POETRY AS A PEDAGOGY OF TOUCH

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ABSTRACT

With evidence ranging from visual representations by scanning tunneling microscopes to the fluid and dynamic language of poetry, my research shows that we are shifting from a culture primarily based on 'sight' to one that is involved with 'touch,' metaphorically and literally speaking. Recent developments in theory and technology, especially quantum physics and post-structuralism, have redefined representation to encompass the necessary reflex of the representer. To be sure, my research has also found feminist and postcolonial criticisms to echo this theory: both have sought to challenge representations due to the objectivity normally attributed to the representer, the Cartesian logic of which quantum theory has destabilized.

Thus, by reading poetry with a quantum theoretical lens, specifically the works of Gertrude Stein, Marianne Moore, Anne Carson, and Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, I show how 'touch' plays into our language, consequently affecting how we think through language.

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GENERAL AUDIENCE ABSTRACT

This is an essay on language – how we read language, where we go with language, and how language affects the way we think. Because poetry is an activity that first realizes the limits of language and then attempts to go beyond those limits, reading and writing poetically teaches us to use language to think in a different manner, what I propose to be by *touch*: a quantum manner. With respect to the field of Linguistics, I want to clarify that I am not saying our thoughts are wholly limited and determined by our language – the space of our minds are quite far-reaching, and it is quite possible to think whatever we want. What I am saying, however, is that language *habituates* how we think, and poetry reveals these habits in an attempt to break from them. Marilynne Robinson calls these habits our "little island of the articulable, which we tend to mistake for reality itself" (21).

Thus I explore attempts at breaking linguistic, hence cognitive, habits with poetry through the writings of Anne Carson and Theresa Hak Kyung Cha. I use feminist, post-colonial, and post-structural theories to formulate a methodology that shows how we *touch* language and understanding through poetry, at the same time enacting this poetic through my own writing.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

Language is an assumed commonplace; we find it near impossible to recall or imagine a time when we communicated or thought without language, and even when we have, be it the unexpected touch of hands or the knowing glance of eyes, it had been so profound that to put it into words almost seems like blasphemy. In her essay "Imagination and Community," Marilynne Robinson writes:

> We live on a little island of the articulable, which we tend to mistake for reality itself. We can and do make small and tedious lives as we sail through the cosmos on our uncannily lovely little planet, and this is surely remarkable. But we do so much else besides. For example, we make language. A language is a grand collaboration, a collective art form which we begin to master as babes and sucklings, and which we preserve, modify, cull, enlarge as we pass through our lives. (2012, 21)

If the "articulable" is what we often mistake for reality, then reality must also encompass the *in*articulable: what cannot be said. But it seems that when we have known someone for some time, especially after we have heard their articulations over and over again, we begin to hear what is not being said, what they communicate both within language and without – every year my mother plants and prunes her azaleas, and when she speaks of it her voice bears the sweat of digging in the earth, the frustration of her aging muscles, and the joy of seeing something grow and bloom from the work of her hard hands. And I have never understood this apart from her language, perhaps in how she might mispronounce 'azalea' from time to time. This is interesting to me: what we say when we cannot find the words to say. This thesis, then, is an investigation of how we make language to paradoxically express the inarticulable. With a wide range of perspectives, from critical theory to philosophy of science to lyrical analysis, I propose that poetry exemplifies language that quite literally uses touch to communicate what cannot be said.

In the contemporary context of an increasingly literate globe, more often than not we use *words* to communicate with each other anytime and anyplace, verbally or textually. We find, simplistically speaking, the transition from an oral to a literate culture was popularized with the printing press, when mass communication was realized through the production and dissemination of printed text. Although we have been writing for millennia, we might be able to trace the cultural transition towards literacy by the emergence of technologies that seem to have significantly altered communicative possibilities towards reading and writing. By this I mean, for example, that text can now be typed and encoded into digital information, a computer language, to be sent across multiple parts of the globe simultaneously. How we make language to bend space and time to our will. What has seemed to remain consistent through the changing means of communication is this use of language. Be it words, ideograms, images, etc., we use a medium through which thoughts and ideas are abstracted and consequently conveyed. Just as light is the medium through which we can see, language is the medium through which we communicate. But what is it exactly that we communicate?

We often consider words to bear meanings that a hearer or reader might understand, but perhaps meaning, thoughts, or ideas are not all that words communicate. Just as the printing press changed certain aspects of communication, recent technological advances have pushed boundaries of perspectives on reality, one example being the shift of focus from taking language as knowledge to language as material. To be clear, these shifts and changes are not to posit a progression toward some superior form of communication, but merely a difference in focus, one that attempts to go beyond our "little island of the articulable." Perhaps we have always wanted to communicate more than we can articulate, but we think to wade on the beaches of articulation is to stand on the very edge of reality itself. Little do we know the sea is ripe and abundant with

life for those who learn how to swim. I believe that one way to understand language beyond articulation is to swim in language, when it can move and caress you with its tides and its salt can sting your skin and burn your throat and push all the air out of your lungs. By this I mean understanding language with the sense and concept of *touch*, both metaphorically and literally.

To provide a concrete example of this theory, and to show how wide a range it extends, we can first look to the development of perceptions on sight. Ever since the 17th century, technological advancements have surpassed what was able to be seen by the unaided human eye. Microscopes, especially, increased the possibilities of what could be seen, revealing realms that were before barely even imagined. However, besides illuminating things too small to see, microscopes also appeared as a barrier between the object to be viewed and the human viewer due to the process of microscopic image production. Generally, the microscopist would look through the microscope and sketch out an image of what was under the lens, translating what he saw onto paper; thus, images produced by microscopes were often met with disbelief or incredulity because of the need for technological mediation, resulting in microscopy being either irrelevant or inaccessible.

It was not until 1665 when Robert Hooke published his descriptions of 117 microscopic images in *Micrographia* that the general public in London grew to take an interest in microscopic imagery. The difference, as scholar Jordynn Jack writes, is that Hooke employed a "rhetorical framework that instructs readers *how* to view images in accordance with an ideological or epistemic program" (2009, 192). That is, readers had to be taught how to view microscopic images, and be persuaded to find it relevant. Jack terms what Hooke did in *Micrographia* as a "pedagogy of sight" (2009, 192) – by employing rhetorical strategies in his descriptions of microscopic images, Hooke conveyed a new paradigm of interpretation that instilled in readers a

sense of trust in microscopes to produce accurate representations of reality. Thus Hooke successfully convinced readers not to live solely by the sight of their own eyes, but by faith in microscopic technology, along with its translating microscopist.

This faith has certainly carried over to the present, three centuries later, where we take for granted the images produced by the microscope. Much of this is due to the continued enculturation of a pedagogy of sight, as well as increased accessibility, since many of us can recall looking through microscopes in our high school laboratory classes. Simplistically speaking, we trust optical microscopes because they operate on a similar basis as the human eye: by light. How the optical microscope sees is how we see, besides the fact that it has a greater magnifying ability. The optical microscope, then, is now rarely seen as a technological barrier to vision but rather a mere modification of it with a set of well-placed magnifying lenses.

For those of us who are surrounded by light every day, it is difficult to imagine seeing without it. Furthermore, if we wanted to see something smaller than a unit of light (photon), how would we even go about seeing it? These questions shifted microscopists to experimenting with electrons, one of the smallest units of matter known. Especially in light of such debates as the definition of the atomic model, as well as more contemporary discussions on nanotechnology, physicists were hard-pressed to develop the technology to be able to see the reality that was smaller than light itself. To be sure, they had the same exigence that microscopists did before Hooke's *Micrographia*; that is, how to make seeing beyond the visible light spectrum relevant? After all, many of us have swabbed the insides of our cheeks and seen those cells stained under high school laboratory microscopes, and only the select brilliant few have stayed the course. What would it be to us to see what even light cannot reach?

In 1981, physicists Gerd Binnig and Heinrich Rohrer developed the scanning tunneling microscope (STM), for which they would win the Nobel Prize in Physics five years later. Instead of using optical measures to collect data, the STM has a sharp tip only a few atoms in size, allowing it to graze over the surface of a sample and interact with the electromagnetic forces of the sample's electrons. The STM uses the phenomenon known as quantum tunneling, which is, as far as physicists know, unique to the nanoscopic level. Basically, the quantum mechanics of the interactions between the electrons of the STM's tip and the electrons on the sample surface are measured, collected as data, and then visualized. For the purposes of this thesis, however, the details of quantum tunneling are less important than its difference from the optics used by conventional optical microscopes.

Working with lenses, optical microscopes collect light as 'data,' that is, by using 'sight.' On the other hand, the STM data collection process is more akin to the phenomenon of touch. Theoretical physicist and feminist scholar Karen Barad explains: with touch, "there is no actual contact involved…but what you are actually sensing [when touching a mug], physicists tell us, is the electromagnetic repulsion between the electrons of the atoms that make up your fingers and those that make up the mug" (2014, 155). Similarly, what the STM does is collect the electromagnetic repulsions between its conducting tip and the sample surface as 'data,' that is, by 'touch,' and visualize it into presentable images. In other words, rather than seeing its shadows, we can understand the curvature of a ball by feeling its roundness in our hands. The production of the STM's imagery, then, as opposed to that of optical microscopes, is by touch. Thus, the STM shows the shift in microscopy from a pedagogy of sight to a *pedagogy of touch* – that is, a rhetorical framework that teaches us to think and speak by touching.

It is important to note that the images produced by the STM are digitally visualized. Since the STM measures the electromagnetic interactions between electrons of the STM and that of sample surfaces, its imagery is computer-generated, and hence are not necessarily representative of what the surface might 'look' like. To be clear, this is the main difference between the pedagogy of sight and the pedagogy of touch: while the pedagogy of sight teaches viewers to see visual representations as what things might actually 'look' like, a pedagogy of touch does not. Instead, it teaches readers to experience, create, and manipulate – accuracy of representation is not ultimately the point of pedagogies of touch.

Where a pedagogy of sight emphasizes accuracy through representability, a pedagogy of touch emphasizes accuracy through *manipulability*. Take advertising for example: ads often do not aim to represent a current reality, but to create one where their product becomes a necessity. Manipulation, in these cases, are enacted on the desires of the audience. For STM imagery, scholar Valerie Hanson writes, "the "artists" (the scientists who created this image) point out quite explicitly how they have not discovered this "landscape" but instead have created it" – that is, "the image works against the convention, especially through the emphasis on the user's hand in creating the space. Thus emphasis is communicated in particular through the artists'…mention of "complete control"" (2012, 67). This admittance of manipulation seems to have taken a positive connotation, alluding more towards artistry and collaboration. In other words, using the data collected by the STM, scientists create an imagistic reality for the reader to explore, thus presenting a pedagogy of touch.

What this thesis seeks to do, then, is to shift this theory into the purview of language, considering words as material that is touched, felt, grasped, experienced, lived in. To be sure, touching language is also to be touched by language, rather than just read it as words on a page

or screen, or hear it spoken or sung. But what might it mean to be touched by language? Perhaps language already affects us as much as a warm breath that seems to creep ever so slowly down the back of your neck, or the brush of soft lips on your cheek, or the familiar tautness of your mother's embrace after she had not seen you for too long – moments so wordless and fragile that we fear articulating would scare them away. This exploration hopes to shed light on how and why we touch language, sometimes grasping for words the way we move through pitch black rooms reminding us we have not always used our eyes to see the blurred boundaries that voices and words, so lined and defined, often seem to forget.

Consider Gertrude Stein's short poem "A Carafe, that is a Blind Glass":

A kind in glass and a cousin, a spectacle and nothing strange a single hurt color and an arrangement in a system to pointing. All this and not ordinary, not unordered in not resembling. The difference is spreading. (1946, 407)

The poem begins with its title, setting a carafe up as a "Blind Glass." To consider it grammatically, we might question whether Stein means the glass itself to be blind, or a glass that makes one blind. The latter would perhaps contrast the carafe with a looking glass, that is, a mirror, the difference being implied that one allows 'sight' while the other causes 'blindness.'

Stein then refers to the carafe as "A kind in glass and a cousin" – perhaps the carafe is glass that is molded in such a way that would look like a "cousin" to other forms of glass, becoming "a spectacle" of glass and yet "nothing strange" since a carafe is used by many every day. The word "spectacle," however, could also refer to the spectacles one wears in aid of faulty vision. In that case, the implication would be that a carafe, that is, a "Blind Glass," would paradoxically aid one in seeing. But what is it that Stein sees or wants us to see? She continues without punctuation to "a single hurt color and an arrangement in a system to pointing," the

"hurt" perhaps referring to what is seen when one looks through a carafe and sees a distorted reality. It is interesting to note that Stein never clearly states or even implies what is seen through the carafe or what it is "pointing" to, which leads us to consider the emphasis of the poem is not in what she sees through the carafe, that is, a "Blind Glass," but the "arrangement" itself. Taken in that sense, rather than being about a carafe, the poem is about being blinded by a carafe.

But perhaps we might not need to think about a literal carafe. The carafe is not the only arrangement in the poem that is "not ordinary, not unordered in not resembling" – if a carafe is glass that is molded as a "Blind glass," then a poem is language that is similarly composed to 'blind.' And in being blinded, then, as Stein suggests, poetry might be a "spectacle" of language that aids in our faulty vision of language itself. What a literal carafe does with light, spreading the "difference" with refractive and diffractive properties of glass, poetry does with language. Through differing and 'hurting' conventional syntax and sentence structure in her poem, Stein exposes the fragile nature of language just as a carafe exposes the fragile nature of the reality we see. Her poem uses language in a way that is "cousin" to convention, making it a "spectacle" in both meanings of the word. In the same way, the poem's own structure is "not unordered in not resembling," revealing itself to be "an arrangement in a system to pointing."

What Stein does, then, is involve herself in the carafe, experiencing it through her senses, and then reproducing the experience with language. In other words, her poem itself is a carafe, that is, a blind glass, in the sense that when it is read, our perspective on language is distorted. This is done in the poem not by telling us about a difference in perception, but by moving us through the language in a way that literally reads differently. The lyricism of Stein's poem, that is, the affect of its language, makes us perform the language in a way that contrasts from the norm. In other words, what we do, intentionally or not, when reading is *touch* the words – as

Karen Barad explains in physical terms: because touch is a repulsion of electromagnetic forces, we feel the friction of language when reading the poem, which encourages us to read language in an entirely different fashion.

I propose that poetry has always encouraged us towards utilizing a sense of touch, both metaphorically and literally, in understanding and interacting with the world around us. Specifically, the lyricism of poetry, as seen with Stein, teaches us to read and grasp language in a different way than the imagery that words often evoke by a pedagogy of sight. Instead of words being representative or symbolic, I posit that lyricism is more akin to how we physically interact with the world – by grasping, grazing, and moving in it. That is, lyric poetry is a collaborative manipulation with and of language in order to create pieces of art that are read through pedagogies of touch. To show that touch as a metaphor for reading and learning is not unfounded, the rest of this introduction will be spent grounding the methodology of this thesis in contemporary developments of critical theory.

For a feminist science lens, Karen Barad's *Meeting the Universe Halfway* will be drawn from to show that boundaries and definitions are based in instability, proving that words are not mere static representations but fluid beings that are more indeterminate than we think. Linda Tuhiwai Smith's *Decolonizing Methodologies* will provide a postcolonial basis for analysis to show that to read by touching is effectively, for the reader, to be touched back. Lastly, since this thesis is by nature a literary analysis, Timothy Yu's *Race and the Avant-Garde* will ground the methodological theory in showing how poetic language utilizes a pedagogy of touch to subvert literary and linguistic conventions. These bases serve not only to credit and support the theory of the pedagogy of touch, but also to suggest its wide-ranging, hence transdisciplinary, implications. For the scope of this thesis, however, application of the theory will be limited to the realm of

language, later chapters focusing specifically on the works of Anne Carson and Theresa Cha. Of course, "limited to the realm of language" means as much or as little as the rising and the falling of waves on a western coast.

To be or not to be: a feminist perspective

In a Western context especially, language has often been taken to refer to communication through objects that carry meaning. That is, for instance, words are abstract representations of an inherently independent reality. This representationalist mindset has much of its roots in philosophies of the Enlightenment period which purported objectivist and logical hierarchies as ultimate ideals. The French language, for example, developed according to what was deemed the most rational word order, while the empiricism of the British pushed the English language toward representational realism, where words were meant to describe an external reality as accurately as possible (Leavitt 2010).

The concept of teaching words as meaning-carriers is quite apparent in many language instruction classes. For example, in a Spanish class for English-speaking students, the word *perro* is taught to mean the English equivalent of 'dog.' As true as that is, what is often not considered is how the words (or languages) differ in what they do. In other words, although *perro* and *dog* represent a similar reality, they communicate differently. Consider the roll of the r's in *perro* in comparison to the word *dog*: the tongue roll is a physical activity that the English speaker does not have to perform in order to communicate 'dog' – in this case, the Spanish speaker literally feels the word *perro* through the flapping of the tip of the tongue on the bridge of the mouth, while the English speaker feels the glottal stop at the end of *dog*. In other words, there are physiological and corresponding neurological differences when speaking various languages, affecting the mindsets and frameworks of respective speakers (Foley 1997). To be clear, I am not implying that biological habituation or sociolinguistic enculturation are wholly deterministic, but I am merely pointing out that they are among many factors that influence

cognition. We might think this difference is merely aesthetic, but, especially in the literary field, we need not think aesthetic to be mere.

To relate, teaching words as mere meaning-carriers allude to a pedagogy of sight, or representationalism; that is, to the English-speaker, *perro* represents the word *dog,* rather than an actual dog. To a Spanish-speaker, *perro* refers to an actual dog, while to the English-speaker, *perro* refers to the word *dog*, which then refers to an actual dog. The extra step in linking meanings forms a distance almost contradictory to verbal communication. It is an abstract corresponding to another abstract, a presumption that everything translates, tongue rolls and all. Perhaps, then, words do not just represent meaning, but also sing impression and feeling, a history of flapping tongues, even triggering memories, say, of a dog from childhood. They communicate what can only be physically felt, touched. To be fair, it is difficult to think of a way to teach language in a classroom other than representation and correspondence, but maybe it is the classroom model itself that already presumes abstract distancing.

In her book *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, Karen Barad draws from various feminist and poststructural theorists to critique representationalism. She questions the assumptions we make when approaching issues of epistemology and how we trust that we know what we know, showing that "representations are presumed to serve a mediating function between independently existing entities. This taken-for-granted ontological gap generates questions of the accuracy of representations. For example, does scientific knowledge accurately represent an independently existing reality? Does language accurately represent its referent?" (2007, 47). As a physicist herself, questions of accuracy have immediate ramifications in issues ranging from experimentation to analysis to communication. As she points out, however, "the asymmetrical faith we place in our access to representation over things is a historically and culturally

contingent belief that is part of Western philosophy's legacy and not a logical necessity; that is, it is simply a Cartesian habit of mind" (2007, 49). She also refers to philosopher of science Joseph Rouse, who "identifies representationalism as a Cartesian byproduct – a particularly inconspicuous consequence of the Cartesian division between "internal" and "external" that breaks along the line of the knowing subject" (2007, 48). What Barad proposes instead is a feminist approach to 'knowing' that considers both epistemological and ontological aspects, saying that "A performative understanding of scientific practices, for example, takes account of the fact that knowing does not come from standing at a distance and representing but rather from *a direct material engagement with the world*" (2007, 49). To be clear, the STM, as we have seen above, operates directly and materially with its sample surface, quite literally creating nanoscopic images by touch. We can abstract this phenomenon and link it to Barad's idea of 'knowing' by "*direct material engagement*," thus formulating a theory of a direct and material engagement with language as a pedagogy of touch.

Barad develops her theoretical basis by drawing from what she terms the philosophy-physics of Niels Bohr, who made significant contributions to the development of quantum physics in the early twentieth century. She forms a framework in which "the real issue is one of *indeterminacy*, not uncertainty…[Bohr] understands the reciprocal relation between position and momentum in *semantic* and *ontic* terms, and only derivatively in epistemic terms (i.e., we can't know something definite about something for which there is nothing definite to know)" (2007, 118). In other words, the philosophical implications of quantum physics effectively undermines Cartesian presumptions that take reality as inherently independent of representation. Quantum logic, then, as opposed to Cartesian logic, is what Barad extrapolates from Niels Bohr's philosophy-physics. Where Cartesian logic bases itself on the accuracy of representation,

quantum logic "shifts the focus from questions of correspondence between descriptions and reality (e.g., do they mirror nature or culture?) to matters of practices, doings and actions" (2007, 135). The implications of such a logic, instead of asking what something *means*, would lead to asking what something *does*.

To put it in a more specific and relevant context, the indeterminacy of representation that Barad suggests extends to language and words, which features most prominently in poetry. Specifically, she says, "For Bohr, things do not have inherently determinate boundaries or properties, and words do not have inherently determinate meanings" (2007, 138). A poetics based on a pedagogy of touch, then, would not assume that the words in poetry are ultimately determinable in form and content, since it is similarly not concerned with representational accuracy in the first place. As Barad writes, "The assumption that language is a transparent medium that transmits a homologous picture of reality to the knowing mind finds its parallel in a scientific theory that takes observation to be the benign facilitator of discovery, a transparent lens passively gazing at the world" (2007, 97). To be sure, Barad uses the words 'homologous,' 'benign,' and 'passively' to emphasize conditions of reality that we have come to presume as determined. On the other hand, a pedagogy of touch operates from a basis of indeterminacy, focusing more on what words are doing.

From the basis that Barad suggests, then, poetry is a non-representationalist use of language that subverts classical assumptions that words are mere representations of some external and independent reality. In other words, poetry uses a *quantum language*; more technically, poetic language extrapolates from a quantum logical mindset that presumes the ontological gap between representation and the represented to be illusory, rather than a classically Cartesian logic which presumes the same gap to be distinct. As Barad makes clear:

> For Bohr, the relation between knower and known is much more intimate than either the notion of intervention or even the shift from sight to touch suggests: the distance is not a prerequisite for objectivity, and even the notion of proximity takes separation too literally. Bohr argues that quantum physics teaches us the belief in an inherent fixed Cartesian distinction between subject and object is an unfounded prejudice of the classical worldview… (2007, 359)

Consequently, poetry teaches readers the possibility of movement through language by taking its definitions and boundaries to be fluid and porous to begin with, words that have fluid and *indeterminate definition*. That is not to say the content and meaning of poems are eschewed, but are seen only to be a *part* of reading, not the whole of it. Just as throwing a ball necessarily involves a ball to be thrown, reading a poem necessarily involves the words to be read. However, a ball is caught not only by seeing its arc but also by extending a hand and grasping. Methodologically speaking, literary examples in further chapters will analyze aspects of poetry where the language teaches us to grasp. To use the brief analysis of Stein's poem previously mentioned, the word "Blind" in the title is indeterminate in that it refers to the carafe as something blind, yet in the context of the poem implies that it is the carafe that blinds, and that we 'see' with blindness. What paradoxical inarticulations abound, and what else can we do in that landscape of language but to grasp for words as we would air.

Everytime we touch: a postcolonial perspective

As feminist theories bear roots in subverting hierarchical structures that impose the superiority of the masculine with an objectivist rationale, postcolonial theory attempts to subvert the dominance imposed on what was classified as 'savage' or abnormal, that is, 'other,' on the rationale of cultural superiority. Although it might have had good intent, the colonial mindset presumes a superiority that is based on the linearity of cultural progression. In other words, the 'civilized' or 'modern' us are assumed to have come so far as to have broken away from our 'primitive' past. However, as poststructural theorists such as Michel Foucault and Ashis Nandy have pointed out, the presumption of modern superiority finds its basis in objectivist methodologies that have come to be taken for granted. Thus, in her book *Decolonizing Methodologies*, indigenous researcher and educator Linda Tuhiwai Smith critiques objectivist research, specifically in the social and anthropological sciences, and attempts to develop postcolonial research methodologies that seek to collaborate with communities in research, rather than exploit them. As a descendant of the Maori, who are the native people of the Australian continent, and a product of Western education, Tuhiwai Smith has much experience in being both the researcher and the researched.

In her book, she recounts academic courses and research projects she undertook in her career alongside stories and perspectives from her families on the experience of being studied. What she finds is a certain one-sidedness that emerges from the distance and separation usually employed by researchers; this objectivist methodology, she acknowledges, is neither intentional nor malicious, but rather taken for granted in the legacy of a Western education (2012, 44-47). Consequently, even though researchers have good intent, their methodologies ultimately have bases and aims of representing indigenous peoples as 'other,' which, since interpreted from a

presumptively objective perspective, subtly undermines and silences the voices of the indigenous peoples themselves. To be sure, Tuhiwai Smith does not seek to merely critique the social sciences and expose their implicitly colonial methods, but instead, being a social scientist herself, aims to help the social sciences do what they were always meant to do: gather accurate and relevant information to learn about and from different cultures.

Therefore, in an attempt to reconcile the discrepancies of objectivist research, she writes: "Indigenous methodologies tend to approach cultural protocols, values and behaviour as an *integral* part of methodology. They are 'factors' to be *built into* research explicitly…" (2012, 15; emphases mine). What decolonized research methodologies emphasize, then, is the involution of indigenous perspectives into research practices. In other words, Tuhiwai Smith suggests that research on indigenous peoples should involve the voices of the indigenous people in how they want to be represented, that they should affect the research as much as it affects them. To put it another way, where an eye sees by its own perception, able to gaze from a distance, touch necessarily involves something that touches back; the toucher is also touched, giving grounds for the responsibility, or response-ability, of both parties. If we shifted this methodology onto language, which is our primary object of research, employing a metaphor of touch realizes the agency that is due to language as much as it is to language users.

Furthermore, Tuhiwai Smith writes, "The critical issue with insider research is the constant need for reflexivity. At a general level insider researchers have to have ways of thinking critically about their processes, their relationships and the quality and richness of their data and analysis" (2012, 138). As opposed to reflectivity in pedagogies of sight, that is, the researcher represents the researched according to how much semblance it bears to her or his own appearance (culture, behavior, language, etc.), pedagogies of touch emphasize reflexivity.

Naturally, reflex is a haptic response; Tuhiwai Smith calls for the researcher to realize that s/he is also being affected by research, and since the cause-effect relationship is often difficult to determine, their data and analysis should be considered with regards to researcher experience as well. In other words, research should include subjective experiences of both the researcher and the researched.

It might be appropriate at this point to relate Tuhiwai Smith's methodological reflexivity to Karen Barad's quantum mechanical basis, which challenges linear cause-effect assumptions that come from classical Cartesian thought structures. Barad reads the work of the physicist Niels Bohr, analyzing the epistemological implications that come with the observable effects of quantum physics. The challenge to classical Newtonian physics, which operates on the basis of some inherent nature of matter, comes when experiments produce ontological variations of light according to the experimental apparatus – that is, light is shown as a particle in one circumstance, as a wave in another. The seeming duality of the nature of light, then, questions whether light has an inherent observable nature. As Barad writes, Bohr concludes by attributing the objective nature(s) of light according to the experimental apparatus that produces its observable nature; consequently,

> While claiming that his analysis forces him to issue a final renunciation of the classical ideal of causality, that is, of strict determinism, Bohr does not presume that this entails overarching disorder, randomness, or an outright rejection of the cause-and-effect relationship. Rather, he suggests that our understanding of the terms of that relationship must be reworked: "The feeling of volition and the demand for causality are equally indispensable elements in the relation between subject and object which forms the core of the problem of knowledge" (Bohr 1963a [1929 essay], 117). (Barad 2007, 129-130)

The implications that Barad reads from Bohr's philosophical extrapolations from physics bear much resemblance to the argument that Tuhiwai Smith makes in reworking the relationship between researcher and researched, that is, subject and object. To relate this revision to language

and poetry would be to consider the material affectivity of language itself, and how we work with the text's language to produce what I propose to call *dramatic phenomena*. Since a pedagogy of touch considers our experience of language, the production of a drama, both perspectival and visceral, is the phenomenon whereby us readers are touched by language. How the poet does this is to write language in such a way to invite readers into his/her own drama.

For example, in "A Carafe, that is a Blind Glass," Gertrude Stein first involves herself reflexively in the experience of how a carafe distorts reality, then reproduces the experience by molding language into a 'carafe' that distorts reality. Consequently, the poem invites readers to experience language by moving them through the drama, that is, the composed "spectacle" of language. What Stein showed us is that language is as much a subject as it is an object, as fragile and fluid as our own whims. It can arrest our eyes and fix them on the page; it can wonder how the shape of each letter and word be-comes what we say and how we speak and give us pause when we think about where it came from and how we got to where we are now. Perhaps we would read and write and speak differently if we considered all the lives language had lived and all the deaths it had died and all it has to do with the curling of our lips and the tastes in our tongue and that it will be carved into our gravestones and even then it will be erased by the coming and going of the wind and the rain and our forgetfulness. The difference is between treading slowly through a pitch black room and thinking we can turn on the lights.

We have never been avant-garde: a literary perspective

If Barad shows the fluid space of logic produced by indeterminacy and Tuhiwai Smith shows the reflexive and affective nature of research and reading, Timothy Yu's analysis of Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictée* in his literary critique *Race and the Avant-Garde* concentrates the proposed theory of pedagogies of touch into the realm of literature. In his book, Yu questions the distinctions between "experimental" writing and "ethnic" writing, specifically Asian American poetry, claiming that the divisions are enforced by cultural standards. He grounds his argument by tracing avant-garde expressions through the Beat writers' preoccupations with representing identity and Eastern culture, using Allen Ginsberg's "Howl" and "Wichita" as examples of the inseparable relationship between identity and experimentation. Yu shows that Ginsberg does indeed use form and aesthetic to express identity by focusing on the cataloguing of human experience in his poems, reminiscent of Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself," where the aesthetic experience moves the reader through differing identities. Yu then shifts his focus to the Language poets who sought to diminish authorial identity in order to focus purely on language itself and its expression through aesthetic. With Ron Silliman's *Ketjak*, however, Yu shows that even with formal resistance to self-identification, Silliman's identity as a white working-class man can still be discerned through his observations, therefore unable to detach from authorial content completely.

The inseparability of identity (ethnic or cultural) from aesthetic experimentation leads Yu to propose Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictée* as a continuous oscillation between experience and abstraction both in form and content. On one hand, the content of Cha's work moves progressively from historical and experiential accounts to abstract contemplations and meditations; on the other hand, the language Cha uses moves from a distant accounting of events

to a lyrical experience of language itself. Yu considers this literary progression in light of Cha's history. Born in South Korea, where she spent much of her childhood, Cha moved to the United States with her family in the early 1960's. She eventually attended the University of San Francisco, and then the University of California, Berkeley, where she studied art and literature and became a writer. However, even as a Korean American, the work of "Cha was neglected by Asian American critics through most of the decade in large part because a text with so many "experimental" features could not be understood as Asian American in its concerns" (2009, 102). However, Yu refers to Robert Siegle, who recognizes *Dictée* as "its narrator's effort to open a cultural window in order to ring out the full resonance of the voice of her personal, family, national, racial, and gender histories"" (Yu 2009, 112). In other words, the aesthetic experimentation Cha employs in *Dictée* is an attempt to voice the Asian American experience and identity through form.

Yu then refers to Juliana Spahr, saying that "just as *Dictée* thematizes decolonization through its depiction of Korean history, it enacts decolonization through the reading processes its form encourages" (Yu 2009, 121). Yu makes clear, however, that he ultimately disagrees with Spahr's conclusions of Cha's style. Where Spahr reads *Dictée* as a unity of form and content, and consequently of identity and linguistic experimentation, Yu reads the fragmentary nature of *Dictée* as "a way of keeping these two paradigms in productive tension, always visible but never resolved" (2009, 122). This distinction is important especially when considering Yu in relation to Barad and Tuhiwai Smith: Barad's indeterminacy is based on fluid movement through tension, while Tuhiwai Smith's reflexivity is based on a continual interactivity that leads to perpetual self-awareness. In other words, Cha's fragmented writing is itself an inarticulation that speaks quite loud and clear.

More vital and relevant to this thesis, however, is that Yu locates language as a space to destabilize dominant thought structures. He explains a section of *Dictée* where Cha refers to Japan as an abstract enemy of the colonized Koreans: "The colonizer, Cha argues, presents itself to the colonized through language. For all the force of its repressive apparatus, the imperial power's most insidious presence is within the structures of language themselves" (2009, 131). That is, as I will show in a later chapter, Cha shifts the concept of language as merely an abstract entity of communication to a force so concrete as to be able to colonize a whole people – to be sure, it is because of the universality due to the abstractness of language that gives it such material power. Thus, Yu recognizes the blurred and indeterminate distinction between the abstract and the experiential in the space of Cha's language, and that language's tangible and physical effects left unchecked could produce dire consequences. To be clear, we have also seen these implications in Barad's commentary on scientific experimentation and Tuhiwai Smith's critique of research methodology.

As Yu continues, "For Cha, then, politics must be first and foremost a question of language, and thus it is writing that must provide the basis for any attempt to resist domination" (2009, 132). It seems that resistance usually bears much weight when it comes to considering physical domination and colonization, circumstances that are usually seen as long past in modern society; however, as both Yu and Tuhiwai Smith acknowledge, colonization also has roots in psychological and linguistic oppression. An example Cha refers to early on in *Dictée* is that Koreans under Japanese occupation were prohibited from speaking their native tongue in lieu of the Japanese language. Yu explains that the "colonial relationship thus "becomes abstract" by moving onto the terrain of writing, language, and linguistic structure, where it becomes all the more insidious because it is no longer explicitly attached to markers of race and nation" (2009,

131). Thus, Cha considers the force of language through her language, and it is from this basis that I suggest the language of poetry as a subversion of dominating linguistic and thought structures.

Since poetic language employs a pedagogy of touch, "it becomes possible to intervene in material existence through language, through writing" (Yu 2009, 132). Furthermore, to include the theories of Barad and Tuhiwai Smith would consider the distinction between form and content to be indeterminate, and the relationship between the reader and the text to be interactive. Thus, the intervention of poetry, as Yu suggests, would encourage *lyric subversion*, or the movement of the mind from one framework or perspective to another. Methodologically speaking, analysis of literature in later chapters will consider aspects of poetry and poetics that seem to speak against certain linguistic and academic conventions.

To use "A Carafe, that is a Blind Glass" again as an example, what Stein does both in form and content reveals the fragile nature of language, thus challenging linguistic conventions. By utilizing a carafe both literally and metaphorically, and then distorting the syntax of her language, Stein encourages us to follow her in subverting the norms of language. In further analysis, specific attention will be paid to how the language and form encourages readers to shift modes of thought along with the lyrical speaker, allowing them to resist being stuck in dominant structures by experiencing emotions and mindsets outside of themselves. Another way to think about lyrical subversion is to involve the quantum theoretical basis that Barad uses. That is, the quantum language used by poetry encourages the reader to think with a quantum logical mindset, challenging conventional binary structures of classical (Cartesian) logic.

Conclusion

In exploring the facets and implications of a pedagogy of touch in language, my goal is not to produce a totalizing theory by which literary and rhetorical studies can impose structural analyses on other fields, as has been attempted by movements like the epistemological or linguistic turns. Certainly, such movements have brought to light concerns and issues that scholars had overlooked. But perhaps they might have been as limiting as their predecessors were since proposing certain methodologies, be it epistemological or linguistic or rhetorical, as superior and more encompassing than other methodologies still posits the static hierarchy that the humanities desire to break away from. To be sure, a decolonized methodology as Linda Tuhiwai Smith proposes is not contradictory or antithetical to those which are fundamentally 'colonial,' but instead is an acknowledgement of the limits of such. In other words, rather than overriding certain perspectives over others (e.g. colonized vs. colonizers), the basis from which I would proceed is one that questions the presumptions of objectivity that distinguish a perceived us-them binary in the first place. Thus, it is more so a reformation of methodology from an attitude of exclusivity to an inclusive one.

It is with these thoughts in mind that my thesis seeks to remember the academic field of English. To be clear, it does not seek to totalize the variety of aspects and disciplines under some singular theory or ideal, but to celebrate the differences that each discourse can contribute to the creative pursuits of academia. I do not mean 'creative' only in the sense of what is commonly taken to be artistic production, but more so the productive consequences that follow from exploration, curiosity, and wonder – perhaps this definition is ambiguous enough to provide a plane off which all academia might launch.

The pedagogy of touch, then, as I have suggested before, is not a product of evolution toward some ideal, but what I argue is a cultural adaptation to extenuating circumstances, what Foucault would call conditions of exteriority. For the scope of this thesis, I focus on how a pedagogy of touch is shown and affected in language through poetry using three criteria of analysis. The first, indeterminate definition, posits that the language in poetry resists semantic definition in order to create a fluid space that readers can enter. The second, dramatic phenomena, suggests that poetic language allows readers to be affected, both intellectually and viscerally, by the reflexivity that dramatization employs. The third criterion, lyric subversion, considers the ability of the language in poetry to shift readers from one mindset to another, encouraging exploration and curiosity. In other words, I will show how poetry touches language, touches the reader, and consequently allows the reader to touch the world.

To investigate the range of literature influenced by pedagogies of touch, the works of two contrasting writers will be analyzed. Chapter 2 will focus on the works of academic scholar Anne Carson, who shows the fragility and fluidity of the language we use. Specifically, I will review literature regarding instances of touch, and a progression of her reading of Sappho (Fragment 31). I argue that by using poetic language and form in a presumptively academic setting, Carson seeks to subvert expectations of literary analysis and academics towards a methodology that is more personal and explorative while still employing conventional academic techniques. Chapter 3 will focus on the writing of Korean American writer Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, specifically the section "Lyric Poetry" in *Dictée*, connecting identity with language. Through analysis of the text, as well as how it relates to my personal experience, I argue that Cha employs a lyrical use of language to produce friction between the individual and the political, subverting the latter to

show the fluidity of identity that escapes definition. In doing so, she ultimately teaches the reader a different way of reading, one that puts us in touch with language and, consequently, reality.

To tie the two writers together with the basis of language as a pedagogy of touch, Chapter 4 will provide a brief conclusion of the thesis, including further speculation on the implications of the proposed theory, especially regarding Barad's quantum interpretation applied to other fields. A praxiography of cultural shifts is crucial if we are to remain relevant amidst the rapidly changing environment of the twenty-first century. My hope with this thesis is to produce a creative piece of writing that dissolves disciplinary boundaries such that anyone academically inclined, since this is written in an academic context, might find application in a multitude of pursuits. Especially with cybernetic and virtual innovations in technology, as well as the increasing territorialization of the seemingly infinite space of the internet, notions of reality and possibility are being challenged every day. Perhaps this has always been the case, our imaginations always being vaster than anything we have produced, history always seeming as static as words we read on a page. But perhaps words on a page have never been static either.

Chapter 2: A (Re)touch of (Re)vision

In *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, Karen Barad considers the implications of the ambiguous behavior of light: in one experimental setup, it acts as a particle, and another, a wave. In other words, light is *defined* in how it is set up (2007, 296). Barad also considers the discrepancies between Albert Einstein's *definition* of 'physical reality' and that of Niels Bohr and how it leads to differing concerns and ways of thinking (2007, 126-7). Barad herself consistently attempts to re*define* what, in many definitions of the word, counts as meaningful results in experimentation (e.g. pp. 146, 197, 206, 253, 343). I find it curious when writers of any field define a certain word or concept to begin – in this way, they gain power over the word or concept in how they want to use it, and in how they want us readers to understand them. On the other hand, they show the fragility and fluidity of our languages – how they rise and fall in rhythm and time, and whimper and flow with sound misaligned, twisting and turning and breaking and burning with the whim of our words that are never enough.

It might be fitting, then, to view our world as if it were always somewhat ill-defined. Even sitting alone at the summit of some mountain on a cloudless day everything could appear quite still and static. Everything quiet and silent and the foliage covering the valleys beneath looking like a dark green wave frozen mid-rise in such a way that the shades of sky blue blend in gradually to make no eternal horizon; we could misperceive the ground underneath to be solid and never moving and that we were just happened upon by a piece of scenic painting. It is interesting that scenery is sometimes described as 'like a painting.' Something that ends with its canvas and is captured with still and dried paint, each hue beginning with the end of each ill-definition.

Of course, even sitting still we believe that at the very least the Earth we stand on spins and moves through space; so, logically speaking, we are always moving, always changing. If we considered the Ship of Theseus, and wondered whether new cells replacing old cells in our bodies meant that we were being reformulated every second of every day, being made new, we can say we are different people one second to the next. Yet our eyes deceive us – if a tree appears neither moving nor changing, we believe it to be still and static. Beyond what we see, however, we find cells continually dying and being renewed; trees grow and decay. If we closed our eyes, sat still and listened, we could feel our bodies changing by the second, our reflexes adapting and reacting all that is around us, constantly dying and being reborn. We might say the body were revising, each movement a beginning again. And the next a beginning again again. And what if we extended this idea to view our world as if it were in constant revision?

In her "Poetry," Marianne Moore writes:

I, too, dislike it: there are things that are important beyond all
                                                this fiddle.
          Reading it, however, with a perfect contempt for it, one
                                                discovers in
          it after all, a place for the genuine.
                    Hands that can grasp, eyes
                    that can dilate, hair that can rise
                      if it must, these things are important not because a

high-sounding interpretation can be put upon them but because
                                                they are
          useful. When they become so derivative as to become
                                                unintelligible,
          the same thing may be said for all of us, that we
                    do not admire what
                    we cannot understand: the bat
                              holding on upside down or in quest of something to

eat, elephants pushing, a wild horse taking a roll, a tireless wolf
                                                under
          a tree, the immovable critic twitching his skin like a horse that
                                                feels a flea, the base-

ball fan, the statistician--
nor is it valid
    to discriminate against "business documents and

school-books"; all these phenomena are important. One must
    make a distinction
however: when dragged into prominence by half poets, the
    result is not poetry,
nor till the poets among us can be
    "literalists of
    the imagination"—above
    insolence and triviality and can present

for inspection, "imaginary gardens with real toads in them,"
    shall we have
it. In the meantime, if you demand on the one hand,
the raw material of poetry in
    all its rawness and
    that which is on the other hand
    genuine, you are interested in poetry. (Moore 1967, 266-7)

Moore explains that there is a fine line between poetry that uses elaborate and sophisticated

description to sound elaborate and sophisticated, and poetry that attempts to use language in a

useful manner: "Hands that grasp, eyes/ that can dilate, hair that can rise" – these are things that

we understand, but, as Moore says, we sometimes put upon it a "high-sounding interpretation,"

turning it "derivative as to become unintelligible." On the other hand, the way poetry tries to use

language is akin to "Hands that grasp, eyes/ that can dilate, hair that can rise," that is, actions

themselves: words that *touch*. She elaborates this theory by continuing to list actions, from

animal behavior to human behavior to the statistician, whose profession is perhaps to actively

quantify and derive so as to understand.

However, in describing the list, Moore's language itself becomes more and more

"derivative"; she recognizes this mid-poem and catches herself in the act with a dash. What

comes after the dash is the contrasting thought that it might not be fair to invalidate "business

documents and school-books," in quotation perhaps because they are textual commonplaces that seek to describe and explain and understand. They too are useful, even if their language is often academic and "derivative." Statisticians too are genuine, even if their language is often quantified and "unintelligible." With the poetic break, we see Moore struggling between the inarticulable (what is useful) and the act of articulation. In other words, she tries to articulate what is useful, but in articulating finds herself "derivative" in triviality (i.e. "fiddle"). Thus, in the poem, her mind attempts to justify her language by validating "business documents and school-books" in their utility. The assumption that she struggles with, then, is how poetry describes something useful without becoming "derivative" and "unintelligible": how to say what cannot be said.

The rest of the poem is another attempt of articulation, explaining that poets should be "literalists of the imagination" who put to language "imaginary gardens with real toads in them." But might a statistical graph not be a literalized imagination, and might, say, a thesis not be a garden with concrete concepts, warts and all? The fact that these phrases are in quotation posits that Moore is trying to explain without explaining. She understands the utility of poetry, but cannot bear to explain it so as to reduce it, at least not in her own words, hence quoting Yeats or a billboard ad, etc. In a sense, what Moore proposes is, according to scholar Bonnie Costello, quite tautological, where "We do have the peculiar illusion of an answer, by virtue of the very struggle of getting to this point" (1981). However, the very struggle Moore presents in this poem suggests that she writes this poem to herself more than to the reader – not as an act of communication, from subject to object, but an act of articulation, a subject to itself, made new: a self-revision. In fact, the poem itself self-revises.

To explain: Marianne Moore spent decades revising "Poetry" until it was cut down to three lines:

> I, too, dislike it.
>> Reading it, however, with a perfect contempt for it, one dis-
>>> covers in
>> it after all, a place for the genuine. (Moore 1967, 36)

If we applied the 'original' version of the poem to itself, that is, Moore's theory of poetry to Moore's "Poetry," this process of revision should come as no surprise. That is, if we applied Moore's poetics to Moore's poetry, this process of revision makes sense as part of Moore's poetics. If admiration for the inarticulable is articulated, "they become so derivative as to become unintelligible." On the other hand, "we/ do not admire what/ we cannot understand" – there are things we understand that are easily lost when we put them to words. Moore's three-decade revision of the 'original' "Poetry" (1935) to the three-lined "Poetry" (1967), however, shows an understanding that is articulated and then made inarticulable. Something said and then un-said: a revision. As Costello says, "Revision, whether within the text or between texts, is an essential part of Moore's aesthetic…the effect [of which] is always to make her subject (and her poem) unfamiliar, without allowing it to become alien" (1981). In other words, through her "Poetry," Moore turns the self into a self-as-other; an erasure of the self to be made new. This process of revision, Moore proposes, articulates the inarticulable.

Semantically, the word *revision* comes from the verb *revise*, which means, according to the Oxford Living Dictionaries, to "Reconsider and alter (something) in the light of further evidence" (Oxford Living Dictionaries). What I find very interesting is that the object in definition is labeled "something" and then also placed in parenthesis, making it doubly

ambivalent. This seems quite poetic on the part of lexicologists.[1] There is also a connotation *revision*, or re-*vision*, has with sight. It logically flows that the something-in-parenthesis is often taken to be the viewpoint of the see-er, the subject, since it is her or his vision that is re-visioned. On the other hand, when we actually practice revision, oftentimes for an essay or a report, it is the object that is the focus of the re-visioning – the object appears different afterward.

I want to question this relation *revision* has with sight. Etymologically speaking, *revise* comes from the Latin *reviser*, the prefix *re-* meaning 'again' and *visere* meaning 'to visit.' The act of visiting has little to do with sight, at least not directly; the common root visitation would have with sight in the Latin (*videre*) would be to use 'visit' in the sense of 'to go to see' – that is, for example, I visit my grandmother to go to see her. To revise then, from *revisere*, would be to re-visit rather than just to re-vision. If anything, *visere* would encompass sight and refer to more, visitation often involving the experience and/or relationship with someone or someplace, or, more accurately, (something). Perhaps the lexicologists were right to be so poetic.

Practically speaking, revision might be considered to be a re-touching of sorts, whereby both subject and object (if distinctions could even be so clearly delineated) are reconsidered and altered. Touch necessarily involves the friction created by at least two parties, involving "Hands that can grasp, eyes/ that can dilate, hair that can rise" (Moore 1967, 266).[2] Revision is the act of

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[1] I do not have any knowledge whatsoever on the processes that go into finalizing dictionary definitions, but the picture that comes to my mind shows various amounts of shrugging around a bar table followed by a more formal gathering where a gavel is involved.

[2] Notice how "eyes" are referred to dilate, rather than to see, which means 1) to make or become wider, larger, or more open, and 2) to speak or write at length on (a subject).* Again, with parentheses, the poetic lexicologists suggest 'subject' as topic and subject-in-question. More importantly, dilation is an action of the eye in revision according to the amount of light in the environment; thus, Moore refers to it as a reflex, which, naturally, approaches the realm of touch.
    *Unfortunately, these definitions are not from the Oxford English Dictionary, but from a Google search, so perhaps, to some eyes, bears less authority.

touching and re-touching language: the writer on the text; the text on the writer; the text on the reader; the reader the writer; and so on. At a broader level, what Marianne Moore's poetry shows us is that language is in constant flux, and revision is the negotiation between putting our reality into language and questioning if our language is in touch with reality. Perhaps, then, it might be quite accurate to say that our world is always revising, that is, -in-parenthesis: (somethings) that we make into some things.

If we abstracted this concept to say that our reality off the page is in constant revision, how we consequently adapt and get in touch with it is a matter of reflex, which is ultimately a matter of touch. As my thesis proposes, poetry uses a *pedagogy of touch* that teaches us a framework whereby we touch language, the world, and our selves. We have seen through Marianne Moore's revisions the struggles she had with articulating the inarticulable – her reflex in this case was to remove language in order to explain what cannot be said. To be sure, it took her over three decades of revision and negotiation with the world. What reading Moore's process of revision can teach us is that the world is in constant flux, always revising – it agrees with the earlier stated quantum theoretical basis which says that "things do not have inherently determinate boundaries or properties, and words do not have inherently determinate meanings" (Barad 2007, 138).[3]

To be fair, there is *not* no definition. As Moore shows by attempting to define poetry, definition comes through touch, as much as we find separation from each another by the feel of skins between us. In terms of language, "The imagination must continually catch itself in its complacencies and wipe away the smudge of accumulated thought. And the poem must have the

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[3] that is, *indeterminate definition*.

same effect on the reader: it must elude his settled understanding" (Costello 1981).[4] It is

interesting to note that Costello assumes the "settled understanding" of the reader, which

certainly makes sense since there is rarely a moment when we can think of anything we are

wrong about. Costello also pits "imagination" up with "accumulated thought," that is, subjective

ideation as opposed to objective standards. Since imagination is largely individual, what poetry

does, if done well, is engage the imagination of the reader to upset what is commonplace and

taken for granted. In our eyes, things often appear very still and static; it is the work of poetry,

then, to challenge what we see by throwing us off our "little island of the articulable" (Robinson

2012, 21).[5]

This chapter will focus on how a *pedagogy of touch* is shown through the work of Anne

Carson, a contemporary poetic scholar who, similar to Moore, attempts to revise reality through

her language.

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[4] In other words, reading Moore's process of revision teaches readers to revise their own language and selves according to the changes in the world by bringing them through her process, that is, through *dramatic phenomena*.

[5] – in other words, through *lyric subversion*. Of course, subjective ideation comes from external inputs, and objective standards come from ideations of a collective of individuals; but the nuance is the discrepancy between points of stability, the former from the individual phenomenon, the latter toward some ideal or certain form.

Autobiography of Adjective: A Review in Translation

Perhaps Anne Carson's most well-known work is *Autobiography of Red*, where she revises the mythology of Heracles and the red-winged monster Geryon. Originally, Geryon is featured as the tenth labor of Heracles, where Heracles must retrieve the Cattle of Geryon. In Carson's version, inspired by Stesichorus' *Geryoneis*, it is Heracles who is featured in Geryon's story, where Geryon is a red-winged adolescent who copes with the world and his sexuality through photography. Instead of his cattle, Heracles steals Geryon's heart.

As scholar Dina Georgis puts it, in *Autobiography of Red*, Carson complicates the process of narration and the genre of biography by employing what she terms as "queer affects," that is, "the force of psychic revolt to the social logic, to teleology, and to certainty" (2014, 155).[6] Clearly, the work is not an autobiography of Geryon, nor is it an autobiography of Anne Carson herself, but, as the title suggests, an autobiography of "Red." Georgis notes Carson's use of adjectives as particularly subversive, "mak[ing] way for the aesthetic representation of unnamable intensities" (2014, 155). Carson's use of adjectives suggests a poetics that attempts to articulate the inarticulable and subvert definitions normally attributed to some noun – in other words, adjectives are revisions of reality.

The adjective most commonly used to describe Geryon is "red," which, because of its ambivalence and resistance to definition, represents a basis of indeterminacy that stabilizes in the various contexts Carson places him. This begs the irony of the title of the book, since it is not at all, in any conventional definition, an autobiography. By using "red," however, the autobiographical aspect of the work does indeed extend to Carson, as it does to the reader, since

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[6] This is a similar discrepancy between Niels Bohr's concept of *indeterminacy* and Heisenberg's *uncertainty principle* in quantum physics, which Karen Barad brings up in *Meeting the Universe Halfway*.

"red" is (something) in which we can all write ourselves. "Red" is mentioned extensively in the

fragments of Stesichorus' *Geryoneis*, but no explanation is given to what it even means,

becoming something-in-parenthesis. As Carson translates Stesichorus: "Geryon was a monster

everything about him was red/ Put his snout out of the covers in the morning it was red" (1998,

9), and so on. In fact, Carson's Geryon recognizes and reflects the metaphysical implications of

"red," saying "I will never know how you see red and you will never know how I see it" (1998,

105),[7] thus alluding to the difference in how each person might read this autobiography of red.

Carson captures this metaphysical conundrum in the ambiguous adjective "red," with which we

can revise ourselves to be more or less red, accordingly.

Scholar Monique Tschofen considers Carson's revision of Geryon's narrative as a

composition of fragments that highlights the fluidity of definition with its seemingly monstrous

form. She writes:

> This complex ambiguity is what Carson, in her commitment to a material, embodied
> deictic practice which has the potential to topple Cartesian abstraction, wishes to address
> when she invites us to manipulate the box and pull out and examine the fragments…
> (2004, 38)

Tschofen notices the attempts to invite readers to manipulate the text, just as Carson manipulates

mythology and language, in order to involve them in it. Besides the space created by the

ambivalence of, say, "red," Tschofen also terms Carson's adjectives as "synaestehtic," due to her

incorporation of Stesichorus' poetics, in which "The connotations and meanings of the images

change, depending on which senses the reader considers" (2004, 39). Thus, it not only

illuminates the lack of stability descriptions have in their seemingly objective (Cartesian)

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[7] It continues "But this separation of consciousness/ is recognized only after a failure of communication, and our
first movement is/ to believe in an undivided being between us…" (1998, 105), which points to revision and the
move toward indeterminacy.

relations to the nouns described, but also the response-ability readers have in stabilizing definition, even if it were moment to moment.

This ambivalence and responsibility extends to Carson's use (or lack) of photography, where "Many of Geryon's autobiographical photographs are technically impossible; framed by evocative titles and descriptions, they appear to picture things that cannot be seen with the eyes" (Tschofen 2004, 44). Since no photography is actually shown or depicted in the entire book,[8] it serves as a sort of something-in-parenthesis, just as "red," or Geryon himself, does. By doing this, Carson upsets mythological narrative not in the sense that she uses inaccurate sources and contexts to falsify a story, but rather uses fragments of Stesichorus' *Geryoneis* and takes what is not said to create (something) ambivalent in which readers inhabit photography, redness, and Geryon in its process of creation and revision. As Georgis writes, "Geryon's autobiography invites us into his cage and demands that we represent him from the encounter of having been drawn inside and from having been touched by his being" (2014, 165). Thus, what *Autobiography of Red* becomes, as Georgis and Tschofen suggest, is the autobiography of each reader as well – in some sense, we are all red-winged monsters.[9]

The use of ambivalence is also seen in *The Beauty of the Husband: A Fictional Essay in 29 Tangos*, where Carson tells the story of a wife's desire for her husband's 'beauty,' yet another adjective that is vague enough to write readers in. However, as scholar Maya Linden highlights, Carson's book has garnered some feminist commentary which critiques Carson's writing for

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[8] unless you consider the photograph on the front cover of the 1998 Knopf edition to be included, seeming to depict the volcano featured in later parts of the autobiography as "Red Patience" (Carson 1998, 51) – but, as written on the back cover, the front cover design is credited to one Carol Devine Carson, who was perhaps attempting to add her own autobiographical imprint to the mythology of (Anne) Carson.

[9] It might be interesting to some to note that in 2013, fifteen years after the publication of *Autobiography of Red*, Carson again revises (i.e. revisits) the mythology of Geryon in *Red Doc>*, shifting from adolescent to more 'grown-up' problems, and this time including actual Cattle.

depictions of masochistic feminine experience and "concentrates on the text's relevance to the author's own lived experience and its potentially negative effect on the feminist movement's achievements and progress, rather than exploring the aesthetic qualities of writing" (2014, 231). To be clear, Linden clarifies, in one of her footnotes,[10] the complexity of the feminist movement and does not eschew the work it has done thus far, instead seeking to investigate its boundaries so as to progress it further. Thus, she turns to Anne Carson's "heightened combination of aesthetic qualities" (2014, 231) to show how they do indeed speak into a wider context of feminism, specifically because of its unconventional form. Ultimately, Linden posits that with Carson's formal ambivalence, she "shift[s] focus from questions of feminist responsibility to those of postmodernist poetic possibilities" (2014, 233). In a sense, Carson revises feminism through the wife in *The Beauty of the Husband* because it speaks to the inclusion of "multiple and ambiguous" identities in a woman, rather than be constituted "according to their allegiance to, or away from, what is a political movement rather than an artistic alliance or moral position" (2014, 232).

As shown by Timothy Yu's reading of Theresa Cha's *Dictee* in the introductory chapter, Cha's aesthetic is similar to Anne Carson's in that they attempt to formally interrupt conventional interpretations of feminist, and specifically in Cha's case, Asian American, experiences. As Yu points out, Cha uses the structure of mythology to frame her personal

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[10] I find it quite interesting when writers use footnotes – they are intended, I think, to provide clarification without taking away from some flow of argument; but often there is more going on, especially if we were to look at it from the purview of a *pedagogy of touch*.

     For example, Linden's clarification in footnote does not just clarify her intentions, but places her as a voice in the narrative of the feminist movement; that is, it branches off from the 'main' narrative and implies (or creates) another. Furthermore, the fragmentation of footnotes, the detaching nature of its form, reminds us readers that she is an actual living force in this world, as much our written words often seem diminish. Footnotes, it seems, are explicit acts of intention, suggesting some underlying mind of a writer, revealing a hidden narrative of sorts; they are like cypress knees, roots that pop out of the ground to breathe fresh air, hinting at the massive tangled rhizomatic underneath. In this sense, they could lead up to the tree, but also could be followed to who knows where.

experiences, which many critics have read as her attempt to represent the female voice in what has been taken to be a conventionally patriarchal setting. Although this is a possibility, what Yu finds is that because Cha's form is so experimental and fluid, she "demonstrates an ambivalence toward the very structure of myth, suggesting that the mythic method organizing her own text cannot be regarded as final" (2009, 125). Furthermore, this theory extends to "Cha's construction of a Korean or Korean American identity that is multiple and shifting, not reducible to any single vector of identification" (2009, 128), thus showing how Cha's use of lyricism allows her to escape political constraints without completely removing herself from those contexts. In a manner akin to Cha, then, Carson's revisions of form and language show a poetic subversion of political thought structures by making definition ambivalent.

In a similar vein, Leah Souffrant considers Anne Carson's writings on desire, where she also finds Carson's ambivalent form intriguing: "When a writer turns away from elaborating on what is arguably central to a work, it is a curiosity" (2012, 68). What Souffrant highlights is the strength of the poetic, in its lyricism, to give space to the unsayable or inarticulable in order to invite us to participate and, if done well, revise. This lyricism is quite characteristic of Carson's work, especially in her essays, where she consistently "turns away from elaborating" – the effect of this "turn," as Souffrant acutely notes, is "curiosity": a loading of strangeness that ignites our desire to find out.

To be sure, Souffrant indicates that Carson's earlier work on *eros* applies this "turn" from the concept of desire, with both content and form,[11] in that it "is defined by its unlocatedness, because there is in eros always a movement, an energy between a this and a that, and it is in this _____ that we recognize the erotic" (2012, 68). Simplistically speaking, once we achieve what

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[11] This move, if form is taken to be "bodied," is a pedagogy of touch.

we desire, that force of desire disappears – thus, Carson's use of ambivalence articulates this

desire[12] by carefully circling around what is "arguably central."[13] This lyric dancing is also

evident in her later work *Decreation*, in which the title essay begins by revisiting Sappho. Dan

Disney notes that in "Decreation," "Carson maps speculative territories of selfhood" (2012, 28),

that is, Carson posits the self as other in an attempt to revise the concept of self.[14] She does not

explicitly state this, but instead involves the perspectives of Sappho, Marguerite Porete, and

Simone Weil to articulate this inarticulable contradiction: how can a self write as an other when

the self is the one who is writing? To relate, recall how Marianne Moore articulates the

inarticulable in "Poetry" by becoming an other to her self and erasing her words. This is similar

to Geryon's struggle to word himself in *Autobiography of Red*, from which Dina Georgis

concludes that "narration is always already relational because how we come to recognize our

own selves depends on how the other narrates it" (2014, 164).

In fact, writer Glenn Kurtz finds narration in his struggle with his brother's death by

reading Carson's 2002 translation of Sappho, *If Not, Winter*. In his essay "What Remains:

Sappho and Mourning," Kurtz writes about the flaws of remembering, in that he wants to

remember his brother "faithfully, not freely, to honor his memory, not play with it" (2010, 251).

The common ground he finds between his late brother and Sappho's work is that they are both

fragmented: gaps in memory, perhaps lost forever. What Carson does in her translation, however,

is "plac[e] the poems in an aesthetic of loss, opening their absences, rather than framing them"

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[12] What Souffrant refers to as "movement," "energy," and "_____" – (something)?

[13] Arguably, Anne Carson is noted for quoting Gertrude Stein in a Paris Review interview, saying: "Act so there is no use in a center."

[14] In terms of disrupting the Cartesian sense of self from the Enlightenment, Karen Barad would agree with Carson's formal move, saying that the 'self' is not "a special system separate from the natural processes that he or she observes, but rather one that seeks to understand the emergence of the "human" along with all other physical systems" (2007, 339).

(2010, 249) – that is, rather than attempting to complete the fragments, she accepts them in what is said and not said, her translation articulating the inarticulable. By articulating these absences, Carson translates Sappho in a way that brushes up against the limits of what is known and unknown. As Emily Carr writes in her commentary on Carson, it is a "doing and un-doing, not so much replacing one interpretation with another as suggesting that interpretation is itself a process of accumulation, of excavating possible meanings from the sediment of the original text" (2007, 93). Thus, through reading absences in his memory, Kurtz finds that "Memory cannot protect the dead from death…mak[ing] memory something other than a memorial, a still image, a still life" (2010, 254). In a very real sense, then, Carson's translation is a form of revision in which she touches the absences left by Sappho, giving them bodies and life.

What does she learn by touching these absences? What does she learn by writing them? And, more pertinent to this thesis, what might we learn from exploring these blank spaces, these revisions and contradictions and inarticulations? I am quite intrigued by Carson's revisitations of Sappho, and so I will spend the rest of this chapter investigating her readings of Sappho, specifically fragment 31, in *Eros, the Bittersweet* (1986), and twenty years later in *Decreation* (2006).

Autobiography of Desire: A Revision in Essay

It might be fitting, perhaps, to live in the world as if it were always somewhat ill-revised. Even sitting alone at the summit of some mountain on a cloudless day everything could appear quite still. Everything quiet and silent and not dancing in the foliage covering the valleys beneath that looks like a dark green wave frozen mid-rise in such a way that the shades of sky blue blend in gradually to make no geometry; we could imagine everything melting into everything else – the green and blue and brownish yellow of the leaves beginning to change all swirling into a palette of purplish gray – and that we were just happened upon by a piece of scenic painting. It is interesting that scenery is sometimes described as 'like a painting' but never 'like a photograph.' Something that ends with its canvas and is captured with still and dried painted light. It is interesting that we like to capture.

In *Eros, the Bittersweet*, Anne Carson captures Sappho's fragment 31 into the phrase "the lover's mind in the act of constructing desire for itself" (1986, 16). Looking upon a scene, the lover captures (something) and creates (something) – if the mind constructs desire *from* the scene, then this process of capturing and creating is the mind's revision. But why does the mind revise? Carson says it is "desire for itself." The very plain meaning of this phrase is the act of interpretation; that is, the mind looks upon a scene and revises it so as to understand and construct meaning. The other way to read the quote, though I doubt it was within Carson's intentions, is to take "desire for itself" as the object constructed, rather than just "desire."[15] To be clear, I am proposing that the revision produced by the lover in fragment 31 is not just "desire," but "desire" for her mind itself. What my extrapolation would imply is that the mind looks upon

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[15] It's a stretch, so it is not what Carson means, but a mere extrapolation from her syntax.

a scene and revises it not only to understand and construct meaning from the scene, but also revises the mind so as to understand the mind: itself. But let us first consider the word *desire.*

The Latin root of *desire* comes from *desiderare*, which is the active infinitive interpretation of the verb *desidero*. To break it down even further, the prefix *de-* means "of, from," and *sidus* means "stars, constellations, heavenly body." What *desidero* literally means, then, is "of or from the stars." However, the usage of it has come to mean "to want, wish, lack, need, etc.," that is, an action toward (something). From the literal definition, it has been taken to "[mean] "to gaze at the star," hence morally "to record the absence of," with a strong notion of regret" (Couturier 2004); or, from the Online Etymology Dictionary, it is "to await what the stars will bring" (Online Etymology Dictionary). Some include mere longing, some waiting, some drive toward; but all imply a lack, void, or negative of (something). Regardless, there is an ambivalence to how *desire* has been defined as a verb, depending on the context in which it is used. On the other hand, if we took the literal definition of its root, *desidero*, "of the stars" would seem to be less a verb and more of an adjective.[16]

The common ground for the interpretations of *desire* is apparently something to do with "stars," but to literally reach for stars would be an impossibility.[17] Therefore, what *desidero*, and consequently *desire*, seems to refer to is a description of the unreachable or unattainable. If we take *desire* as an adjective, or a modification of reality, instead of an action on reality, to say that one desires (something) would take (something) to be "of the stars." To put it abstractly, desire-as-adjective would be a description rather than a prescription. This would differ from Lacan's

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[16] The lexicologists might desire my head for this, but I am merely taking their lead on poetic license.

[17] I am assuming here that the linguists who coined this term were without the references of, say, *Interstellar* or *Sunshine*, or other representational science fiction, thereby making it a metaphorical reference to what cannot be reached.

position that recognition is the aim of desire, and Zizek's theory that truth is desire's goal, since both presume desire as action towards its own end.

On the other hand, desire-as-adjective revises reality into being "of the stars": the recognition here is that the described is unattainable, the truth desire for itself. "Who ever desires what is not gone? No one," says Carson in *Eros* (1986, 11) – desire exists not with absence, which implies a possibility of being filled, but with what cannot be attained (e.g. the stars). To use Glenn Kurtz above as an example: his desire does not stem from the lack of his brother, but because he cannot reach his brother – not with memory, not with articulation. It is with Carson's *in*articulations that he finds peace with the unattainable, that is, his desire for his brother. In this case, *desire* lives on and does not end, making it as true and recognizable and eternal as *red*. One lover saying to another "I desire you" would describe how heavenly the other is, how distant-seeming they are and yet so close: you are of the stars, yet you are here. How unattainable you are. Everything about you is desire; out of the covers in the morning you are desire, even in the desire landscape and the desire wind and the desire dawn jelly of my dream.

There is a perpetuity that *desire* as a noun or verb does not convey, except perhaps in the gerund *desiring*: a continual movement or energy. The descriptive nature of adjectives allows it to be more considerate of subjects – a noun apart from the subject is external to it, and a verb refers to an externalization of the subject. On the other hand, an adjective is a modification, a description, or, as I posit in this chapter, a revision of the subject. In "Imagination and Community," Marilynne Robinson considers a similar thing regarding words in general:

> Some students in France drew my attention to the enormous number of English
> words that describe the behavior light. Glimmer, glitter, glister, glisten, gleam,
> glow, glare, shimmer, sparkle, shine, and so on. These old words are not
> utilitarian. They reflect an aesthetic attention to experience that has made, and
> allows us to make, pleasing distinctions among, say, a candle flame, the sun at its

zenith, and the refraction of light by a drop of rain. (2012, 21)

Robinson highlights our tendency to revise the world in such nuanced ways; the way we experience, say, light is reproduced in the various expressions with which we describe it. Effectively, then, poetry as a pedagogy of touch – that is, "an aesthetic attention to experience" – is a revision of reality not just in the way we think, but also in the way we capture and articulate (something).[18]

Before capturing Sappho's fragment 31 in *Eros, the Bittersweet*, Carson investigates the Greek concept of *eros* and how it emanates from *desire* due to Sappho's description of *eros* as "bittersweet." What she finds is that *eros* is based on a want for what is not there, and that desire is the foundation of the complex emotion *eros*. It is, as mentioned by Souffrant above, an energy or movement – but to and from what exactly? Carson concludes that "desire is poised on an axis of paradox, absence and presence its poles, love and hate its motive energies" (1986, 11). In other words, because desire is so paradoxical and circular,[19] oscillating between these poles and energies, it creates the contradictory bitter-sweetness of *eros*. But, we might ask, how is *eros* articulated when desire is always trying to erase itself? Thus Carson looks to Sappho's fragment 31, her epitome of *eros,* which she translates:

> He seems to me equal to gods that man
> who opposite you
> sits and listens close
> to your sweet speaking
>
> and lovely laughing – oh it
> puts the heart in my chest on wings
> for when I look at you, a moment, then no speaking
> is left in me

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[18] thereby presenting a *pedagogy of touch*.

[19] One might even say it "turns away from elaborating on what is arguably central" (Souffrant 2012, 68).

no: tongue breaks, and thin
fire is racing under skin
and in eyes no sight and drumming
fills ears

and cold sweat holds me and shaking
grips me all, greener than grass
I am and dead – or almost
I seem to me.
   (*LP*, fr. 31) (Carson 1986, 12-13)

Carson considers the three characters of the fragment ('he,' 'you,' and 'I') to form a geometrical shape. She then reviews the scholarship surrounding the fragment, beginning with a theory on jealousy, which she explains is based on geometrical instability. However, she argues that Sappho is not explicitly jealous, and that the poem is not about jealousy, because the emotional situation between the three characters is not unstable – in fact, the geometry is quite solid, as she shows the necessity of the obstacle ('he') between 'you' and 'I.' What she concludes the poem to be about is, as quoted above, the mind's construction of "desire for itself" (1986, 16). The triangular geometry created by the speaker shows the relationship between "lover, beloved and that which comes between them" whereby each does not move or change, but rather the relationships between them change, "electrified by desire so that they touch not touching" (1986, 16). Thus Carson explains how *eros* is articulated by *desire*.

It is interesting to note that Carson's use of *desire* here is, conventionally speaking, as a noun. The implication is that the 'you' is a desire of the 'he' as it is of the 'I,' that is, an external object gazed upon. As she writes later in the book, on her analysis of Heliodoros' *Aethiopica*, "[*eros*] permits the reader to stand in triangular relation to the characters in the story and reach into the text after the *objects* of their desire, sharing their longing but also *detached* from it,

seeing their view of reality but also its mistakenness" (1986, 85; emphases mine).[20] While it might be appropriate to use *desire* as a noun in the case of *eros*, there seems to be more going on in Sappho's fragment 31 than gazing at objects, especially since *desire* works more as a movement than the interactions between static objects. Perhaps it might be a slight error, then,[21] for Carson to say that *desire* is a "dance [where] the people do not move" (1986, 17). In fact, the speaker in the poem seems to move quite a bit; or, more accurately, she is moved. She says, looking upon the scene between 'you' and 'he,' that it "puts the heart in my chest on wings," and later on in the fourth stanza, "greener than grass/ I am and dead" (1986, 13). What is captured and created is quite a bit of movement on her part: she flies with wings, and then shakes and dies, almost. *Eros* here is articulated as an erratic movement within the speaker: emotion, as the word is defined. In other words, it seems *desire* is not just relegated to a want for (something) external, but concerns a revision within the desirer as well. Internal affection is, after all, quite poetic.

Carson revisits Sappho's fragment 31 again about twenty years later in *Decreation*, specifically in the title essay "Decreation: How Women Like Sappho, Marguerite Porete and Simone Weil Tell God." She frames the idea of self-erasure through writing on others, emphasizing it as an essay on "spiritual matters" (2006, 161),[22] and beginning with Sappho's fragment 31. What is interesting to note is that in this reading of fragment 31, Carson includes a

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[20] This might perhaps serve as a theoretical explanation of the purposes of ambivalence which Carson formally incorporates into her later, more lyric, writings, as we have seen.

[21] i.e. "mistakenness"

[22] To be sure, metaphysical concerns of the self are quite spiritual. The 'matter' is how it relates physically, that is, how spirit touches body.

piece of the poem that was not in *Eros*. After the fourth stanza, there is an incomplete sentence which she translates:

But all is to be dared, because even a person of poverty… (2006, 159)

She then briefly summarizes the first four stanzas according to her thoughts in *Eros*, after which she finds focus in the speaker of the poem, presumably Sappho: "Sappho's poem sets the stage for jealousy but she does not dance it. Indeed she seems to forget the presence of her dancing partners entirely after the first stanza and shifts the spotlight onto herself" (2006, 160). Similar to what she considers in *Eros*, Carson finds that the geometry created by desire produces a bitter-sweetness in the speaker. The difference in this reading, however, is the shift in focus from the concept of *eros* to the concept of self – Carson's "spotlight" moves from desire articulated (i.e. *eros*) to desire as an articulation of self-revision. That is, if Sappho's poem is "the lover's mind in the act of constructing desire for itself" (1986, 16), this reading twenty years later takes "desire for itself" to be the object constructed, rather than a "desire" for (something) external.[23]

To put it another way: if Marianne Moore revised her "Poetry" to three lines to articulate what cannot be said about language, Carson's revision of Sappho articulates what cannot be said about desire. How does the absence of the last line of *Eros*' reading of fragment 31 affect our understanding of it? Better yet, how does adding the incomplete line, with ellipsis, affect our understanding of desire? In a very real sense, the rest of Sappho's fragment 31 is not so much lacking as it is unreachable; her lost fragments are not so much absent as they are, to articulate more poetically, "of the stars." At least as far as Carson is concerned.

We can view her translated ellipsis as an articulation of desire – there is more, but we cannot reach it. Instead, we reach within, just like the speaker in Sappho's fragment does. Carson

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[23] Again, the delineation is not implied in Carson's *Eros*, but I am using her syntax to term desire-as-adjective. On the other hand, I cannot say for sure it was not ambivalently subconscious.

leads us through this in her essay, considering the speaker's inner movements of flying and dying as ecstatic, explaining: "This is the condition called *ekstasis*, literally "standing outside oneself," a condition regarded by the Greeks as typical of mad persons, geniuses and lovers, and ascribed to poets by Aristotle" (2006, 161). Explicitly speaking, the concept of 'ecstasy' is the primary revision to Carson's reading of Sappho and desire.

This move that Carson makes effectively turns the self into an 'other,' and, if we recalled the definition of *desire* as discussed above, how much further could the self get from itself than to be "of the stars"? Instead of defining desire as the basis of the bittersweet, it is now defined as the basis of the ecstatic. The two are not mutually exclusive, but to consider how Carson revises language to lead us through different concepts circles around her lyrical poetics. In *Eros*, Carson saw Sappho setting the 'you' and 'he' up as objects of desire in varying relationships, a dance in which the speaker/reader can "reach into the text after the objects of their desire" (1986, 85). Now, in "Decreation," this dance has moved inward – it is not a poem about ecstasy, Carson says, but ecstasy has caused this inward shift. It is the concept of ecstasy that gives voice to Sappho's silence, in that "We see her senses emptying themselves, we see her Being thrown outside its own centre where it stands observing her as if she were grass or dead" (2006, 161). Carson's focus seems to have shifted from the erotic (of *eros*) to the spiritual – desire in this sense is neither an object nor an action but a revision of reality. More specifically, it is a spiritual revision. Carson begs the question: "granted this is a poem all about love, do we need to limit ourselves to a reading of it that is merely or conventionally erotic?" (2006, 161-162). We might argue that *Decreation*'s Carson posits this question to *Eros*'s Carson; we might say Carson asks this question quite ecstatically. A conversation and a revisitation of Carson to Carson: a lover's mind in the act of constructing desire for itself.

In order to construct "desire for itself," the self must first stand outside of itself. This is an ecstatic movement, which is seen in Sappho's fragment 31. Carson then does her own ecstatic turn by interpreting the incomplete line: "I don't want to give the impression that I know what this verse is saying or that I see where the poem is headed from here, I don't. Overall it leaves me wondering" (2006, 161).[24] To be sure, the admittance of "wondering" here leaves much to be *desired* in us readers. There is (something) Carson cannot reach; there is (something) we cannot reach; but it does not leave us stranded. In fact, she reads the condition of Sappho's last line, "poverty," to be driven by "daring": "This word is a verbal adjective and expresses a mood of possibility or potential. Sappho says it is an *absolute* potential" (2006, 162).[25] In "Decreation," then, Carson quite literally revisits the absence, the line in Sappho's fragment that she did not consider in *Eros*, moving from writing *about* desire to entering desire, touching it, being touched by it, ending up in "poverty." And what does it mean to be in poverty – out of language, out of self, inarticulated? Carson says it creates the electrifying potential to push us further, to wonder, wander, to desire – it revises the realities within us to reach for the unreachable and name the unnamable; and in understanding we cannot reach and cannot name, there we have it in our grasps. But, of course, not for long: we go back to speaking and deriving and all this fiddle…

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[24] If the essay is taken to be a literary analysis that is academically situated, which its form certainly suggests, then this move by Carson is one of *lyric subversion*, whereby she upsets the conventions of academic writing by referring to the *indeterminate definition* of the broken fragment and the *dramatic phenomena* of her thoughts and experiences, much like a footnote seems to do (q.v. fn. 10 supra).

[25] It should be noted that "potential" here need not be relegated to a metaphysical sense, but can also be extended to a physical one. In Cartesian terms, the potential energy contained within an object at rest relates to its energy and possibility of movement. Since a Bohrian conception of reality finds basis in instability, i.e. particles are in constant motion, the concept of "potential" in the quantum theoretical sense is quite strange and pertains to probabilistic calculations regarding its relation to position, movement, and time. If a Cartesian logic posits a particle to move from point A to point B in the straightest line possible, a quantum logic would find a particle wandering all over creation before ending up at point B. In a metaphysical sense, then, the "potential" of the self is found as much within as it is without, which is perhaps why Anne Carson attempts to both erase her self by writing other women, and also to find herself by writing other women.

It might be appropriate, at this point, to reemphasize Carson's point of revision. Just as Marianne Moore revised her "Poetry" according to her poetics, taking a few decades to effectively un-say almost everything in her first attempt, Carson evolves in a similar way. That is not to say either evolved toward a better or superior reading, but that the time passed affected their reading of certain texts, bringing to light other aspects they had not seen before. In one sense, it would be misguided to say they made errors in earlier readings; in another, it would be quite accurate. The word *error* comes from the Latin *errare*, which literally means "to wander."[26] And that is exactly what Moore and Carson have done: visiting and revisiting these places, touching their artifacts, being touched by them, flying with hearts on wings, shaken and shaken and almost killed. Moore impoverishes her poem of language; Carson impoverishes herself of self. In other words, poetry teaches us to wander: teaches us that to live is to always be in error, always in revision.

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[26] Interpretations have taken this to be "to wander from the truth" or "to stray," implying a deviation from some path, but let's "Act so there is no use in a center."

Chapter 3: A Lyric Definition

On April 25th, 2011, the Syrian Armed Forces began an eleven-day siege on protesters in the Syrian city of Daraa, going on to kill over a thousand civilians across twenty other cities within a month and starting what is now the ongoing Syrian Civil War. Protests rose across the Middle East in accordance with the Arab Spring, a revolutionary movement largely propagated by social media against corrupt and dictator-led governments. Syria was no exception – its people harbored a deep resentment against the Ba'athist government, which had been ruling unilaterally since 1963 and is currently headed by President Bashar al-Assad. What began as a militant culling of dissenters who were protesting for the resignation of al-Assad grew into skirmishes between various militia groups with the Syrian Armed Forces, which then escalated into a full-scale civil war. Because of the violence and destruction caused by the constant conflict between the Syrian government, the coalition known as the Free Syrian Army, and other rebel groups (most notably the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, or I.S.I.S.), many civilians have been forced to flee the country and seek international refuge. As of December 4th, 2016, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has reported a 4,810,710 total Syrians that are "Persons of Concern" outside of Syria (UNHCR 2016). The number of displaced are much higher within.

Those who managed to cross the borders have resettled in the neighboring countries of Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey, but the immensity of the displaced population has prompted other countries around the world to open their borders due to humanitarian concerns. In turn, anti-immigration sentiments have risen especially in the West, largely stemming from a fear of socioeconomic decline and terrorist activity. This has been seen particularly in the United States, where fear-based politics regarding immigration have been propagated and stirred by certain

rhetoric of recent political campaigns. As Ashley Fantz and Ben Brumfield reported to CNN, after the Paris bombings in 2015, thirty U.S. governors opposed settling Syrian refugees in their respective states. From the governors that did continue to welcome the refugee settlement, however, Fantz and Brumfield included a quote from Gov. Jack Markell that appropriately criticizes fear-mongering and sums up the goal of humanitarian aid: "It is unfortunate the anyone would use the tragic events in Paris to send a message that we do not understand the plight of these refugees, ignoring the fact that the people we are talking about are fleeing the perpetrators of terror" (2015). On the contrary, as Christine Hauser reported to the New York Times on September 20th, 2016, the son of our current president, Donald Trump Jr., "posted a message on Twitter…that compared Syrian refugees to a bowl of Skittles sprinkled with a few that "would kill you"" (2016). To be sure, he received much criticism from domestic and international sources, but, especially after recent election results, I cannot help but wonder what the refugees who are already settled in America think of the country to which they fled because they had no choice. A 'home' that must be their *home* because there is no home to return to. Their bodies that speak and bleed and cry and embrace and are compared to pieces of poisoned candy.

Why is it that we feel compelled to separate ourselves from one another? I do not mean this in a critical sense but a curious one. Perhaps it is because we can only truly enact our own bodies, in the skins that separate one from another. With language, we distinguish ourselves by name, each of us. We write them, we mark, we sign: this is me, not you; this is me. We call each other names, and others call us names. In that sense, then, it seems we do not speak of ourselves as much as others speak for us. We are spoken to by others, and it is only others that see our face. I mean this literally: even a mirror is a mere reflection, a trick of the light that inverts how we really look. And photographs, tagged or untagged, filtered or not, tell a different story. I also

mean it in the figurative sense. The older we get, the more sides of ourselves we find.[27] Yesterday we woke up and felt the contours of our face and found a nose. Today lips. Perhaps tomorrow we will be the left eye. And we might find a diversity within us, much more without. Only others really see our face, so perhaps only through their eyes can we see our own. Maybe that is the point of writing: to experience and show the different sides of who we are and who we could be. To wonder about someone we do not know.[28] To touch language, others, the world, and hence ourselves. If not to relate, then to learn. Surely, we are capable. We do, after all, contain multitudes.

There is a many of us, a many of me, fragments here and there that clash and create friction: I don't know, I cannot say. We have seen Anne Carson wonder this about Sappho. She does not know, she cannot say, because there are fragments here and fragments not. And yet she speaks for the Sappho articulated and the Sappho silent. Sappho missing. Absent. Carson revises the gaps in Sappho's fragments not to fill them and make one smooth and contiguous Sappho, but a Sappho speaking and a Sappho silent because perhaps sometimes Sappho silent speaks louder as a Sappho different. There is a many of Sappho. And different Sappho silent speaks:

>]desire
> and[   ]Aphrodite (Carson 2003, 193)

Carson revises Sappho's lines in such a way that the gaps in and of the fragments are articulated. The absences are elaborated to keep Sappho fragmented. Carson keeps the gaps. Carson keeps

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[27] Not to say age is a prerequisite, but a tendency.

[28] Reporting to the Guardian in 2015, children's literature author Gillian Cross wrote that stories "invite us to discover what it's like being someone completely different. They are explorations – for the writer as well as the reader" (2015). She also wrote the children's book *After Tomorrow*, which tells the story of two young refugees in France, as a response to the Syrian refugee crisis.

them separate. She does not know, she cannot say. And when the fragments touch, when they brush up or clash or collide, there is friction. In other words, by revising Sappho Carson not only revisits and retouches her fragments, but creates a sort of lyrical rub[29] – because the fragments' absences are articulated by Carson, and the fragments themselves are translated by Carson, reading them finds a layer that moves through Carson's "mind in the act of finding what will suffice" (Stevens 1923, 254): an act of poetry, where Carson's mind touches Sappho's Greek and Sappho's silence. To be sure, this is nothing new about translation, neither is it anything new about poetry. It does, however, beg the question: who is Carson to speak for Sappho? Who is Carson to touch Sappho? The rub here is that Carson is not Sappho; Carson is Carson.[30] But, as we have been considering, perhaps that is the point of writing, hence translation and poetry: to touch the different sides of who we are and who we could be.[31] And through Sappho Carson touches a different side of her face, using another's words as a Carson silent. But what does it even mean to *touch*?

Let us recall Karen Barad's essay "On Touching," where she explains *touch* as "no actual contact involved…but what you are actually sensing [when touching a mug], physicists tell us, is the electromagnetic repulsion between the electrons of the atoms that make up your fingers and those that make up the mug" (2014, 155). What is interesting about this description is the continued separation between (somethings), even as they touch, due to *repulsion*. In other words,

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[29] I refer here to Rumi's overquoted inspirational adage: "If you are irritated by every rub, how will you be polished?"

[30] Carson says, in an introduction to her translation: "I like to think that, the more I stand out of the way, the more Sappho shows through. This is an amiable fantasy (transparency of self) within which most translators labor" (2003, x). Simplistically speaking, it is a "fantasy" that anything speaks for itself.

[31] Again, this is nothing new, the word 'empathy' being heavily associated with fiction and storytelling. The rub here, as is the point of my thesis, is to show *how* poetry does this with language.

there is a constant fragmentation of the external. On the other hand, Carson explains the internal fragmentation of the speaker in Sappho's fragment 31 with the ideas of desire and ecstasy. She then moves this onto herself and her writing, where her impoverished fragmentation reveals the illusion of a coherence that was never there to begin with. It would be appropriate at this point to relate our idea of fragmentation to Barad's basis of indeterminacy, with which my thesis has applied to language and poetry as *indeterminate definition*. This produces *dramatic phenomena* that enfolds readers outside of their ken, *lyrically subverting* the structures and frameworks with which they conventionally read. We have called this revision: we revisit language, the world, and the self, touching and retouching and revising. Another process of touch that is elucidated by Carson's translation of Sappho is *repulsion*. To be clear, what Barad's scientific explanation for touch shows us is that we never truly come into contact with anything. Our sensations come from the repulsions of our skin, repulsions that show difference and separation and friction and contradiction. Repulsions that show a many of me.[32]

I would like to extend this idea of *repulsion* into language and propose lyrical poetics to employ a pedagogy of touch through linguistic repulsion, exploring its effects and implications in Theresa Cha's *Dictée*. Specifically, I will review the context and literature surrounding the work, after which I will examine passages from the section "Elitere: Lyric Poetry," which is controversial due to its experimental nature. According to Timothy Yu, "Cha was neglected by Asian American critics through most of the [1980s] in large part because a text with so many

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[32] If interested in further investigating the repulsive implications of the refugee situation after the election, refer to Deborah Amos' article "After Trump's Election, Uncertainty for Syrian Refugees in the U.S.," reported to NPR about a Syrian refugee, Osama, and his and his family's reactions to the election results. The worry they have points to the instability in political and national affiliations, as elucidated by those who are in the margins of such affiliations, namely refugees. The political identities of refugees, in most cases, are spoken for them – they cannot stay where they are from, they are placed here, they are placed there, etc. It is this uncertainty of determination, or, more appropriately, *indetermination*, that reveals the porousness of the boundaries that so illusively seem to separate one identity from another.

"experimental" features could not be understood as Asian American in its concerns" (2009, 102). Yu uses this seeming disconnect between experimental form and issues of identification to bridge language and identity, concluding that Cha's poetic endeavors were experimental precisely because of her Asian American culture. In tandem with Yu's claim, I seek to explain Cha's experimental poetics as a *pedagogy of touch*, where we are taught a different way of thinking – as Juliana Spahr writes, "*Dictée* forces the reader out of linear, absorptive reading practices and into vertical, circular, inter- and intra-cultural ways of reading" (1996, 26). Thus, my reading will show how Cha uses language to *repel* and disrupt conventions of reading and writing, thus connecting poetic language to a quantum reality, which similarly belies what we conventionally see in both word and world.

In earlier sections of her autobiographical text, Cha gives voice to her mother, Huo Hyung Soon, who migrated from Korea to the United States in 1963. It should be noted, to relate to this chapter's introduction, that Cha was born during the Korean War, a time of great displacement, which perhaps contributed to her parents' decision to migrate. How she presents this fragmentary experience is with broken language and broken stories as, one might even say, a refugee of identity. Cha writes about her mother's experiences, specifically her struggles in a Japanese-occupied Korea, where they were forced to speak Japanese. This is one of the ways, then, that Cha writes about her own struggles with identity: by giving voice to her mother's history. Giving voice to occupation. Voice to linguistic repression. Voice that touches and repels: this is you, not me; this is you.

She writes of her mother's migration to the United States:

I have the documents. Documents, proof, evidence, photograph, signatures. One day you raise the right hand and you are American. They give you an American Pass port. The United States of America. Somewhere someone has taken my identity and replaced it

with their photograph. The other one. Their signature their seals. Their own image. (1982, 56)

It is interesting to note the pronouns in this passage. Cha begins with documents, presumably of her mother's citizenship, and her mind moves to the image of her mother taking the oath, the "you" being enfolded into a nation. The juxtaposition of "The United States of America" and "Somewhere someone" creates a tension between specificity and ambivalence. Cha's mother, a specific "you," and the United States, a specific place, leaps to an ambiguous someone somewhere – the identities, concrete and abstract, repel each other and produce for Cha a "taken *my* identity and replaced it with their photograph" (emphasis mine). In other words, the friction produced by the repulsion between gaining identity (American citizenship) and losing identity ((something)) creates a drama in Cha's mind, where she struggles with her identity being lost in "Their own image." The abstract 'they' is at odds with the concrete 'me.'

Repulsion is present here on multiple levels: first on a political level, then conceptually, then on an individual level. As Timothy Yu writes, "in its multiple and often clashing structures of organization – linguistic, poetic, mythical, historical, personal – *Dictée* shows us a way of keeping [formal experimentation and identification] in productive tension, always visible but never resolved" (2009, 122). Yu recognizes the irresolution in Cha's writing as clashes that generate a productive friction. For example, the passage quoted above shows Cha considering her mother's complex political identity: Huo was a Korean born in Manchuria, who migrated to Korea under Japanese imperial rule to teach Japanese to Koreans, and was later a migrant to America after the war. This history of Huo Korean underlies what was before the "One day you raise your right hand," in Cha's mind clashing against what comes after: the mother she grew up with: Huo American. The passage then moves to struggle with the concept of identity as it relates

to national affiliation, in which Cha relegates America to a 'they' that took away her identity and "replaced it with their photograph…Their own image."[33] This image conflicts with the first eleven years of her life in South Korea, where she was born during the Korean War. In a sense, then, the layers of repulsion reveal that Cha is not just a refugee of place, but also one of self.

To be sure, what is not said in this passage speaks volumes to the confusion of identity Cha creates formally, the same way Anne Carson translates and writes on Sappho. As Yu writes, Cha provides "a Korean or Korean American identity that is multiple and shifting, not reducible to any single vector of identification" (2009, 128): a many of her.[34] Thus, Cha's lyrical movement serves to disrupt constraining structures of identity, be it national or ethnic affiliation, using specific shifts in pronoun to emphasize a linguistic struggle. That is not to say that Cha uses language to transcend affiliation, but to question the structures on which these affiliations are based. In other words, Cha's language is still embodied by a Korean American woman, and the issue of language is not one of *representability* but *manipulability*.[35] As Hyo Kim writes on the embodiment of Cha's language, "I am not interested in tracing some stable correspondence between a representation of a unified body in *Dictée* and its historical author, Cha… *Dictée*'s poetics departs from the dominant view that configures the body as distant and distinct from an

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[33] The term 'image' implies a religious theme that rings throughout the book – as in the Christian gospels where Jesus is questioned on whether one should pay taxes, to which Jesus replies, by the account of many translations, by asking whose image is inscripted on the coins, and that those whose image it bears should be those to whom it would be rendered. To relate, Cha attempts to find whose or what image she bears by inscribing various fragments of her identity in the form of dictations, hence *Dictée*, thus creating lyric drama.

[34] In fact, Sue J. Kim extends this fragmentation beyond textual representation, arguing that "the text does not necessitate the union of its voices into one narrator, and that the narrator does not have to be identified with Cha for the text to be effective… *Dictée* should be read as what Susan Lanser describes as an "equivocal" text, in which the author and narrator are neither wholly distinct nor wholly identified" (2008, 164). The implications of this, in the context of *indeterminate definition*, could make for quite an existential exposition, but for the scope of my thesis. An example of this, however, may be referred to in fn. 10 (q.v. ch. 2, p. 38).

[35] q.v. ch. 1, p. 6.

ideally disembodied rationality" (2013, 134).[36] The word to note here is "correspondence,"

where the convention is based on a Cartesian logic that takes objectivity for granted, that is, that

Cha wrote to say. On the other hand, as Hyo Kim (2013) and Sue Kim (2008) suggest, the

"correspondence" that Cha aims for is an "embodied process involving the dynamic interplay

between affect and thought" (2013, 134); that is, Cha wrote to *do*.[37]

Nicole McDaniel puts it another way, saying, "Rather than read Cha's text as an

autobiography, I propose that *Dictée* be read as a memoir which uses the heterogeneous

technique of collage to emphasize the extent to which identity construction, self-representation,

and the recovery of memory fragments are interrelational and serial" (2009, 71). Where an

autobiography aims to assemble an accurate history to represent the present self, a memoir

emphasizes the fluidity and struggle, hence "construction," of present identity. Critics such as

Michael Sugimoto have regarded these lyrical struggles as "representing a kind of "failure"…of

the Western tradition…[where] bourgeois individualism serves as endpoint," arguing that

lyricism "signif[ies] the philosophic failure of poetic discourse to either exceed or circumvent

language" (2002, 387-388). However, Sugimoto's assumption that "individualism serves as

endpoint" finds its basis in a linear progression of modernity. That is, the notion of an "endpoint"

already assumes representationalism. On the other hand, our forays into quantum and decolonial

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[36] Kim also refers to Sue J. Kim's reading of Cha (2008), saying, "In fact, *Dictée*'s embodied vision of writing radically undermines the traditional author function, rendering the identification between the text and its author to one that is equivocal at best…Thus the absence of a fixed and uniform "I" in *Dictée* is far from secondary. It is in fact one of the crucial effects of Cha's overall experimentation with cultural belonging as a process mediated by affect" (2013, 134). (q.v. fn. 32 & 34 supra)

[37] It is important to note that this "dynamic interplay" is theoretically coincident with the electromagnetic interaction visualized by the scanning tunneling microscope, that is, by touch.* Jose Felipe Alvergue similarly refers to Cha's aesthetic as touch-based, calling it *kinetics*, which "charts the communitarian, spatial, and at all times relational aesthetics that perform a nexus of intentional, formal innovations upon the arrangements of language available for the creative composition of the transnational subject" (2016, 429).
     * q.v. ch. 1, p. 6.

theories have questioned the linear model, as well as representational limitations, proposing that lyricism is not a stable endpoint but rather a movement that ruptures and revises.[38]

To be clear, we would recall that Barad's philosophical extrapolations from Bohr's philosophy-physics shows a shift away from representationalism, which is based on sight and Cartesian logic.[39] What we are moving towards, as my thesis proposes, is a culture of touch and quantum logic, where subject and object manipulate[40] by revision and repulsion, not to exploit, but to create and generate. If Anne Carson revises Sappho in her absences to generate lyrical discovery, Cha repels the various fragments of her identity within and without, pitting them against each other to produce a lyrical friction that is equally electrifying.

This fragmentation of and within the self, especially regarding questions of identity as Cha repulsively generates, is a topic of particular interest to me. Perhaps it would be remiss to my methodological integrity if I did not clarify that the basis of my interest in this subject largely extends from my own struggles with identity. I was born in the Philippines and migrated to Singapore at the age of one, where I spent the next fifteen years of life as a permanent resident[41], after which I moved to North Carolina with my mother and stepfather.[42] The political status of my life in Singapore was not so much a concern, being adolescent, as the social waters taken for

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[38] Eric Hayot notes that "*Dictée* shows failure to be the fundamental intermediary of all representation, all communication. In this sense, what looks like "failure" probably ought to be called something else" (2006, 615). Or, perhaps, we have a too connotated, hence limited, an understanding of what it means to fail.

[39] q.v. ch. 1, p. 13.

[40] "Manipulate" comes from the Latin *manus*, meaning "hand," and *plere*, which means "to fill." The haptic connection is not unfounded.

[41] i.e. not a citizen

[42] My parents divorced when I was fourteen, and my mother remarried to an American, hence the move. I left my father in Singapore, along with a kid brother, who now currently resides in the United States as well.

granted. Hosting almost three-quarters of the population as majority Chinese, and the larger

minorities being Malay and Indian, the Filipino population had little-to-no presence, much less

voice, in the island city-state. The addition of a non-Democratic and unicameral political

environment under the slogan 'racial equality' made for quite a confusing experience of

identity.[43] In other words, considering Singapore's demographics, how could my racial identity

be equal if it were politically nonexistent?

The various responses to these inarticulations were a mix of meritocracy and

perseverance, since Singapore is adamantly a capitalistic nation, while a Filipino mindset prizes

individual tenacity. To be clear, an ethic of hard work and determination are noble traits, and

should be encouraged at an individual level; but an individual's place in a system or institution is

negligible insofar as the purposes of systems and institutions themselves, which is to run

regardless of the individual. What resulted was a contradiction between one side that promoted

advancement based on individual ability, and another that dissolved identity into its contribution

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[43] Certainly, the country has made some strides in addressing institutional issues of race, more so its citizens in speaking up about them, but subjects of identity bear much less concern in an Eastern politic that values a social harmony based on conformity as opposed to the individuality (subjectification) and social freedoms emphasized in the West. Therefore, to contrast how I have seen issues of race handled in different cultures, over-simplistically speaking, identity in the East is abolished for the sake of the community, while the Western mindset conventionally presumes the standard 'I think, therefore I am.' The historical contexts of each generalized sphere also contribute and explain this divide. To be sure, as I have so far shown in my thesis, poststructural and quantum theories seem to have upset and destabilized the conventional Western framework, effectively, because its language speaks into the Western context, and timely, because of its emergence in the West alongside technological globalization and corporation.

This critique also alludes to decolonized methodologies proposed by Linda Tuhiwai Smith, as elaborated in the introductory chapter – poststructuralism indicates the reflexivity of the West to adapt to conditions of exteriority that place it more in touch with their Eastern counterparts. That is not to say either are conforming to some universal standard, for that would give credence to Westernizing the East, since the West has been the more culturally dominating. On the contrary, to relate to current discussion, it creates a "productive tension, always visible but never resolved" (Yu 2009, 122). Further speculation in the conclusion, then, might provide some direction to how a pedagogy of touch (between Western and Eastern mindsets, again oversimplified) might explain certain political reflexes due to issues such as identity politics and immigration.

to the state.[44] When I came to the United States, then, the confusion only grew, since the non-subjectification purported in Singapore was directly opposed to the individualism taken for granted in America. However, it was only in the context of individuality that institutional pressures could be seen; in other words, without an opposing force, there would be no friction. If these identities all clashed and fragmented, perhaps it was in language that I hoped to find some sort of universal grounding to put all the pieces together. On the contrary, language continues the fragmentation between identity, imagination, and articulation. It was poetry, then, that showed me language used in a fragmented yet sensible manner, since it articulates the silences and the contradictions instead of filling or resolving them.

For instance, in *Dictée*'s "Lyric Poetry," Cha writes:

> Qu'est ce qu'on a vu
> Cette vue qu'est ce qu'on a vu
> enfin. Vu E. Cette vue. Qu'est ce que c'est enfin.
> Enfin. Vu. Tout vu, finalement. Encore.
> Immediat. Vu, tout. Tout ce temps.
> Over and over. Again and again.
> Vu et vidé. Vidé de vue.
> Dedans dehors. Comme si c'etait jamais.
> Comme si c'est vue pour la première fois.
> C'était. C'était le passé.
> On est deçu. On était deçu la vue
> du dehors du dedans vitrail. Opaque. Ne reflate

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[44] Unsurprising that in confusion I chose the formation of my identity to come largely from television and video games, since the interaction allowed by such media, especially video games, seems to (implicitly) give permission to create one's own identity, or to even have an identity. That is, the reflexive *manipulability* (q.v. fn. 35 supra) celebrated in video games seems to transcend conventional politic into a social virtuality where race does not matter insofar as physical demarcation. My point is that video games are another indication that we are shifting toward a culture where considering a *pedagogy of touch* would be quite useful, specifically the context of this section being identity fragmentation and formulation. It might be quite inconspicuous from within a Western standpoint that already prizes individuality (e.g. subjectification is the standard in most advertising and marketing campaigns, commercial and political), but it is revolutionary without. It is no accident that many of the youth in China, a country that ties the value of identity to the state, take to video games and find virtual worlds more real than its physical counterparts: in virtuality, at least they are allowed to have an identity. In fact, virtual identities (online, on-screen, on-page) seem to be more representative of how they are in actuality, i.e. fluid and manipulable, "not reducible to any single vector of identification" (Yu 2009, 128). Never has the adage "You can be who you want to be" been more true than in games.

jamais. Conséquemment
en suivant la vue absente
which had ceased to appear
already it has been
has been
has been without ever
occurring to itself that it should remember.
…………………………………………………
This view that one has viewed
Finally. View. This view. What is it finally.
Finally. Seen. All. Seen. Finally. Again.
Immediate. Seen. All. All the time.
Over and over. Again and again.
Seen and void. Void of view.
Inside outside. As if never.
As if it was seen for the first time.
It was. It was the past.
One is deceived. One was deceived of the view
outside inside stain glass. Opaque. Reflects
never. Consequently
following the absent view
which had ceased to appear
already it has been
has been.
Has been without ever
that. All aside. From then. (1982, 125-127)

It is important to note, first of all, that the muse Cha invokes for "Lyric Poetry," "Elitere," is not, like for the other eight sections, a conventional muse. Nicole McDaniel suggests that Cha revised the muse Euterpe into "Elitere" "because the etymology of "Euterpe" means "to please," and [her] memoir does not attempt to please its readers through simplification," but "By challenging the established forms, she challenges the idea that narratives must be told in a linear, chronological fashion, and critiques the possibility of representing a complete life, choosing instead to represent an episodic, serialized version of self" (2009, 73). In other words, by revising her muse, Cha reveals the fragility of narrative or mythological structure; more specifically, Cha does this by repelling it and creating her own. The exact derivation of "Elitere"

is unclear, and many scholars see it as a play on the Latin "*littera*, or "letter"" (2009, 74). In any case, it remains as a point of challenge to mythos.

We can also see this challenge to coherent identity and narrative in the fact that Cha switches between English and French in the quoted passage. One point of interest is that part of the French, from "Enfin. Vu E. Cette vue…" to "en suivant la vue absente," is translated later in the poem, from "Finally. View. This view…" to "following the absent view." On a broad level, this switching between different languages shows the fluidity in Cha's mind, which, in turn, translates into the fluidity of her identity. What I am wondering, however, is why Cha chose to write part of the poem in French, juxtaposing it right next to English. It presents a linguistic confusion that is present within the mind of the poet, yet it is reminiscent of the experiences of Cha's mother, who was forced to speak and teach Japanese to her Korean compatriots. In this section, then, Cha seems to be exploring what it is to have a fragmented identity through the experience of conflicting linguistics. What is produced on the page is an articulation that embodies this conflict in both language and grammar.

For example, in French, Cha writes, "Tout vu, finalement." However, in English, she translates into "All. Seen. Finally."[45] Semantically speaking, the translation ultimately agrees, but the difference in syntax is clear. A more accurate representation of the French sentence in English would be "All is seen, finally," but, of course, representational accuracy is not Cha's goal. In fact, the syntax in the translated sentence belies both French and English conventions, suggesting that the conflict of identity presented by Cha here goes beyond what she can articulate. If language and writing is the articulation of thought and idea, what Cha proposes by disrupting

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[45] We should be aware of my presumption here that it is the French that later becomes English due to the linear form of how it is presented in the book.

conventional forms of linguistic representation is that the boundaries separating meaning from meaning, and consequently identity from identity, is much more fluid than language makes it seem. In other words, the formal experimentation Cha articulates shows *indeterminate definition*.

Another interesting example, which directly suggests Cha's intentions with her language, is the translation of "Vu E. Cette vue" to "View. This view." Throughout *Dictée*, Cha plays around with the formation of words, slicing and dicing them to explore what they might do in different circumstances.[46] In this case, "Vu E" seems to be a manipulated "vue," which generally translates to "view, or sight." However, "vu" is also a French word, meaning "seen," as in the past perfect tense of "to see." The English version, as Cha translates, does not include this interpretation in which the meaning of the phrase is altered. That is, "Vu E" is different from "vue" in that the former breaks the word to imply a past perfect verb of viewing, while the latter refers to the noun "view"[47] – that is, what she means by "Vu E" cannot be directly translated into the English. What Cha is doing here in playing with the language, repelling various meanings and morphologies from each other, is not only to emphasize the fragility of semantics, but also to show the power allowed in creativity: the point of repulsion, she proposes, is creation.

But what does she create? Let us consider that it is not just Cha's fragmented identities that are in play here. If her language is written in a fragmented manner, then it is also read in a fragmented manner. The lyrical movement that Cha produces with her fragmentary poetics creates a drama for us readers to enter. We can see the similarities here between Cha's translation of her personal history with Carson's translation of Sappho: both seem to include fragments that

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[46] Earlier in "Lyric Poetry," for example, she writes "Remove light   Re move sounds to far" (1982, 124).

[47] Just as "Re move" is different from "Remove" – the former literally means "to move again" while the latter implies a movement of (something) in order for it to become absent.

are lost, "of the stars" – spaces that move and make and create. In Cha's passage, she struggles through linguistic fragmentation; it is not so much a drama about a specific event, recorded or imagined, but one of the mind. When we come across the conflicting languages and grammars, we cannot help but notice the friction. Knowledge of the French language, presuming that the text was directed toward an English-speaking audience, would not alleviate the friction since Cha's goal is not to hide some meaning in misrepresentation, but to emphasize a different way of thinking through linguistic play. In fact, knowledge of the French language would further elucidate the differences, as we have seen in the translations above.

Consequently, it is not just Cha's identities and languages that are repelled, but also that of the reader. In other words, friction is not just produced by the juxtaposition of French next to the English, or by Cha's clashing identifications between American, French-Catholic school girl, Korean, mother, etc., but more so by the fact that we are moving through the tension of languages and identities with our own languages and identities. This is the *dramatic phenomenon* that Cha creates, allowing us to involve ourselves in another way of thinking.[48] The effect produced through repulsion, if read carefully and sincerely, is one, as Carson would call it, of ecstasy. In fact, the title of the passage quoted above is "ALLER/RETOUR" (Cha 1982, 125). *Aller* means "to go," and *retour* means "to return" – we can see from our analysis that with language, Cha continually goes from and returns to her self. If we took this in the perspective that Carson takes with Sappho, we might say that Cha stages a triangular geometry between herself, her self, and language (or her mother, or Korean history, or Greek mythology, or Joan of Arc, etc.), thus inducing ecstasy. What results, then, from Cha's ecstatic condition is her entering

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[48] q.v. pp. 64-66 *supra* for an articulation of a reader moving through Cha's drama, albeit in a more academic manner.

into the poverty of language: English, French, I don't know, I cannot say. To be sure, Yu suggests

Cha's language as a means of travel into Carson's poverty: "only by moving through the

landscape of nation, myth, and history can one reach this place of their negation" (2009, 129). So

follows the ecstatic reader.

Going and returning is an important theme in *Dictée*, especially given that Cha left South

Korea at age eleven and did not return until seventeen years later, in 1979, three years before

Dictée was published. Going and returning has been an important theme in my life as well, for, at

this time of writing, it has been seven years since I last returned to either Singapore or the

Philippines. In the summer of 2017, however, I plan to take a month-long trip to Manila to visit

my grandmothers, from respective sides of the family, for each of their birthdays. On the other

hand, since I am now documented as a citizen of the United States,[49] in order to visit the

Philippines for more than 21 days, I must apply for a visa. That is, specific documentation is

required for me to return to my birthplace. Perhaps it should not seem so strange, since we have

been already considering the friction between identities. If we consider the situation from a

political standpoint, that is, from documents of political affiliation, Czander-on-paper[50] has no

connection to the Philippines whatsoever, other than what is answered as "Place of Birth." The

political domain that Czander-on-paper is a subject of, however, which is the definition of

"citizen," is due to his documents of naturalization, as well as his passport, both of which

conclude that he is a subject of the United States. If we consider the situation from an ethnic

standpoint, to require an endorsement in order to go/return to his country of birth would be quite

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[49] At the time of gaining American citizenship, I had to renounce my Filipino citizenship. The only way to get it back is to apply for dual citizenship.

[50] See Appendix.

absurd, since Czander-in-skin is quite akin to Filipinos. Without getting into cultural, socioeconomic, or personal circumstances, we can already see the friction between the conflicting states, both internally and externally, in Czander that show a fragmentary identity.

Perhaps it is this friction that leads to much dissension and disagreement with regards to issues of immigration. From a political standpoint, non-immigrants, at least those whose life experiences evidence to them as such, find a coherence between internal and external identities, no matter how illusory this coherence is. This trend can be seen in families whose lineages and genealogies can be tied to a specific geographical location and traced back for generations. Where dissonance might occur, then, is when their identities come into contact with identities that are more explicitly fragmented in external forms. Clear examples of these 'other' identities are immigrants, whose migrations are not yet so far removed as to be assimilated as they are, and refugees. Perhaps this is also why Cha's language seems so discomforting at first glance: it is different and unfamiliar, and we find we cannot assimilate it to our current, seemingly coherent, circumstances. In effect, *Dictée* not only elaborates on Cha's Asian American experience, one in which I can attest the struggle of going/returning is quite relatable, but also proposes a language and way of reading that attempts to teach readers how to handle linguistic, conceptual, and self-ish friction. Hopefully, as Cha's writing suggests, this internal revision might translate to the external.

This distinction between the internal and external and how each affects the other is also repeated by Cha in the passage quoted above, with "Day seen through the veil of night" (1982, 124), "Dedans dehors," "du dehors du dedans vitrail" (1982, 125), "Inside outside," "outside inside stain glass" (1982, 126), and "interior/ and exterior./ Inside. Outside" (1982, 127). These juxtaposed words provide an explicit grounding to wander between the inside and outside spaces.

We have also seen this concern poetically, with Cha's lyrical movement of fragmented language being an articulation of her fragmented identity – inside French, outside English, inside America, outside Korea, etc. Conceptually speaking, Cha presents an interesting idea in both French and English with "One is deceived. One was deceived of the view/ outside inside stain glass." This, I propose, might perhaps be called the thesis of this section. Recall that this passage is from the section called "Lyric Poetry" – what is normally viewed as the individual perspective from a certain subject toward the external world. Deception here, as Cha places it, seems to critique the idea of lyricism as merely individual perspective – she says it is "Opaque. Reflects/ never." To explain: if the view of the individual is behind the "stain glass" of her or his own perspective, then it cannot accurately represent what it outside. Neither, then, can what is outside, that is, articulation, accurately reflect what is inside. On the other hand, the point of stained glass is neither representation nor reflection. If this definitive postmodern critique is what Cha wanted to communicate, however, it begs the question of the form chosen. In other words, why did she not just say what she meant?[51] As I have suggested above, Cha's purpose here is not to represent meaning or thought or experience with language. Instead, she seeks to create. After all, similar to what we see with our eyes, language is often quite deceptive.

Given that her poetic form repels definitions normally ascribed, Cha's critique here is not on the inadequacy of individual perspective to represent, but rather on what stains the glass. In other words, she calls to our attention the frameworks with which we see, read, understand, etc., in order to give voice to the individual. To put it another way, we might relate Cha's "stain glass" to Gertrude Stein's "Carafe, that is a Blind Glass." A carafe that is "a spectacle and nothing strange" (Stein) also "Reflects/ never" (Cha); a carafe produces "a single hurt color and an

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[51] Why do poets never say just what they *mean*?

arrangement in a system to pointing," and "stain glass" does the same. Both poets enact language

in such a way to create a language-carafe, one in which language is distorted and "difference is

spreading" (Stein). Thus, rather than using language to reflect and represent, they teach us

readers to think in a way that might lead us to distort, experience, and create language ourselves.

Let us recall that Cha's first act in this section, at least from a linear reading, was to

revise the muse Euterpe into Elitere. We might conclude, then, that the disruption Cha enacts

extends from the mythos of mythological structure to contemporary considerations of the lyrical.

Thus, Cha presents here a *lyrical subversion* of conventional ways of understanding, for if we do

not pay attention to the stained glasses all around, we might think we see quite clearly. If Cha

formed this subversion in a way that could be conventionally understood,[52] it would

hypocritically defeat her entire purpose of *repulsion*. This friction between form and content is

not definitive, but, as with most lyric thinking, generative. Questions of identity, individual and

political come up: where is the line drawn between the many of us, states united; the many of

me. As Cha writes in another section:

> Suffice Melpomene. Nation against nation multiplied nations against nations
> against themselves. Own. Repels her rejects her expels her from *her* own. Her
> own is, in, of, through, all others, *hers*…
> Violation of *her* by giving name to the betrayal, all possible names,
> interchangeable names, to remedy, to justify the violation. Of *her*. Own.
> Unbegotten. Name. Name only. Name without substance. The everlasting,
> Forever. Without end.
> Deceptions all the while. (1982, 88)

What I find interesting about this section is that Cha invokes Melpomene, the Muse of Tragedy,

to consider repulsions political, linguistic, and metaphysical. I do not want to give the impression

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[52] as I am now attempting to do, though perhaps I am not as concerned with appearing hypocritical given the circumstances in which this is being written.

that I know why Cha invokes her here, but it is no accident that Melpomene, who was the Muse of Chorus before becoming the Muse of Tragedy, is derived from the Greek *melpomai*, which means "to celebrate with dance and song." It seems almost contradictory to even celebrate tragedy, at least in our culture. Overall, it leaves me wondering.

Perhaps the tragedy with Melpomene is that she had become a refugee of her own name, and Cha finds in her a side of herself that is quite tragic. But then we might see her work as a celebration of dance and song. By the same token, maybe why we really fear refugees is because they show us a side of ourselves that we ultimately do not want to see: we are not whole or coherent either; we too do not belong. We are repulsed by the idea of them, of difference, discomfort, instability, because we are repulsed by our selves. No matter how hard we try to hide our eyes from our selves, we cannot run from them. We are always with us. A many of us, a many of me. But, as our writers have suggested, perhaps it is only by moving through this repulsion that we are able to live with it.

Conclusion & Speculation

What if when we talk about poetry we don't really talk about poetry at all, or what if when we talk about everything else we actually talk about poetry? Perhaps living in language for so long, we have come to take it for granted as much as the air we breathe. As of the twenty-first century, we have not known anything else but a world where language is everywhere. Similarly, many of us live where light is always accessible, always abundant. And when it is dark, it is a wonder that we fortunate ones can press a button or flip a switch to connect the circuitry that allows a current to flow through threads of wiring and a conductive piece of metal so that the electric current generated by a power source or battery would continually heat the piece of metal and by heating it up bring us light, simplistically speaking. Of course, we cannot see this process of generating electricity or light with our naked eyes, and it is altogether another metaphysical mess to ask if we can even see this light, since it is light that even allows us to see in the first place. Even for the blind, however, light exists: they can feel its warmth, its energy – they would not see it in the same way because light exists differently for them. Certainly, to think about the physics of light is seen as irrelevant to many, hence deferring to science and scientists.

Likewise, trying to explain "red" to one born blind is much less intuitive than thought to those not blind and those who take red for granted. We could explain the facts of the matter: objects that appear red are objects that absorb all colors of the visible light spectrum except "red" light, which it reflects. But, to someone for whom "visible" is an abstract concept, explaining the scientific definition of red is as arbitrary as saying roses are red and violets are not. Of course, no matter how arbitrary "red" is, it is not nothing: there is still the "r," "e," and "d," or at least the phonetic sound of the word "red" – one might say the energy of it, to generalize. The point is that words are everywhere but they are often unconsidered, unless a misunderstanding occurs, then

some definition is pursued. Even pragmatic concerns reveal the fluid and unstable nature of

words and language. Perhaps words are more affective than we realize, and we actually say more

than we think. Certainly, to think about language is seen as irrelevant to many, hence deferring to

poetry and poets.

> And also linguists and lexicologists: as linguistic anthropologist Laura M. Ahearn writes:

> most linguistic anthropologists working in [linguistic relativity] maintain that the
> influence of language on culture and thought is more likely to be *predispositional*
> rather than *determinative* – in other words, the particular language you speak
> might predispose you to view the world a certain way, but it will not prevent you
> from challenging that view. (2011, 66)

From a linguistic anthropological standpoint, then, what I have been suggesting is that the we, in

Western education, have been predisposed to think on a Cartesian model, and that poetic use of

language is the linguistic line of escape out of this binary mindset. In other words, poetry teaches

us to think in a manner different from what culture is predisposed to because it challenges the

very language that predisposes the culture, that is, as a *pedagogy of touch*. As we have seen, our

culture has been predisposed to seek and accept evidence based on notions of *sight*, whether it is

by reading or research. On the other hand, the inherent challenge poetry poses to language makes

us all, in a linguistic sense, blind. But it is through this blindness, then, that we are able to see the

structures and conventions around us that we take for granted, and as a result we might be able to

repel and revise accordingly.

To be sure, this critique is nothing new, but it is realistically quite difficult to break out of

cycles that we find we cannot break out of. My tautology here is quite intentional, as has been

my language throughout, because it is our language that reinforces the mindset we have been

attempting to break out of – I am not saying that language is entirely responsible, since there are

social and cultural forces in play as well, not to mention the physiological; but, as linguistic anthropologists and anthropological linguists have found, it would be remiss to say that language does not, at the very least, influence the way we think. I have suggested, then, from the quantum logical basis Karen Barad provides, that poetry uses language to disrupt tautological mindsets of convention, the point not being mere destruction but creation: not an endpoint but a movement.

In terms of pragmatic application of this theory, we have already seen its implications in microscopy and imaging, where data and evidence are gathered by haptic equipment and visualized by digital manipulation. I have also hinted at the use of a *pedagogy of touch* towards a framework for social and foreign policy, where governance might take into account the porousness of borders within and without. In a similar fashion, Annemarie Mol provides a rhetorical analysis of practices in a Dutch hospital in *The Body Multiple* (2003), showing how diagnoses and medical action, specifically regarding atherosclerosis, come from diverse and ambivalent definitions of atherosclerosis which converge at points of contact between patient, doctor, surgeon, internist, etc., before a practice is enacted.[53] It seems that a *pedagogy of touch* that teaches fluid thinking for the sake of pragmatics would certainly be quite useful in medicine. We can see this in the steady increase of interest in Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (D.O.) programs, where, in addition to the requirements for the traditional Doctor of Medicine (M.D) degree, curricula emphasize a holistic training founded on the physician Andrew Taylor Still's techniques that relies on manipulating a patient's joints and bones.[54]

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[53] That is, even something so 'pragmatic' as medical practice seems to have a basis of indeterminacy.

[54] The connection to *touch* here is certainly no accident.

What I find most compelling, however, is application in the technical and technological spheres. I have already mentioned video games as clear examples of *pedagogies of touch* that enfold the player into a reality[55] where manipulation of identity and world are creative pursuits.[56] At the same time, it is seemingly ironic that video games, along with a majority of our technologies, are formed on computer code and machines that are ultimately binary. On the other hand, recent developments in quantum computing hardware and artificial intelligence software suggest a shift away from binary models and frameworks. As we have seen, poetics serves as a point of intersection for language, thought, and culture – and what if we approached computer code with a poetic lens?

Let us consider a basic loop written in the Python programming language:

```
x = 1
while x > 0:
        print "What hath God wrought?"
        x = x/2
        if x == 0:
                print "Salvation"
                break
        elif x < 0:
                break
        else:
                continue
```

Simplistically speaking, if this code is compiled and run, the computer will execute a program to output "What hath God wrought?" perpetually, that is, an infinite number of times, until the program is closed. To apply a poetic lens to the text would be to do a close reading of its lyric potential – but to what purpose? First, to read the code as a poetic text would consider how the

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[55] That is, by dramatic phenomena.

[56] That is, lyrical subversion.

mind of the computer, that is, its binary machinery, is moving through the code to produce the effect of an infinite loop. By implication, we would also be considering the writer of the code, or how she or he thinks in order to create the program. The revisions to language, as well as the repulsions of languages, can teach not just how computers work at a basic level, nor how computer programmers might code accordingly, but also a technological culture that is informed by and reinforces a binary paradigm. Let us break this down line by line.

"x = 1" sets a premise, or, perhaps more appropriate in mathematic and sociological terms, an identity. "x" is "1," not "2" or "3" or "0," but "1." "x" is also not arbitrary or unassigned in that it is given a definite value, though we could certainly argue how definite "1" is in a mathematical sense.[57] The code continues to "while x > 0:" and provides a setting and condition for the identity set – in a sense, it places "x" in an environment and challenges its identity with "> 0." That is, "x" is asked if it is greater than "0," or whether its given value exceeds naught. To be clear, "x" must check itself and provide an account of its self-perceived value; in other words, it must become an 'other' to itself. Even here existential correlations abound. If the "while" condition comes true, then the code is allowed to proceed through ":" (colon), into deeper layers, namely "print "What hath God wrought?"/ x = x/2." In a sense, "print" is an outcry of the program to the reader, that, if related to the previously set conditions, asks "What hath God wrought?" if "x" sees its value as greater than "0." We might also argue that it is the writer of the code who "prints" to the reader, and it is the writer who is asking us this

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[57] Technically speaking, the definition of "1" depends on decimal criteria set up by the user. That is, in certain situations, "1.01" is still considered as "1," as is "1.0000001" or "1.00000000000321421151223" – the question of the criteria is where the line is drawn for the definition. To be sure, for practical binary purposes, this can be negligible; but one can imagine at a quantum theoretical level, where considerations go to the infinitesimal, how this criteria is quite important.

question. Consequently in the code, "x = x/2" is an act of revision, where "x" divides itself by "2," presumably to get to some core of itself.

The next line, "if x == 0:," asks whether "x" is identical to "0," that is, if it sees its own value as equal to naught. Notice that a double "=" is used here instead of one used in the first line: it shows the program asking a question of identity, rather than prescribing one. As we can see, if conditions are met, it will print "Salvation" and then "break" out of the program. On the other hand, "elif x < 0:" wonders if "x" does not see its own value as equal to nothing, perhaps it is negative – in that case, it would consequently "break" out of the program as well. At this point, from the program's first run-through, the value of "x" is "0.5," since it has been revised to half. Thus, none of the above conditions are met, it moves on to "else," and the program is allowed to "continue." The whole process is then repeated from "while x > 0:," except now "x" is valued and considered differently. What we can see is that with each of the program's iteration, with each beginning again, the value of "x" gets smaller and smaller, each time with the outcry of "What hath God wrought?" – in a metaphysical sense, the more times "x" has divided itself to get to its core, the more times it has cried out. It repeats the process of repelling and revising, perpetually stepping out of itself to perceive itself. We might even say this were an ecstatic piece of code. Furthermore, what is ironic about this program is its line of revision: with "x = x/2," "x" will never reach "0," hence the program will forever ask "What hath God wrought?"

To be sure, if taken by itself, our poetic analysis can easily be dismissed as theoretically self-justified nonsense. However, through the analysis, we have learned a new language and logic, one that is fragmented, one that repels our common senses, one that underlies so much of the technology we use every day. At the same time, a large portion of our population uses this language in work and play, sitting behind desks and silvery screens that unknowingly mirror

their faces and expressions; yesterday a nose, today lips, maybe tomorrow the right eye. Perhaps they might be regarded as the poets of our era. And how are they disrupting our conventions? How are they formulating new frameworks? How do they manipulate language and what do they create? Although it is highly technical, computer programming is also an extremely creative endeavor. With its fingers clearly reaching into the spheres of culture and language, computer science is one of many fields where a *pedagogy of touch* might be well-suited. On the other hand, it is difficult to imagine living in the twenty-first century and not be steeped in language, so perhaps it might be well-suited wherever it is. After all, "We live on a little island of the articulable, which we tend to mistake for reality itself" (Robinson 2012, 21), and what a reality to miss if we chose not to pay attention.

Appendix

Czander-on-paper

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