textual predecessors of the poem's past and the readers of its future.²³

The notion of vacuum is key to understanding the type of space it defines in the poem and in the body of the poet ('Emptying' being the process, according to Spicer) and how it is connected to time, therefore engaging communally the dead, the poet and the readers.²⁴ in this configuration, the past and the future merge in a sort of poetic synchronicity, producing potential distortions of temporal lines and hence, of perception. In particular, it reorganises our way of apprehending reality, that is to say our way of being engaged temporally and spatially in the world²⁵.

In fact, 'emptying ourselves' with reference to the mind/body connection is a practice which can be related to spiritual religious practices, in the lineage of European mystics²⁶, in particular, the 'mystic speech' as defined by Michel de Certeau in *La Fable Mystique* (The Mystic Fable). The relationship poetry has maintained with mysticism and philosophy over the centuries indicates that one function of poetry may be to produce this non-causal and non-linear displacement, to disrupt our 'being-in-the-world'.²⁷ Therefore, it means that, in

²³ Gizzi, p.175.

²⁴ Certeau (de), 'It is rather an organizing factor. It marks *in* the text the *empty* place (empty of world) where the *other* speaks, following a process the discourse describes by *recounting its own production*.' p. 94.

²⁵ Williams, pp. 179-180: ' But what, then, is this 'recomposition'? It is almost a definition by negation – 'Whatever "truth" is, it is not merely the world I know'; it is to put the world under judgement. How? By making a new thing. The poet *adds* to the world (as does every artist), to the totality of language; thereby proclaiming his dissatisfaction with the existing world and existing linguistic options.'

²⁶ For example, the spiritual exercises of Ignatius of Loyola, the writings of St John of the Cross and the writings of Teresa of Avila. In reality, there were numerous mystics in France, Germany and Spain during the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century. See Michel de Certeau, *The Mystic Fable*.

²⁷ Jean Greisch, (ed.), *Philosophie, Poésie, Mystique*, (Paris : Beauchesne, 1999), 'Comment définir le rapport au Dieu poétique ? (...) C'est un rapport nostalgique au sens strict, qui envisage dans la mélancolie les chances d'un réenchantement du monde par l'improbable retour des dieux.'/How to define the relation to the poetic God? (...) It is a nostalgic relationship in the strict sense, which envisages in melancholy the chances of a re-enchantment of the world by the improbable return of the gods', p.67.

this situation, because of the ‘gushing’ discontinuity poetry fabricates, appearing as truth, the ‘obstreperous’ and the communicative functions of poetry writing are entangled: there is a political dimension to this practice as it simultaneously redefines the order of things and its geography, that is to say, traditional binarisms, for example: centre/periphery,²⁸ living/non-living, subjectivity/objectivity.

Gizzi considers this in terms of intertextuality, as this vacuum becomes the centre of the poem, and enables the interrelationship between texts in the history of literature; but there is also another dimension, a conversation, which is not only from poem to poem, but also from poet to poet. Not only textual predecessors but also predecessors, full stop. And ‘correspondence’, as Spicer used it in *After Lorca* is a very effective medium to communicate with them. In Spicer’s conception of poetry, poetry literally embodies the ‘word’²⁹ of the Outside.

DICTATION
‘Word’



Jack Spicer, within the same ‘gesture’, opened up new possibilities in the poetic arena, bringing into play a new approach of the poet’s subjectivity,³⁰ new taxonomies and the interconnectedness of the political and the aesthetic. Clarifying the articulation between these is relevant as it can allow us to grasp the specific dynamics of time and space being conveyed in the poetic exploration, that is to say the where and when, the situation of the poet when

²⁸ Martin Heidegger, the analysis of Rilke’s poem: ‘The Force of Gravity’, p.104. Certeau (de): ‘The issues immediately at hand are the formal aspects of the discourse and the tracing movement (the roaming, *Wandern*), of the writing: the first circumscribes a locus, and the second displays a ‘style’, a ‘walk’ or gait, in Virgil’s sense when he says, ‘her walk reveals the goddess’, p.82. and ‘a place where one dwells without dwelling there – and whose center is also exteriority.’ p.95. Gizzi, on the notion of ‘gait’, p. 132.

²⁹ See again how Spicer uses the pun Lowghost/Logos.

³⁰ See the definition of the subject (Sujet) and subjectivity (subjectivité) in Emile Benveniste, *Problèmes de Linguistique Générale I*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1966). And Gilles Deleuze, *Différence et Répétition* (Paris: PUF, 2011).

engaging with his/her own material.

This particular dialectic between time and space in the formation of the dictated poem enables us to trace back the genealogy and adumbrate the contours of a necropoetry, finding its origins in the poetic gesture Spicer initiated in *After Lorca*. As we will see it, the “anti-humanist”³¹ Spicerian vision³² (or as Katz says: “the Spicerian form of ‘impersonality’”)³³ is an important aspect of this poetry, enabling the poets to reconcile – in an unexpected way – universalism with a poetry rooted in the particular, the singularity (for example, biographical)³⁴ which usually remains problematic in contemporary postmodern practices.³⁵

B. In the mouth of the Outside: Death, guts and the hanged moon

Tell everyone to have guts
Do it yourself
Have guts until the guts
Come through the margins
Clear and pure
Like love is ...³⁶

The term ‘*necropoetry*’ is a productive tool to define the type of relationship a “poet writing poetry”³⁷ can establish with time, both physical and abstract. The idea of the dead body (from the Greek *Nekros*) and the Dead (as imaginary or real entities, now ‘in the realm’ of the outside; and more generally all thanatopoetic forces in play) are implicitly part of it. This dual condition is

³¹ Katz, Introduction.

³² Katz, p. 9.

³³ Katz, p. 5.

³⁴ See the symbolism of blood in Victor Hugo, *Contemplations*, Baudelaire’s poem *La Fontaine de Sang*, Antonin Artaud’s book of poems *L’Ombilic des Limbes*, Jean Cocteau’s film, *Le sang d’un Poète* and in Lorca’s theory of the duende. It is interesting to note that usually the biographical aspects are usually seen as a major component of Romanticism.

³⁵ Certeau (de), ‘With this founding act, the subject enters a retreat, it goes where the world’s objects are absent. The subject is born of an exile and a disappearance.’ p. 92.

³⁶ Blaser, in *Admonitions* and quoted p.98 in the introduction to ‘*Poetry in process and Book of Magazine Verse*’.

³⁷ Gizzi used this expression in his essay ‘*Jack Spicer and the Practice of Reading*’.

actually a precondition in the sense that the poet *has* a body³⁸ (here I am referring to the politics of location³⁹ from a feminist point of view) and is, at the same time, placed in a lineage (imaginary or real) whose forces and energy s/he can summon up to give meaning and strength to his or her poetic engagement in the chaos of the world.

To put it another way, it can prove useful to reconsider the connection between poetry and politics as it is clear, as Katz says, that there is a poetry in which *'the ethical and the aesthetic are indissoluble'*, and this can only be actualised in a specific relation to time and space in the poetic practice.⁴⁰ Taking Spicer's conception of time in the writing of poetry as a point of reference is a way to unknot some complexities directly related to this question.

To that end, the fictitious letters Spicer wrote to the dead Lorca in *After Lorca* can be considered as a sort of *Ars Poetica* that gives us extremely important food for thought in our practice as poets. In *After Lorca*, there are seven epistolary poems: Lorca's introductory letter and six letters written to Lorca. These poems are read as letters and they assume the standard conventions of a letter: the opening address and closure of the letter. Spicer employs the direct address to a singular person as it gives him freedom not found in other

³⁸ Cristanne Miller, *Cultures of modernism: Marianne Moore, Mina Loy, Else Lasker-Schüler* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2007): 'Sexology, Style and the Poet's Body', pp. 90-130, in particular: 'One's body instructs others of one's species (...): experience writes the body, and the body is then read as guide enabling others to cope with similar experience. Following the analogy of the poem, Moore's experience-marked 'skin' or readable appearance serves as a 'manual' for other female poets, or women', p. 108. 'Reading the Modernist Poem: Literature and Location', pp. 175-201, in particular: 'Lasker-Schüler could be seen as having lived most of her life outside the law, or at least outside the social norms that restrict behavior. She rejected conventions from bourgeois womanhood and capitalist accumulation (...)', p. 191.

³⁹ Adrienne Rich, *Notes Toward a Politics of Location*, Genius, <<http://genius.com/Adrienne-rich-notes-toward-a-politics-of-location-annotated>> [accessed October 2016]: 'Begin with the material'; 'Perhaps we need a moratorium on saying 'the body' (...) To say 'my body' reduces the temptation to grandiose assertions.'

⁴⁰ Certeau (de), 'Like other sciences, even more so, the 'science of the saints' is confronted by the necessity of reconciling a central contradiction: between the *particularity* of the place it delimits (the subject) and the *universality* it strives for (the absolute). Perhaps it is defined by this very tension, which is played out in the opposition between *all* and *nothing*.' p.88.

forms (letters can be spaces of experimentation) and the possibility to explore freely all the types of questions he wants to discuss. Poetry finds again its communicative function, being able to deliver a message as well as asking open questions, reinforcing the sense that Spicer (and in reality, all poets) needs this mediation. By this choice, Spicer places himself in the lineage of epistolary practices and it enables him to use multiple registers, from the most familiar one to the most intellectual one, and to be conversational, digressive in his words or even interrogative. Furthermore, he is making a special use of the direct address, even using transgression I would say, as the person he is writing to is dead. Therefore, these letters are crossing boundaries between this world and the *Other* world, leaving space for necropoetry to emerge with its uncanny conception of time, creating an invisible and deep bond between the two poets. Here, death does not separate but unites and bridges different forms of reality across time.

Indeed, Spicer raises the question of the dialectic between immediacy and eternity in the language of poetry, the poet being a facilitator, someone simultaneously caught in the flow of time, like in a river, acutely aware of his or her finitude, and capable of 'drag(ging) the real into the poem'⁴¹ so that the immediate reality becomes eternal. The sense of time is cyclical, in flux, with no beginning and no ending. As it happens, Spicer also says, 'Time does not finish a poem',⁴² and one interpretation may be that there is an openness inherent to the poem, a 'beyond' of the poem, crossing boundaries between life and death, which always makes the dictated poem a 'swollen' poem: swollen as the river of time, and swollen as the flesh of a dead body carried by the current of the river. It is, in fact, a message of Joy: 'As things decay, they bring their equivalents into being'⁴³ building the bridge between past and present, the dead and the living through the mechanism of correspondence: 'Things do not connect; they correspond'⁴⁴ and we have to consider this as an alchemical process⁴⁵ as well as a conversation in time and space. In this context, the body of the poet plays a processual role (like physiological

⁴¹ Blaser, letter 2, in *After Lorca*, p. 25

⁴² Blaser, in *Imaginary Elegies*. p. 336

⁴³ Blaser, letter 3, in *After Lorca*, p. 33

⁴⁴ Blaser, letter 3, In *After Lorca*, p. 33

⁴⁵ See the importance of the Renaissance thought in Jack Spicer's background.

processes, such as the different body systems: digestive, respiratory, etc.) engaging the poet 'psychophysically'. As we will see below, what is disorientating is that Spicer seems to have a paradoxical relationship to the body of the poet that we may relate to biographical elements in his own life⁴⁶.

Katz states that a crucial element of the dynamics of 'dictation' is that the poet has a privileged relationship to death, and is even able to speak as dead.⁴⁷ Indeed, in this context, it seems relevant to refer to the French poet Jean Cocteau – beyond the parallels we can draw with Spicer – in his attempt to reintroduce the body of the poet into the creative process.⁴⁸ Cocteau was a polymath, in particular, a highly skilled illustrator, therefore, his hand was of greatest importance in his practice. Moreover, he constantly compares the act of writing and that of drawing in which a kind of improvisational game happens as it happens in jazz music (and again we can see these affinities between Cocteau and Spicer with reference to jazz music). This conception, on the contrary, designates the body as less passive in the reception and more open to communality – and I would say even 'paracommunity'.⁴⁹ It reintroduces agency (in particular, related to desire) into the process. Indeed, Spicer had a very paradoxical conception of the whole process; at times, passive and mechanistic: 'the identity of this ultimate Other is often mechanistic, just as dictation as a passive, mechanistic, even secretarial copying',⁵⁰ and at times physical and even erotic: 'A swallow whispers in my loins'.⁵¹ This tension makes his poetry all the more powerful.

Spicer greatly admired Cocteau, and in reality Cocteau's vision of poetry and methods of composition have real affinities and resonances with Spicer's practice. For example, the notion of the 'Intemporal' was dear to Cocteau: he recorded a short film/self-interview in 1962 to speak to the people living in the

⁴⁶ Blaser, letter 4, in *After Lorca*: 'Anybody physically capable can receive them', p. 38

⁴⁷ Katz, p.10.

⁴⁸ See again blood symbolism in the works of Antonin Artaud, in particular *L'Ombilic des Limbes*.

⁴⁹ Gizzi, pp.182-183: 'because of the disruption in the "time" (...), his poems create a space that both the living and the dead share in the act of reading'; 'instead of being a private artifact, the dictated poem is a shared place'.

⁵⁰ Gizzi, p.178. Cocteau (de), 'community of saints', p.87.

⁵¹ Gizzi, p.179.

year 2000.⁵² In this short film, he talks about his own society at the time and also about poetry, and the role of poetry and the poet, and how he thinks things may be in the year 2000; it is deeply moving to watch him as it really seems that we are summoning up the dead Cocteau and that we are able to receive a message⁵³ from him.

Spicer, in his conceptions, places the dead and the messages the poet is receiving from them and transmitting to the community of readers at the heart of the practice of writing. He considers the poet being a sort of radio,⁵⁴ whose 'waves' according to Gizzi 'haunt(s) the buildings, people and things of the material world'. These notions of 'radio' and 'messages' add an interesting layer to the complexity of the creative process as the poet engages very specifically with the past and the Dead, and is therefore placed in this lineage we have been discussing, not only from the point of view of intertextuality but also in a 'real' conversation to say so (e. g. connected to the thanatopoetic aspects of existence). In the third Vancouver lecture, Spicer even says, referring to Lorca: 'I've never gotten any poet but Lorca, which was just a direct connection like on the telephone. Which wasn't the poets of the past but was Mr. Lorca talkin' directly'.⁵⁵ In a sense, Spicer is evoking a kind of 'channeling' through which he can speak *with* Lorca, a true conversation in the literal sense of the term – 'to turn together'⁵⁶ (see the close reading of the opening poem of *After Lorca*), not to mention that these appropriated notions come from Cocteau's conceptions of the poet and poetry in his film *Orpheus*.

This paradoxical and complex relationship between passivity and agency can be better grasped analysing a foundational myth: the myth of Orpheus. Spicer and Cocteau were both obsessed with the myth of Orpheus⁵⁷ (who was one

⁵² Jean Cocteau, *Jean Cocteau Speaks to the Year 2000*, YouTube, 11 January 2014, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z-x-wNiN4Hk>> [accessed October 2016].

⁵³ See also the parallel we can draw with Blanchot: Rilke's *Songs for Orpheus* and the Hebrew definition of Angel as Messenger.

⁵⁴ Gizzi, p. 168: radio is a surface: 'I don't think the poems come from the inside at all'.

⁵⁵ Gizzi, p.138

⁵⁶ See also Certeau (de), conversation as 'inter-course' (*conversar*), p. 89.

⁵⁷ Jed Rasula, 'Spicer's Orpheus and the Emancipation of Pronouns', *boundary 2*, Vol. 6, No. 1, Jack Spicer (Autumn, 1977), pp. 51-10. Certeau (de), 'topography of personal pronouns', p.93.

of the very few human beings, if not the only one, allowed to descend into the Underworld, in Hades). With Spicer and Cocteau, as well as with the French critic and writer Maurice Blanchot,⁵⁸ we will see that this myth is fundamental to the practice of poetry writing as it deals with loss, death and depth, reactivating and 'vivifying' the relationship of passive and active elements in the practice.⁵⁹

Generally, access to Hell is forbidden to human beings, and it is even quite a difficult task for half-gods to descend there (e.g. Aeneas). This access was granted to Orpheus because he was one of the greatest poets, and because at the time epic poetry was leaving space through which '*Language speaks*' (as Heidegger⁶⁰ tells us). This implies that a sort of materiality is consubstantial to poetry, for instance, the relationship between sound and poetry (Orpheus was a musician).⁶¹ Ultimately, Orpheus has a body and Eurydice loses her materiality and vanishes into the realm Hades once again. The materiality itself of language constitutes the 'hard core' of the poem. Both Spicer and Cocteau used what may be called an 'Orphic methodology' (which is as we can see very costly) but it seems that Cocteau left more space for the body in the creative process. Like Yves di Manno, we can consider this method as 'material visions in the thickness of syntax and vocabulary stratum',⁶² reintroducing physicality into the creative process which makes it psychophysical. In all its aspects, materiality is contingent and unrelentingly

⁵⁸ Maurice Blanchot, *L'espace littéraire*, 'Le Regard d'Orphée', (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1955), pp. 225-232. In particular, see : 'the Orphic measure', 'gait' and the myth of Orpheus : '(...) cette dépendance magique qui hors du chant fait de lui une ombre et ne le rend libre, vivant et souverain que dans l'espace de la mesure orphique' / 'This magical dependence which out of the song makes him a shadow and makes him free, living and sovereign only in the space of the Orphic measure', pp. 226-227.

⁵⁹ Certeau (de), pp. 80-81. Greisch, 'Ici la mesure n'est celle d'aucun mètre ou métronome; elle n'est pas une mesure mécanique, mais une mesure vivante.' Here the measure is that of no meter or metronome; It is not a mechanical measure, but a living measure', p. 28. This goes beyond the scope of this study but it could be interesting to explore 'projective verse' in relation to movement and the Open in this context.

⁶⁰ Heidegger, 'Poets are the mortals who, singing earnestly of the wine-god, sense the trace of the fugitive gods, stay on the gods' tracks, and so trace for their kindred mortals the way towards the turning', p.94

⁶¹ Roman Jakobson, *Huit Questions de Poétique*, 'Structures linguistiques subliminales en poésie', (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1977), pp. 109-126.

⁶² Yves di Manno, *Objets d'Amérique*, 'La Dictée du Dehors', (Paris: José Corti, 2009), p.95

tied to a form of desire, which produces in return ('the looking back') its own disappearance: this is why the myth of Orpheus introduces the poet to the veritable poetic experience. Both Spicer and Cocteau sensed it. Poetry cannot be conceived as being cut off from the creative imagination, which in its openness leaves a yawning chasm before the poet. It is in this 'void' that creation takes place.

This model of radical openness creates poems that are empty at the center; instead of seeing poetry as a vessel for poet's self-expression, it prefers the removal of self from the concerns of the poem.⁶³

As methods (*methodos* in Greek means 'journeys') may open up new possibilities, in relation to time and space and hence in the writing, it is particularly relevant in the context of writing from the perspective of a minority, or from the perspective of people who are not able to conform to the norm, and/or with marginalized voices (women, sexual minorities, racialised people, disabled people, seriously ill persons – and both Spicer and Cocteau were part of this community of outsiders)⁶⁴.

In short, these are people who are mostly confined to their body by the society in which they live or, at least, whose subjectivity and voice can only emerge from a minimal configuration in time and space. History refuses them 'to be led across time'. This specific position in society is paradoxically all the more stimulating as it turns the situation around, making visible the arbitrariness of the mainstream representations of 'success' and 'failure'.⁶⁵ Therefore, this

⁶³ Gizzi, p. 176.

⁶⁴ Certeau (de), 'I' is an 'empty' form that simply announces the speaker. It is a 'siteless site' related to the fragility of social position or the uncertainty of institutional referents. The question addressed is not one of 'competence'. It targets the *exercise* of language, performance, and thus, in the strictest sense, the 'reestablishment of language within the context of discourse.'" p. 90. Catherine Imbriglio, 'Impossible audiences: Camp, the Orphic and Art as Entertainment in Jack Spicer's poetry' in John Emil Vincent, ed., *After Spicer: Critical Essays*, (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2011), pp. 98-137; see in particular the analysis of '*Lament for the Makers*', pp. 121-122. Miriam Nichols, *Radical Affections: Essays on the Poetics of Outside*, 'The Imaginary Elegies: Castle of Skin and Glass', pp. 150-158.

⁶⁵ Gizzi, 'Poetry and Politics', pp. 152-172; in particular: 'Certainly we belong to a community rather than a society, we poets. But I think every poet has to create

leads to a provocative perspective that makes space for a more inspiring configuration to emerge. In a sense, all minorities are doomed to begin with their body, with the bodies of the Dead, they need to re-envision their body from the dead bodies of their ancestors and place themselves in this lineage (are they '(...) a cup the dead drink from?')⁶⁶. Therefore, Thanatos, against the flow of traditional representations, has in fact a positive presence in this process, is a driving force setting directions; hence, becoming necrotic in the writing, decomposing or decaying, is a way to mobilise a force coming from the darkness, a "*chthonicity*"⁶⁷ making the poetry gush from the guts and making visible its potential political dimension without jeopardising its universal message and power as is often the case in poetries whose starting point for the writing is the literal biographic, the 'I' limited to the ego, the personal experience, that is to say a very narrow conception of subjectivity – especially in the context we have just described.⁶⁸

I think there's something Outside. (...) I do believe so.

The works of Maurice Blanchot, in particular the notions of 'the Outside' and 'the Night'⁶⁹ as well as Heidegger's notion of 'destitute time'⁷⁰ can help us

actively his own community.' p. 167. Blanchot, 'Mais si l'inspiration dit l'échec d'Orphée et Eurydice deux fois perdue, dit l'insignifiance et le vide de la nuit, l'inspiration, vers cet échec et vers cette insignifiance, tourne et force Orphée par un mouvement irrésistible, comme si renoncer à échouer était beaucoup plus grave que renoncer à réussir, comme si ce que nous appelons l'insignifiant, l'inessentiel, l'erreur, pouvait, à celui qui en accepte le risque et s'y livre sans retenue, se révéler comme la source de toute authenticité.'/But if inspiration tells the failure of Orpheus and Eurydice twice lost, says the insignificance and emptiness of the night, inspiration, towards this failure and this insignificance, turns and forces Orpheus by an irresistible movement, as if to renounce failure was much more serious than renouncing to succeed, as if what we call the insignificant, the inessential, the error, could reveal itself to the one who accepts the risk and surrenders to it without restraint as the source of all authenticity', p. 229.

⁶⁶ Blaser, *The Holy Grail*, p. 188.

⁶⁷ 'Chthonic'/'Tonicity': both linguistic and physical dimensions.

⁶⁸ Certeau (de), 'The act of *utterance* becomes separated from the objective organization of statements. And it lends mysticism its formal characteristics – it is defined by the establishment of a place (the 'I') and by transactions (spirit); that is, by the necessary relation between the subject and messages. The term 'experience' connotes this relation.' p. 89.

⁶⁹ Blanchot, 'La nuit est inaccessible, parce qu'avoir accès à elle, c'est accéder au dehors (...)'/'Night is inaccessible, because to have access to it is to reach the Outside', p. 214.

define a theory of poetic inspiration which goes beyond a postmodern approach to authorship, too humorous. In a sense, it would empty Spicer's vision and we should take his definition of dictation literally to explore further the complexity of his vision⁷¹. In *Le Regard d'Orphée*, Blanchot says that 'Ecrire commence avec le regard d'Orphée', that is to say the act of writing, starts with 'the gaze of Orpheus', which determines and engages the poet in a particular relation to time (and space) in his poetic practice: it is the *founding act* of dictated poetry.⁷² It raises the fundamental question of 'looking back' (or not) which is a crucial concern for Spicer.

In Spicer's cosmology, the 'not looking back' is, as for Orpheus, a kind of ideal, a rule, but one that is inhuman, a rule one can't help but 'cheat' at.⁷³

Looking back makes the materiality disappear. Eurydice disappears and goes back to hell for eternity when Orpheus looks back.⁷⁴ Clearly, this is destroying the very substance of writing. In fact, to access the Being of language in the making of the poem means that one has to unreservedly accept the principle of 'Becoming': in reality, the poet is always a becoming-poet. Spicer shares this dream of purity and its consequences when 'cheated at': Orpheus ends up being lacerated by the Erinyes, the chthonic goddesses of vengeance and retribution who used to punish men for crimes against the natural order. Is that the cost of true poetry?⁷⁵ Is that what happens when necropoetry, 'reshuffles' the natural order of things we call the 'real'? Sadly, the life of Jack Spicer and, notably the expression he used to explain his tragic end to a

⁷⁰ Heidegger, 'It is a necessary part of the poet's nature that, before he can be truly a poet in such an age, the time's destitution must have made the whole being and vocation of the poet a poetic question for him. Hence 'poets in a destitute time' must especially **gather in poetry the nature of poetry.**' p. 94.

⁷¹ Blanchot, p. 223.

⁷² Blanchot, 'Regarder Eurydice sans souci du chant, dans l'impatience et l'imprudence du désir qui oublie la loi c'est cela même *l'inspiration.*' / 'Watching Eurydice without worrying about the Song, in the impatience and imprudence of desire that forgets the law, that is inspiration.', p. 228.

⁷³ Blaser, p. 99.

⁷⁴ Nichols, 'The Poetry of Hell: Jack Spicer, Robin Blaser, Robert Duncan', Line 12 (1988), pp.14-41: Eurydice as a linguistic substitute.

⁷⁵ Blanchot, 'l'Orphée dispersé' / 'Orpheus scattered' (by the Erinyes), p. 227.

friend when he died: “*my vocabulary did this to me*”⁷⁶ shows us that Spicer was definitely an orphic poet – in a sense, possessed and ‘torn to shreds’ by the *daimon* of alcoholism.

For Blaser, the kind of poetry Spicer writes, a poetry ‘at the gates of existence’, ‘resides in the heart’.⁷⁷ But I would like to add to this conception a splanchnic dimension, co-existing with his ‘phrenic’ conception of the dictated poetry. We can use viscera as a metaphor for the body and it can be a productive approach to explore the role the body plays in the writing, even in a receptive, supposedly passive state. Indeed, phrenic is related to the diaphragm, altogether these ‘soul’, ‘breath’ and spirit introduced in the first part of the essay, while ‘splanchnic’ is related to the viscera, the internal organs of the abdomen. These two dimensions represent the dynamics of the energy of the poem – if we were to think in terms of vitalism, of a physiology of the poem in which different systems function together as a whole to create a ‘meaningful unity’. Necropoetry always draws its chthonic energy from this dynamics.

As the bodies of minorities are even more controlled in our contemporary (western) societies, affected by conflicting demands, it is all the more important to consider them as sites of resistance and emancipation, and to understand this complex and multilayered relationship between the body and the writing of poetry. In the *Testament of Orpheus*, his last film, Cocteau plays his own role as a poet, dies and resurrects, crossing paths with the characters he created in his film *Orpheus*, and he is even judged by them. He magnificently explores the relation of the poet to death and time (‘un poète ne meurt jamais’)⁷⁸ and he exposes his own body to the hardships of poetry, even to a kind of poetic ordeal (blood is essential to Cocteau, as it is for Lorca, it literally shows us the great cost of being a poet, when transverberated by the lance of the goddess Minerva, amongst other things). Furthermore, the presence of Gypsies playing music as well as being ‘mourners’ of the poet himself when he is dead demonstrates the importance

⁷⁶ Gizzi in his essay Jack Spicer and the Practice of Reading and Katz in the introduction of *The Poetry of Jack Spicer*.

⁷⁷ Blaser, p.310.

⁷⁸ ‘A poet never dies.’

of the body in the creative process. Again, we can draw a parallel with what Lorca tells us of the duende. Duende is not a way to understand inspiration in a traditional manner as it is not evocative of the Muses but it is much more related to the physicality⁷⁹ (the 'living body' interpreting forms) of the creative process, its anchoring in the physical body, as it blurs the boundaries between inner and outer space, and it places the body's response at the centre of artistic practice. This living body needs two sources of energy: breath and a deep-rooted visceral energy, both essential to the metabolism of creation. Gypsies in Cocteau's film represent these forces: earthiness, Death and a chthonic dimension. These aspects are clearly part of his vision of poetic practice. We could also say Gypsies represent the Dionysian aspect ('splanchnic') of the process, which is a necessary 'component' of an Orphic methodology, while Minerva represents the Apollonian aspect ('phrenic').⁸⁰

Likewise, in Spicer's vision of inspiration, the 'poet writing poetry' must establish a relationship with the outside whatever his definition of his personal experience, that is to say his ego must be put aside or extended. It doesn't mean that personal experience, individual emotions and feelings do not play a role in the writing of a poem, but *desire*,⁸¹ the desire of the poet, plays a major role. In other words, the intimate without the prism of death cannot achieve universal resonance. This desire is partially thanatic, Blanchot posits 'L'inspiration, par le regard d'Orphée, est liée au désir',⁸² that is to say, to impatience and the desire to 'cheat at' as breaking the rules in a game. The

⁷⁹ Federico Garcia Lorca, *Juego y teoría del duende*, (Biblioteca Virtual Universal: 2003), <<http://biblioteca.org.ar/libros/1888.pdf>> [accessed 4 December 2016]: 'Todas las artes son capaces de duende, pero donde encuentra mas campo, como es natural, es en la música, en la danza, y en la poesía hablada, ya que estas necesitan un cuerpo vivo que interprete porque son formas que nacen y mueren de modo perpetuo y alzan sus contornos sobre un presente exacto' / 'All arts are capable of duende, but where it finds greatest range, naturally, is in music, dance, and spoken poetry, **for these arts require a living body to interpret them, being forms that are born, die and open their contours against an exact present**'.

⁸⁰ Jean-Michel Roessli, 'Convergence et Divergence dans l'Interprétation du Mythe d'Orphée. De Clément d'Alexandrie à Eusèbe de Césarée', *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, 219.4 (2002) pp. 503-513 : see in particular the role of music and Logos.

⁸¹ Blanchot, p. 231. Certeau (de), 'In other words, 'it is necessary to give form to the desire', a desire 'tied to nothing'.', p. 92. Catherine Pickstock, *Eros and emergence*, Queer theology : Rethinking the Western Body, ed. by Gerard Loughlin, (Malden : Blackwell Publishing, 2007), pp. 99-114.

⁸² Blanchot, 'Inspiration, by the gaze of Orpheus is attached to desire', p. 231.

Song, the lyrical in the poem, is tied to this 'unreachable' desire – constantly effacing itself as the mist fades away, and nonetheless being its condition of possibility.

What a poem says is what is being said that comes from a depth (or from Death?) – which is not related in any way to the psychoanalytical hypothesis of the unconscious mind. As we will see in the analysis of the first poem in *After Lorca*, there is an orphic dimension to this poetry; it is a work aiming to bridge the gap between presence and absence, life and death, weaving the said and the unsaid, meandering between the crevices of meaning in a way that confounds the reader:

A meaning is constantly playing within the poetry because the poetry in its openness is more than a meaning and in the composition less than a meaning.⁸³

This orphic dimension is always in tension with the surface, bright and nearly blinding, as the sun is when looked at directly. Hence, the classic Freudian topographic model cannot help us here⁸⁴. First, we only need a very concrete starting point: the words themselves.⁸⁵ As it is with the signifier that the connotative⁸⁶ dimension of writing exists. There is more than this connotative dimension: in particular, the materiality⁸⁷/concreteness of sounds leads to specific resonances which in turn produces semantic contamination leading to new connotations, etc.⁸⁸ Secondly, we need a method: 'Emptying oneself.'

⁸³ Blaser, p. 277.

⁸⁴ Williams, p. 186: 'He has come back alive, though not unscathed, from the borders of language to confirm our suspicions that the world is not to be merely accepted, but accepted and transformed.'

⁸⁵ Jakobson, 'Qu'est-ce que la Poésie?', pp. 32-36.

⁸⁶ Henri Meschonnic, *Pour la poétique I*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1970): on connotation, pp. 55-58. On sonic features and rhythm: 'L'espace poétique', pp. 63- 97. Roland Barthes, *S/Z* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1970): connotation: 'corrélacion immanente au texte'/immanent correlation to the text'.

⁸⁷ The chain Sound – Body is of particular interest in poetry: see Marcel Jousse, *Anthropologie du Geste*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1978): in particular the concept of 'manducation'; 'Nous ne savons plus à quel point **nos liturgies** vont profond dans la nature de l'homme'/ 'We no longer know how deeply our liturgies are in the nature of man', p. 103.

⁸⁸ Greisch, le poète comme 'incorrigible amant des sonorités'/the poet as an 'incorrigible lover of sounds' and 'Il les rend à leur pouvoir de nomination, en faisant

In conclusion, we could say that the Orphic methodology Spicer (and in reality other poets, such as Cocteau) used to produce an infra-poetics in relation to the composition of the real, is a hidden agency in the writing, below the surface of the text, recomposing the chaos naturally present in the world from the depths of the poem and nevertheless considering surface a necessity⁸⁹, being carried away by the surface-depth interconnectedness.⁹⁰ In this situation, poets are swallowing and regurgitating pellets like an owl (see Minerva in Cocteau's Testament d'Orphée). You can find them on your way as a reader. But it can also feed poets in a way birds feed their nestlings (see Bird symbolism in Spicer's poetry, for example in *A Diamond*).⁹¹

It would be relevant to relate the type of relationship 'the poet writing poetry' can establish with the outside to the dynamics between surface and depth⁹² as Hofmannsthal defined it in *The Lord Chandos letter* ('*Ou est la profondeur? A la surface?*'/Where is Depth? On the surface.'). Unfortunately, the role of 'surface'⁹³ in the creative process is outside the scope of this study.⁹⁴

en même temps rejouer leur polysémie, c'est-à-dire le potentiel sémantique qu'ils recèlent. (...) La poésie ne substitue pas l'équivocité à l'univocité, mais ouvre le champ des associations, des transferts de sens, voire de l'analogie. Entre champs sémantiques éloignés, elle crée un lien, rapproche ce qui était séparé et par là même fait pressentir l'unité de ce qui est.'/It restores to words their power of nomination, while at the same time replaying their polysemy, that is to say, the semantic potential they conceal. (...) Poetry does not replace equivocity with univocity, but opens the field of associations, transfers of meaning, even analogy. Between distant semantic fields, it creates a bond, brings together what was separated and thereby makes the unity of what is', p. 29.

⁸⁹ See the notion of necessity as defined by the French philosopher Simone Weil.

⁹⁰ Certeau (de), '(...) but it is a matter of dealing with ordinary language (not the technical sectors) from an inquiry that questions the possibility of **transforming that language into a network of allocutions and present alliances**.' p.90.

⁹¹ Blaser, pp. 22-23.

⁹² See Deleuze's early use of the concept of "Body without Organs" (BwO) in relation to the dialectic Surface/Depth.

⁹³ See adjectives as 'sites' of connotations and their relation to desire in Roland Barthes, *Le Grain de la Voix: Entretien 1962-1980* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1981): 'l'adjectif est le dire du désir'/'the adjective is the saying of desire'; -- *Le Bruissement de la Langue*: 'poussière d'or sur la surface apparente du texte'/'Gold dust on the apparent surface of the text'; and Gaston Bachelard, *La Poétique de l'Espace, 'Dialectique du Dehors et du Dedans'* (Paris: PUF, 2004) : in particular the analysis of a prose poem of Henri Michaux, *L'Espace aux Ombres*, pp. 195-199.

⁹⁴ "Radio" in Spicer's terms.

To illustrate, I shall now give a close reading of the opening poem in *After Lorca: Juan Ramon Jimenez*.

C. Snow, seaweed, and salt: necropoetry is a snowflake chaos

The fact that I didn't know Spanish really well enough to translate Lorca was the reason I could get in contact with Lorca.⁹⁵

Note: In this analysis, I deliberately choose not to compare the Spanish original version to Spicer's work as I am not interested in the work of 'translation' but in how in this necropoetic process Spicer 'becomes' Lorca. Experimental elements in the translation are extremely interesting but would need a more detailed study.

Jack Spicer published *After Lorca* in 1957. It is a collection of poems containing imaginative 'translations' into English of several poems written by Lorca. As we have already seen, it contains an introduction supposedly written by the already dead Lorca and six letters Spicer wrote to Lorca himself and were dictated. This work places Spicer in the lineage of American modernist poets and is a cornerstone in the development of his writing. I have already used some excerpts from the letters but now I would like to focus on the first poem of the collection:

In the white endlessness
Snow, seaweed, and salt
He lost his imagination.

The color white. He walks
Upon a soundless carpet made
Of pigeon feathers.

Without eyes or thumbs
He suffers a dream not moving
But the bones quiver.

⁹⁵ Blaser, p. 138.

In the white endlessness
How pure and big a wound
His imagination left.

Snow, seaweed, and salt. Now
In the white endlessness.

The opening poem in *After Lorca* perfectly exemplifies the type of relationship the poet establishes with the non-space designated in the study as the Outside and with time: the spatial dynamics between surface and depth, and the temporal dynamics of life and death correspond to what has been developed previously. This is why I find that this poetry is necropoetry. It comes from the Outside, a space without place, a time without time where the reader can experience a displacement, a point of dissolution, out of phase, of time and space and be drawn into the core of the poem.

On the one hand, 1) the concreteness of words used – ‘snow’, ‘seaweed’, ‘salt’, ‘carpet’, ‘pigeon’, ‘feathers’, ‘eyes’, ‘thumbs’, ‘bones’ – alluding to the body, the animal and the plant kingdoms, the elements and objects, related to the five senses (sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch) as well as 2) (at first sight) an instance of enunciation which seems personal (personal pronoun, possessive) are constantly in tension with, and sometimes cancel each other out, the abstractness, the opposition or the polysemy of other elements of the poem: ‘snow’/‘the white colour’, ‘endlessness’/‘carpet’, ‘soundless’/‘quiver’, ‘feathers’/‘bones’, ‘wound’/‘without eyes or thumbs’. Time markers also create this tension between past and present – ‘walks’, ‘suffers’, ‘quiver’, ‘now’/‘lost’, ‘left’ and the salience of the present is even stronger if deeply connected to the past. On the surface, we notice the *mise en abyme* Spicer- Lorca-Juan Ramon Jimenez as Lorca is in conversation with Jimenez (and maybe the poem itself at surface level succeeds in showing the evolution or the tensions in Jimenez’ conception of poetry) and Spicer in conversation with Lorca. If we consider this as a transitive relationship, Spicer may have been in

conversation with Jimenez. But we can also use other devices to deepen our understanding of the poem and unfold a multidimensional reading of it, a sort of subterranean or chthonic reading (*'hypogrammatique'* according to Ferdinand de Saussure) that will help us access other layers of meaning, more oblique, reactivating these correspondences we have been discussing so far.⁹⁶ With reference to sounds, which are the primary conveyors of *'signifiante'*⁹⁷ (and by the way so dear to Jimenez), we will be exploring the following devices we find in the poem: repetition (with *antépiphore*)⁹⁸, dysphoria of sounds with alliterations, anagrammisation and paronomasia. Taking the metaphor of degradation and decay, we will be looking at the ways these devices produce decay, degradation and decomposition⁹⁹ in the flesh of the poem.

In this poem, repeating three times the verse *'In the white endlessness'* and in particular the fact it appears as the opening and the closure of the poem reinforces the sensation that time is cyclic ('eternal return'), infinitely repeating itself, and deeply connecting past to present. This connection between past and present, dead and living, human beings, non-human beings and things makes us consider this poetry as *religio*. The incantatory dimension – *'le vers, qui de plusieurs vocables refait un mot total, neuf, étranger à la langue et comme incantatoire'*,¹⁰⁰ permeates the poem with the use of alliterations creating a sound dysphoria in the scansion, bringing together the gentleness of *'snow, seaweed, salt'* and the violence of disseminated [k] sounds, hammering in a 'soundless' space. Sounds here are supposed to be absorbed by feathers and snow, the poet could not even hear his steps, could he? The

⁹⁶ Saussure, Ferdinand (de), *Anagrammes homériques*, ed. by Pierre-Yves Testenoire (Limoges: Lambert Lucas, 2013). This Saussurian 'method', considering unusual aspects of the text (such as anagrams), makes it possible to elaborate a close reading 'below the surface' of the text, facilitating the emergence of a multifaceted meaning.

⁹⁷ From the Saussurian concept; to this day, I couldn't find an English translation.

⁹⁸ Bernard Dupriez, *Gradus: les Procédés Littéraires* (Paris: Editions 10/18, 1984): I couldn't find an English translation either: *Antépiphore* is the repetition of the same verse in different parts of the poem, in particular at the beginning and at the end of the poem.

⁹⁹ Jakobson, 'Notes Marginales sur la Prose du Poète Pasternak': 'tropes of decomposition', p. 65.

¹⁰⁰ Mallarmé, Stéphane, *Crise de vers*, in *Œuvre complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945): 'The verse, which of several vocables remodels a total word, new, foreign to the language and as incantatory.'

salience of silence talks about the wound ('feathers'/'suffers'), the quivering of being and is paradoxically well-conveyed by the work on sonic features in the poem. There is a kind of secret necrosis coming from the Outside, this strange time from when the poem is 'speaking' and when one can 'slip from the subjective to Being'¹⁰¹. But there is a kind of misalignment in this Being, a propensity of the poem to follow the line of dissemination. The presence of things is the sign of a more profound absence ('*vestigium* – footprint – implies a negative space which asserts an absent presence'; 'it's matter and it's spirit').¹⁰² The use of the tenses (past and present) and the paronomasia 'Snow/Now' reinforces the denegation of time. Semantic degradation comes with sounds but also with the anagrammisation 'salt/lost' densifying the original polarity concrete/abstract, the sensible world and the world of ideas, microcosm and macrocosm, in which we find correspondences in the distillation of time, to use an alchemical metaphor. This poem seems like a 'white hole' that is to say not a void, but an invisible object of extreme density, which tends asymptotically towards what Spicer called 'the infinitely small vocabulary'.¹⁰³ The presence of the poet's body is like the word on a tracing paper.¹⁰⁴ No eyes or thumbs but bones, which do not decay and lead the body across time. It is never a soliloquy even if solitude is at its core, articulating loss and plenitude. It reminds us of the community of bodies that poets should share and Spicer was dreaming of when he urged poets to write the same poem across time.

D. Conclusion

What is left, then, if the world is neither to be accepted nor to be rationalized? What remains is Job's *protest*. Job understands his experience as a question, which can only be answered with more questions. His world is not a complete structure to which there can be only a passive response, nor is it a problem to which he, his

¹⁰¹ See Merleau-Ponty quoted by Robin Blaser in *The Practice of Outside*, p. 305 and see Martin Heidegger on Rilke in 'What are poets for?', pp. 96-142.

¹⁰² Maria Damon, p.138

¹⁰³ Blaser, Letter 2, in *After Lorca*, p. 25.

¹⁰⁴ Again see the term 'ichnology' as used in Maria Damon's article on Ghost Forms.

consciousness, is the solution. It is a disordered flux within which he has to find a place; but this finding of a place (a possible definition of personal maturity) is also to adopt a 'position', in every sense: to make an *option* about reality, to be committed to a 'direction' (not an explanation; I hope the distinction is clear) of and in the world.

Rowan Williams, *Poetic and religious imagination*

Segen sinnt.¹⁰⁵

The scriptural experience of letting the other write is not an affair of theory, but takes place 'today'.

Michel de Certeau

In this essay, I took the 'avuncular tone'¹⁰⁶ of Jack Spicer seriously: this was a captivating way to engage with my own material and to reflect upon the experience of writing itself. This short study was really helpful as it gave me the opportunity to read texts that have been feeding my practice for years from a different perspective (that is to say: theoretical and critical) and also discover new sources and new texts highly relevant to my research topic and my practice, opening up infinite possibilities in the future.

Firstly, I have been interested in the relationship between body and writing for years¹⁰⁷ and the study enabled me clarify and understand some aspects of my own practice, which had not been formalised in my mind. Indeed, I have been using somatic experimentation (somatic bodywork, especially experiential anatomy, authentic movement, improvisation) for many years and it led me to publish two collections of poems (in French) dealing with these

¹⁰⁵ 'Blessing Muses.'

¹⁰⁶ Gizzi, p. 20

¹⁰⁷ In the context of 'the physiology of creation' in European (women) mystics' writings. See my book of poems *Hors d'Usure* (in French).

questions: *Splanchnomachie* and *Hors d'Usure*, poetic works that I have been able to develop thanks to a one-year independent research at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Dance in south London, where I could experience, study and learn how to teach creative movement in relation to writing. In this essay, I could explore the theoretical aspects of this question and notably the political dimension in it and its potential implications in poetry writing. Hopefully, the creative part of my work will show the dialectic at work in my investigation.

Secondly, another important dimension of my work is multilingualism, that is to say being able to use and explore freely different languages in poems. Originally, this may come from my international background but also from my lifelong interest in the way different languages circulate in the poem, creating echoes, resonances and sometimes a salutary chaos. It can be disturbing and disruptive for the reader when no translations are provided but I am nevertheless certain that it is a productive approach to explore identity in poetry. It is really fascinating when poets (as in *After Lorca*) take the liberty to use languages they do not necessarily master: it taps into the depths of the poem and questions the reader all the more.

I explained in the introduction why I chose Jack Spicer, and beyond these theoretical considerations, I feel deeply connected to his poetry in a way that made possible the constellation of works to which I am referring in the study. For this project, I was especially interested in the notions of 'wandering', 'gait' and 'dwelling' (*Wandern, moradas*) and I unexpectedly discovered that reading Spicer's poems with these concepts in mind changed my reception of the poems. This led me to consider that my collection of poems works on Rorschach's notion of movement in the psyche as a proposal for a *poetic geography* of the psyche. The topography of its landscape is a topography of Joy, albeit melancholic¹⁰⁸. It reaches its fullness when thanatopoetic aspects are naturally part of the writing: it leaves space for the political dimension to emerge in the poem, targeting the exercise of language and creating a network of allocutions and present alliances as Michel de Certeau posits.

¹⁰⁸ See p.18: Joy, time and decay.

To that end, I consider the 'psychophysical' to be the most relevant experiment in a society obsessed by physical performance, disgusted by and afraid of illness and death, and proposing as a desirable future the same 'perfect' bodies, healthy, efficient and productive, disconnected from their spiritual base. As Spicer says in the third Vancouver lecture, dictation is 'almost like a physical situation', and this technique is a 'fruitful way' to rediscover a poetry in which the ethical and the aesthetic are indissoluble', and to me, a kind of poetry essential 'today'.

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IV. The creative project: Speak, Psyche

We Gather the Limbs of Night

(Fragments for a terrestrial reconciliation)

Bagahi laca bachabé
Lamac cahi achabahé
 Karrelyos
Lamac lamec bachalyos
 Cabahagi sabalyos
 Baryolas
 Lagozatha cabyolas
Samahac et famyolas.
 Harrahya.

Rutebeuf, *Le Miracle de Théophile*

1

We had left our home

For what we thought

Would be our new home

We are in the wrong place

Sleepwalking

On the steep putrescence

Of unexplained

Insanity

2

AR/ W/ HUNT/RS

OR

AR/ W/ WOLV/S

DIGGING IN TH/ ACCUMULAT/D

VOIC/S OF M/ANING

Particles of the hilarious eternity

The moment

Nameless substance turns out

A particular name

AR/ W/ F/RN-SHOOTS

OR

AR/ W/ LOST IN A MONGR/L LANGUAG/ MAD/

OF

DR/AMING ASPHOD/LS

It happened as follows

In the mist-shrouded day

Sadness another thing provoking

Resentment

bleary-eyed memories

Suddenly

Swelling indistinct and

Squamous last year (s a m e d a y) Maria Francesca

Was two months old when she died of apparent sudden

Infant death syndrome and

Local authorities

Refused

To allow the girl's family to bury their child She was a Roma

Baby

Night

Nibht

Niblt

Nablt

Nabls
Eabls

Sable

3

OUR ATTENTION HAS BEEN FOCUS/D UPON

A DYING HORS/

CENTURI/S HAV/ PASS/D

AND STILL

W/ AR/ LOOKING FOR TH/ WOUND/D

/ETYMOLOGI/S OF TH/ R/AL

In the mist-shrouded day

Who swallows the scales of Time

Sadness another thing provoking

Abandonment

And Night

Healing wounds

In a foreign land

Ours

Sandstorm-time of imaginary syndromes

Chronic diseases hidden beasts drip-feeding unpardonable silence

Dodecaphonic landscapes caught up

In the absence of

Minimal love

For fuck's sake

Hear all voices

Awaking at the break of Dawn

In the light of the secant-lilac hospitality

Littéralement

Lapping our wounds

Don't be Immune

Don't tell them to go away

DON'T

4

AR/ W/ HUNT/RS

OR

AR/ W/ WOLV/S

DIGGING IN TH/ ACCUMULAT/D

VOIC/S OF MUTILATION

Particles of the bastardised stormy spells

The very moment

Nameless substance turns out

A peculiar hummingbird-dream

AR/ W/ PISCIFORMS

OR

AR/ W/ LOST IN A MONGR/L LANGUAG/ MAD/

OF

DRUMMING ASPHOD/LS

It happened as follows

In the mist-shrouded day

Sadness and people disappearing into the forest

The tortoiseshell cat

Muddy paws rubbish ashes Night tortuous

A time filled with obliviousness

And no one there to hug

Only birds trapped in an invisible cage

5

AR/ W/ HALF-LIV/S OF RADIOACTIV/S ISOTOP/S

OR

AR/ W/ HAZ/L/SS S/ASONS

Particles of not yet built shelters

Germinal and ocular

As are unanswered questions

AR/ W/ SPAC/ FILL/D WITH DOUBT

TH/ VOIC/ OF TH/ SH/LT/RING NIGHT

The moment

Numbness turns out

White petals of lithium on the tongues of thousands

We Gather the Limbs of Night.

Insomnia is a Mantis
(7 Fragments for an apotropaic prayer)

I cannot sleep at night. Do you not know
Some remedy for dreams?

Electra, Hugo Von Hofmannsthal

At a mantis
I brandish my hand – like
a mantis

Kato Shuson

(Chorus – in the distance.)

*Hey ol'pal
You're a chameleon
But y'know
I'm an old snowy owl*

(Fragment 1: walking the strange landscape of never ending dreams. Empty-handed.)

In the distance
We have lost count of the nights

We lived in their Face
In the realm
Of insomniac stammerers
And amputees

Le Mot, qu'a-t-il laissé

Rien que des traces d'anciennes vérités

Et peut-être l'insomnie...

For us

All is lost

For us

Frost, outside
An invisible Host lurking insatiable
Blazing with hunger

Something passed away
Tant mieux

Something
Entered a true place of witnessing
A terrain often broken and parched
\
The morass of an ancillary-Sound and its necessity

All is to be found

(Fragment 2: Suddenly, the hiddenness of the Tide takes us to oleanders and moorbens.)

– We are waiting for the dissolution of
the Great polar night Knowing what is
being done And bringing out into
the world our deepest fears

– We are waiting for the Diphtheria to
unfold and fall apart and cradle us in her
arms

– We are
vomiting the impervious *chant de vérité*
restless and mindswept

– Deathdrops meeting worms

(Silence)

Parasites always tell you the truth

Reverberating your true Breath

(Chorus – in the distance.)

Hey ol'pal

You're a chameleon

But y'know

I'm an old snowy owl

It's not too late
Perched on our shoulders
The Moon is shelling intimate winters
Dry
And demonic

And we shall point out
an Outside made scarce

Being-Lost is not just a childish fantasy
It lives amongst us

All is to be found

(Fragment 3: embracing the particles of a swollen Past.)

If we had a thousand

red roses

In our mouth

We could hear

The deciduous

Sound

Crawling

and furrowing

Like dirt

(Chorus – in the distance.)

Let it spring forth!

///This is the fertile time
to embrace
the empty space of our thunderous dreams
and throw ourselves
into the Lake of the Maker
Its carnality being mankind itself
Kindness
And
Scum///

If we had a thousand Eye-tide lilacs

Blank slates and crows
At hand
We would see
Insomnia
Sweeping and digging

Cankorous and specular
As it is

And

We would sleep

Peaceful and
 porous
Ready to embark upon a gigantic war

///
This is the fertile time

to exist throughout the Wind

and to unleash our unblinking dreams This is the fertile time to sip the

nascent Selenium and its dipterous vagaries This is the fertile time to

let the blustery viscera

of the Word drown us Ruthless

and Aphasic///
/

If we had a thousand
 estuaries

thousands of constellations and a flock of unborn birds

In our womb

We would pull out pain from nostalgia

And swallow up all wisdom

In a single night

///
This is the fertile time

to let our blood gush from our languagewoven wounds

And become the chatty fissures of our imagination This is the fertile time

to reminisce about Insomnia

Chalky and coarse

This is the fertile time

Because Night is falling thickly past our window

L'yver s'en retourne vers les siens

The vernal equinox is waiting for us///
/

Now
All dreams are born

(Fragment 4: invisible pebbles shelter the Word and let our sorrow go away. Once and for all.)

Allow your scars to bear your echoes
Allow them to become Land and new dimensions
Like mud lark scra ve fo r vis ce ra s mi r ch e d t re a s u r e s

Allow the Void to lift his face from the Mud
Allow your vulnerability to sprout
And lie beneath the loamy soil of your memories

Allow the ancestral voices
that dwell within you to collapse and find their peaceful way

(Chorus – in the distance.)

*And the land upon which they live
The scarred underworld
Of bone-shadows and owls
Make us stronger
Bringing back into our monde
The anemone of the unknown*

Standing at the many crossroads
Always
The same cobalt creatures
Immeasurable and blooming

Long after they have departed

YesterClay

And the body Dust earth-marks lost_____

(Fragment 5: It sprung from our mind like a holed stone.)

What laughs in the Open
Is
The old snowy owl

Again

And again

(Fragment 6: It came as Ballast

pulverulent and imponderable.)

Can't you see that
Being behind Us
Is always given
Peeling back layers of clay
With great Clarity
The practice of being
Is always an earthquake

(Fragment 7: You have to regurgitate them and make them visible at all times.)

We pray to the
atrial poppies
fluttering astray
Arctic and crouching
as in their eyes
Earth is an upturned sky
We pray to Insomnia
Cathartic and immense
sweeping down on silent wings
to carry us away

Insomnia:

The *turning* of the tide

Disseminated

Il y a une part de nous qui veut profondément l'éclatement le mille morceaux qui se pense Ciment

We pray to Intercessors

Smothered with the hyssop
of their Tongue

Whose

Names

go

unspoken

Ne me demandez pas le nom de qui je suis J'ai oublié mon nom dans la violence

We pray to all wishes Stillborn whose night flight
Is a slumberous womb, a tomb without blood

*Quelle
violence*

We pray to all who came into the world
With obstinacy
Lost and confiscated

You

Whose Language-hewn recalcitrance
Is born out of nowhere

Simple as a

Flower

Il y a une part perdue

*Pleine
Comme une lune de printemps*

Eveillée.

Atropos, the Desiccated Outside
(Or how to see your Fetch)

I never knew how I saw my own
shadow coasting along the torpid
canals, my ghost that laughed back at
me from the depths. It went with me
along the strong-smelling streets
where women sang in the hot weather.

Orphic songs, Dino Campana

How it had fallen
How it had failed
How it had acquiesced to secret etymologies

No one knows

But *It* swirled back out to Language

Slippery heroes

Slippery beings

Slippery ghosts

They live deep inside of you.

(Crippling voices /// their prophecies being dissolved in the hallucinatory Foliage of becoming-humus.)

We dream of
being taken to pieces,
of being squared off, lacerated, ripped to
shreds and stitched back together again

We dream of
Moonlit somnambulists whose
discernment is purposefully Blind

We dream of being carried away downstream, Seamless and Insane

We dream of the Mist rolling in over our
Face : *declarée en sommeil*

Avengle, à dessein

We dream of a deep Lamentation delving
into our inconsolable conversations with
clouds

Scattered and Pungent
Once again

tulalelekan na pe uanaye

(A snowflake withers in the shattered space of Asthma-ghosts.)

I can't breathe
Only
Puncture

Hier la griserie éphémère

D'un bruit-paupière s'est refermée

Dense et salpêtre

///You have been bred in that sort of struggle Pregnant with formless memories

And not knowing where to begin///

pela uanayakwele
pani neka kunitto nikkimalainiye

(Driftwood blessings.)

Blessed be ghosts and children, bees and
dragonflies, unicornflowers and moths

Blessed be our Dead, our verdant
destinies, our indecipherable dreams, our
cherished dolls led astray into nothingness

Blessed be the charred traces of our
squelchy Obsolescence, its face fading
away for ever into Infancy

There's been so much Hurt in us so many vernacular Hernias so
much birth-chattering We resemble clandestine passengers

No one knows where we were born

No one cares

Unspoken resonances await and die

Perpetually

A sense of belonging is belching forged apories, itching ashes, *des
chemins de déchirure, encore et encore* trenchancyandenchancement

A l w a y s c h i t t e r

tulalelekan na pe uanaye

(A skeleton basking in rocks suddenly howls.)

The poetics of the Outside is a poetics of Dust
Impetuous and sealed in Silence

(Driftwood blessings.)

Blessed be our innermost stalemates

Blessed be our hands, our hammers
and their stammering omen-moss
etymologies

Blessed be the Past snapping under our
feet like Saturn-dried rosemary sprigs

Blessed be our mildew-strewn clefts, our
forgetfulness, our proliferations and the
absence of Flesh ushering us to chilblains
and ashes

Blessed be our intimate confabulations
with omens and memories

Blessed be Spirit-twigs and the ferns
thrumming in the wind

Blessed be the battered body of Death
hovering around

Blessed be the vicinity of our volcanic
valiance

Blessed be the purple-Psychopomp, red
wolves, turtles and ravens

Blessed be the sacred Shovel and its
infinite Love.

Rien n'y fera manacles of the
night-tide unalterable mandrakes
Lost in spells

– Fireflies are
spawning the
blissful dawn
in the rain
Our fear not yet
triggered by *an*
invisible sand
Our inner frost
fetching the eye
of a beast-
surgeon
The glass-
nightmare
yearning for the
yellow Spirit
Calling us to
coalesce

– I can't remember why
I now blink at an ink-freckled face
The ebb and flow of a mottled-
Grace

Idiom
lingers in Meaning
mutability
is and will always be
Its starlit tears quiver and breed
Oblique
and inebriated
it's time to
Become

dream-fissured.

Ab imo pectore
(On Liminality, Healing and Gratitude)

*He would have charged
and tried to draw blood from shadows*

Book VI, Aeneid, Virgil

Once upon a time

It fell silent

But something created something *else*.

Blessed be every rebirth.

That night
It
c reated
Octopus, Dust and Asthenia
Snake created the joyful chaos
So that
far down
below
We can see the blue-fanged
Depth

(In the light of spring liminality. Desperately looking for a common denominator.)

- What is your medium?
- Poetry.
- Where do you find inspiration?
- In the afflatus of the Outside.
- What's your deepest struggle?
- Keeping my word.
- What is your animal spirit?
- Snake.
- Three words you want him to swallow...
- Immemorial, Laminar, Mantic.

(Chorus.)

*Snake medicine people are very rare.
Their initiation involves experiencing
and living through multiple snake
bites, which allows them to transmute
all poisons, be they mental, physical,
spiritual, or emotional. The
transmutation of the life-death-rebirth
cycle is exemplified by the shedding of
Snake's skin.*

(Embedded lambencies. Sometimes far too realistic. In memory of:)

The door is now open

Don't say you talk suddenness

Don't say you're scared

Wildflowers will go on being there,
certainly ensconced in the presence of wise
women old, young,
beautiful, ugly, of color or not, big or
thin, strong or fragile
But all wise women

And perhaps

The name of time will be
revealed

The name of cruelty and violence

The name of Hurt

Perhaps it's time to confess our vocal silence

(Chorus.)

*All organs of the human body are
communities in heaven*

Our heart is our connection to the world

Our heart is the silence of the dead

*Our heart is scattering a handful of earth
on our heads*

Our heart quenches flowers and oceans

Our heart is a fissure

Necessity

And

Some tears will be woven across all beings
And some of us will forgive and be forgiven
And we will not tremble any longer
And we will be proud
And we will bring the fullness of our depths
Don't say you don't know
Don't say you can't see

Il neigeait

Il neigeait

I know all who died in despair and misery devour me with their slumberous resemblance
They dream of me when I'm awake
They traverse me
Crafting their grammars of eternity
In the thicket of my skull
They usher me to the Immensity
They're an itch that will never stop
And above all
They love me
So much
Il neigeait

J'ai écrit du point de vue de la peur

Now

It's another story

The willow tree and the salty sadness of lost
names have dwelt in the stalks of the sacred
Scar

Let us be born again

(For whom
those
words?)

Daughters of weird heredities

Hear and remember these words

Bring peace and space

Bring milk for all human beings

And set light to this world of emptiness

For that love

Whose arms stretch out in memory

May not withdraw from us

Daughters of weird heredities

Say

Up until now

Up to us

We have lived in the untouchable gesture

We have loved our skin uprooting itself

From its graft-scars

We have been waiting for

The fig tree in the graveyard

Silent and omniscient

And we shall free the others and ourselves

From injustice

(In nitescence.)

///Unwritten hiddenness of scales along green-gray leaves (is it
that it murmurs and hums and hunts

in the solitude of the *dehors?* Insects

with no world being-dust and quietness drying up no
more seasons,

no more wings – at last, but Stillness and a song of wind-to-come Harbinger
through what it gives: the

Because of the erasure: solitude

disons-le

H e r, Them bringer of theblackearth

The last victory of sisterhood///

Once upon a time

And for all

(Silence.)

Lost in a thing that wants
To be devoured
And
Worse
Consumed

(Buried steps reverberating a light breeze.)

It is some blackbird's song
Someone
Dreaming of dark Grass and Carcasses
Somewhere
About to abandon
Her very sweat
When
It wants to say gravid
It says *la Faille*
To the distant and time-sodden intimacy
Of the Outside
Let us dig our own grave
Sewn in the blue

In the sudden melancholia

Of broken places

Here and now

Ignorant and

Lingering

And fierce

Layers of lichens

Making up their mind

All of us

(Yes

All of us)

Must

Dwell in the

Lineaments

Of the squall

(Chorus.)

*Swear by wind
And all is born from the hands
Will face abandonment
Swear by rain
And you will know nothing but the surface
All that counts*

*Blessed be the Scoliosis of Chaos
And Its Callosity
Fibrillating in darkness
Snake-mongering and Silent*

– The suppurating dew, winter-clad,
demands freedom
A heart made of a hand
No more than that
– The more it froths, the more deep-
hidden it becomes
It's about pure generosity
– It reminds me the old oak curdled to
rain-headed Grace bloodstained and
soaring like a fulmar
Heartbeats are a miracle
– And the more it crumbles into
Obscurity the more it ripples
Allies are in the light fabricated at the
borders of our b o r e a l f e a r s
I'm not scared for all that
– The being remembered is a place
without grass, without substance, drawing
a list of self-wounded silences
Yet no one can silence them
– Names exist without exorcism, at the
back of our heads, like sinews or thunder
hunkering at the very bottom of silence
– Be they our closest Allies in this time of
confusion

Their presence

I n b ° t w e ° ° n

Is like no one

(A be-crimson moon, circulaire et opaque, sparkles in the manger. Whispering.)

lostNames churning Hinterland storms

which exist in the

unclouding behind nevermore

just a sort of Strength

emanating

Felled

It surged up

Monsters born ingrown

forever discarnate and forlorn

Never return

They are like dead femurs, strangers

in conversation with

dark woods

Were they created by nothing

They have no

certainty

(The defiance of expectations is being snatched from the jaws of Truth. Adieu.)

Faiseur d'azur

A tête de pluie

Souviens-toi de la zébrure et de l'aneth

Une goutte d'eau s'enfance

Un son qui sent le lait

Neutre

Et

Dru

Enferme tant et rance

Boire le sang d'un sable mouvant

Qui parle de mousse et d'humus

D'un Coeur en partance

Plus jamais

Spirit Sputum
(A message to the *Bonigana*)

In memoriam E. Wong

Qu'ont-ils donc arraché à la forêt et
que la forêt *si lentement leur livre ?*

Antonin Artaud, Les Tarahumaras

La muerte es otro Útero...
Ernesto Cardenal, Homenaje a los indios americanos

Ailleurs

Ailleurs

Ailleurs

Your words,

Your words,

L'encre grise des jours est un rêve délicieux

Words, just splinters of erasure
There's nothing but this trodden dewdrop

– I remember the snow. I remember the
night falling in the snow. I remember that no
memories stuck out their womb

only *ombres et ténèbres*...

– No traces in such night or thought or even
indecision Only the dismemberment of Dream
With its written strictures
It's hard to remember

r e m e m b e r night crawls

and

crevices;

(the Immaculate space of all

You've died You're no longer in this world Grandma The sound of swallowing the flesh
will never return only clouds and crows plucking out tendons and veins and bones

becoming forest Wild flowers abandoned in your eyes wide open dust
Night that is light or

Yo canto con llantos

Something of the thickness of the fear

Something of a night tide, not in place

Not even trees barking at darkness

She who did not conceal her pot of buttermilk

She who was full of gratitude

She who brought prosperity

She who knew her father had made his back sore with carrying loads

It's so hard

And

Yet you fear the silence

(Stained and Innate, as embers dream at dawn)

– I've been here before In these
dismantled places I've been here before I can tell you
I've been here In places of anger and sadness In dark
meanderslands...

– In the faceless night, still blind

– In the dust we're all stumbling upon, in
the fresh air, dishevelled and *émerveillés*
having the feeling of eternity

– Like heart-shaped petals drying up in the
moonlight

– Yes, exactly.

(Silence)

– Mind is serendipity and endless
monsters.

– Out of dust, the tousled sternum of
herstories tells us
to keep unquiet.

Last night I had no sleep
And if tonight you want to milk me I will be dry

My grandmother is dying in her bed you know she's not speaking anymore no face seems
to console her curled-up in her snow-like inner voices

No dust conjures our being
And I'm not dreaming
I'm not drinking the ghost of a distant past I'm just asking
No other dust being conjured

But a force knotting the space *Outside*
A damn childhood memory resisting its own earthiness

Why

Why
Tears, not yet echoed

and t e l l u r i c

Why
This intercalary darkness

I shed tears
I shed a tearforest

A d I n f I n I t u m

(As Orpheus, in the forest of Love-fissures.)

Yo canto con llantos

Can I distinguish between you and the swallows now (these soothsayers – whispering a
kind of old Song lulling us to the road we will follow) as they also sing
the same *canciones de cuna* you used to sing

(Here, the Inescapable bloats conspicuously and, well it seq

Yet I fear the hunter

Like birds wading through the sand and Dusk waking

Le sang maculé de mots

Perdu dans l'instant One hundred and two years of palpitating disappearance
endlessly found Yes, you've been there so many times You've been
entangled in so many lands forced to flow back as time-marshes or

*(Winter clouds. A snowflesh Shaman whose murmur regurgitates lost metaphors.
Bearing witness of Sound.)*

The ears are water
The eyes are sand
The mouth is frost
The hands are chalk

– In
the lichen-crusting solitude
Is there any way out anyone out there to
answer scars and demons Any
Midnight ancestor suddenly
h/e/r/e

to mumble forgotten reveries
– Only hours and hours and hours...
– Only solstices

and equinoxes murmuring past
tense a pleasure-omened skin
a perhaps Nowhere She Whose voice has always
foraged sadness in its entirety *Sous
simplement des feuillages Quand notre lieu c'est l'histoire
Aimer, un point
c'est tout.*

No one hears
the voice Except
the moonflower
No one hears
the breath

Only *frightened* matter

It shivers
Dormant and mercurial
Thousands and thousands watch silently

It's winter
Listen
A congeries of tongues immense and tarry
The soles of their feet summoning down a silent meridian
No matter how obscure
No matter how distant the memory-monger of our intangible *Lands*
Lands of birth and death interweaving their words
Words that soon spread of strange noises coming from under the ground padding
soundlessly by night

Someone's stomping Silence.

With the fathomless Cold behind
It hanged

Countless and blossoming

May the peace be upon you

Please

Take a few words

from me to your

Untethered

World

V. Rorschach-like plates









