

A COMMENTARY ON THERESA HAK KYUNG CHA'S *DICTÉE*

Michael Stone-Richards

Elle [la certitude] appelle, elle insiste, elle éclate dans chaque phrase qu'on lit. Mais elle reste sans objet. Si, après tout, cette certitude [d'être appelé] n'était rien? Si le plus vif de la mémoire était oublié sans fond? Alors la remémoration ne serait plus tentative d'arracher au temps perdu quelques souvenirs pour les revivre. Elle serait effort pour s'avancer toujours plus loin dans l'oubli.

—Michèle Montrelay, *L'ombre et le nom*, 1977

Comment savoir que ce qui fait retour est bien ce qui avait disparu?

—Jean-Francois Lyotard, *Lectures d'enfance*, 1991

[The feeling of certitude] calls out, it insists, it bursts out in every sentence which one reads. But it remains without object. / If, after all, this certitude [of being called] was nothing? If the keenest part of memory was endless oblivion? Then remembering would no longer be the attempt to pull some recollections from lost time in order to re-live them. It would be the effort to move oneself always further within oblivion.

How may it be known that what makes for a return is indeed that which had disappeared?

PART I¹

The opening scene, event and sounds: *pour quoi aller à la ligne . . .*

1

Where does a work begin? The question may appear a simple one. Maybe, even, not the desired formulation, though a certain simplicity may have its value. It has never been a simple question, and even though a certain rhetoric of anti-origins has achieved the status of critical orthodoxy, it is clear, as romantic historiography would show, that the question of origins as formulated, or may be, as approached, by the early romantics, was but the outline of a problem engaging reader, response, writer, culture and historicity where the question of agency would indicate that agency did not reside exclusively in the writer-as-subject.² One might even go so far as to say that an understanding of formalism in aesthetic modernity—from Russian formalism and Surrealist automatism to the geology of language prevalent in J.H. Prynne’s use of etymology³—is one that comprehends the modern artist as one who simultaneously investigates medium, as well as the conditions of articulation within a linguistically mediated historicity, from which would logically flow the problem of origination(s) as the means by which is encountered the related problem, namely, the (im)-possibility of there being a position from which to view the problem of origins.⁴ No writing—or art—within an avant-garde or post-avant-garde, modernist or post-modernist mode has escaped this problematic, and it is something that has defined critical responsiveness. An aspect of this problem is the question of the relationship between reception of a work and the reading of a work, and it is this problem which I shall be confronting in a study of the poet, film-maker and artist Theresa Hak Kyung Cha (b. Pusan, Korea, 1951 - d. New York, 1982) whose book *Dictée*

¹ The work for this “Commentary” was begun whilst holding a position as visiting professor in English and Comparative Literature in the Department of English at Stonehill College, 2003-2005. I here express my gratitude to the College as also to Professor Barbara Estrin, Chair of the Department of English, for the support given me and my work. This is the first of a set of “Commentaries on Theresa Hak Kyung Cha’s *Dictée*,” partially to appear in Michael Stone-Richards, *Logics of Separation: Exile and Transcendence in Aesthetic Modernity* (forthcoming, Peter Lang). I am also grateful to the College for Creative Studies in making possible my visit in 2007 to the Cha archives at BAMPFA, University of California, Berkeley.

² Cf. Timothy J. Clark, *The Theory of Inspiration: Composition as a Crisis of Subjectivity in Romantic and Post-Romantic Writing* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997); Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, *L’Absolu littéraire* (Paris: Seuil, 1978).

³ On the silent use of etymology in Prynne’s poetry, “the unemphasized but radical demands it makes upon English etymologies,” cf. the early response of Donald Davie in “The Hawk’s Eye,” *Thomas Hardy and British Poetry* (London: RKP, 1973), 115.

⁴ Cf. Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, “Le système-sujet,” *L’Absolu littéraire*, 39-52, and J.H. Prynne, following Jakobsen and Benveniste in the refusal of the arbitrariness of the sign in favor of a historically conditioned account of signification and reference, *Stars, Tigers and the Shape of Words* (London: Birkbeck College, 1993), and Émile Benveniste, “Nature du signe linguistique (1939),” *Problèmes de linguistique générale* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), 49-55.

(1982) has continued to receive growing critical attention and a not insignificant aspect of which is centered around the question of the relationship between reception and reading.⁵

Consider, for example, Elaine Kim's opening declaration to the anthology co-edited by her, *Writing Self: Writing Nation*, tellingly titled, "Poised on the In-between: A Korean-American's Reflection on Theresa Hak Kyng's *Dictée*":

The first time I glanced at *Dictée*, I was put off by the book. I thought that Theresa Cha was talking not to me but rather to someone so remote from myself that I could not recognize "him." The most I could hope for, I thought, was to be permitted to stand beside her while she addressed "him." I was struggling at the time to define and claim a Korean American Identity that could protect me from erasure or further marginalization in my American life. What *Dictée* suggested, with its seemingly incongruous juxtapositions, its references to Greek etymology, and its French grammar exercises, seemed far afield from the identity I was after.⁶

In a later contribution to the same anthology, Shelly Sunn Wong provides a cogent reason as to why *Dictée* may not have been *receivable* in the context of Asian-American writing of the 1980s dominated as such writing was formally by realist autobiographical modes and in terms of gender politics by notions of Asian manhood:

In this milieu, *Dictée's* trenchant critique of identity and foundational discourses could hardly have made it a representative work within the context of existing Asian American political realities. However, perhaps because of its formal density and complexity, a complexity which resisted reductive generalizations of meaning, *Dictée's* critics never vilified the work but simply set it aside.⁷

But what is this formal density and complexity, and what difference might it make to the understanding of reception to take into account a reading of the formal density and complexity of *Dictée*? Elaine H. Kim's more recent comment on Cha's work does little or nothing to address what it may be in the fabric or difficulty of the work itself that helps to generate or indeed to resist an audience or certain styles of reading, why indeed the framework of her own pioneering work of 1982, *Asian American Literature*, could not possibly have engaged *Dictée* and its distinctive forms of articulation, and consequently the modes of experience which it uncovers as shaping of a self in perpetual motion and exile encountered precisely because of the experience of avant-garde

⁵ Cf. Elaine H. Kim and Norma Alarcon, eds., *Writing Self, Writing Nation: Essays on Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's Dictée* (Berkeley: Third Woman Press, 1994). Since this commentary was begun there has appeared a study that looks at the visual dimension in *Dictée* as a critical politics of visibility. Cf. Thy Phu, "Decapitated Forms: Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's Visual Text and the Politics of Visibility," *Mosaic*, vol. 38, no. 1, March 2005. We shall discuss the status and role of the visual in *Dictée* below.

⁶ Elaine Kim, "Poised on the In-between: A Korean-American's Reflection on Theresa Hak Kyng's Cha *Dictée*," *Writing Self, Writing Nation*, 3.

⁷ Shelly Sunn Wong, "Unnaming the Same: Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictée*," in *Writing Self, Writing Nation*, 130. It could also be said, of course, that Cha, like say, Nam June Paik, did not figure in any of the networks of Asian-American realist writers or artists.

forms.⁸ We are informed by Kim that Cha's "work . . . has been fought over by various parties that wish to claim it for themselves," aligning herself with "the contenders [who] include both Asian Americanists who believe that Cha's identity as a gendered and racialized Korean American⁹ is crucial to the understanding of her work," as against "historians of avant-garde art who . . . fear that brainless advocates of 'identity politics' will flatten and reduce her work with their 'disheveled,' 'mawkish,' 'bumper-sticker'-level readings."¹⁰ Who, though, could deny the *question*—which cannot be the fact—of gender in Cha's poetics, or that her own experience of the encounter with Korea—both idea and place—was characterized by hurt, regret, rejection and at times fearsome anger? It remains, though, to be seen whether Cha's poetics of exile, in terms of which difference and "Korea" needs be thought, would have been possible, made available without a certain avant-garde tradition as expressed, for example, by Susan Sontag in the limpid statement: "Most serious thought in our time struggles with the feeling of homelessness,"¹¹ or by Heidegger in his movement away from philosophy via poetry to thought, for, said Heidegger in the "Letter on Humanism," "Homelessness is coming to be the destiny of the world," and so one must learn to think the "The essence of the homeland [in terms of] the intention of thinking the homelessness of contemporary man."¹² Making *Dictée* legible by ascribing racialized Korean American gender simply begs the question or solves it by fiat. It is becoming increasingly clear that debates around *Dictée* are dominated by the question of reception and how, for some, reception may be conditioned, if not determined, by the rhetorical fabric and phenomenologies of com-position of *Dictée* itself and its work beyond genre, a work beyond—and against—genre issued from the formality inaugurated by early Romanticism and codified by modernism of which figures such as Blanchot, Duras, late Beckett, no less than Barbara Guest or Paul Auster (of "White Spaces") or, currently, Anne Carson and Mei-mei Berssenbrugge may be taken as emblematic.

Whilst it is assuredly—and demonstrably—not correct to say that the first responses to *Dictée* were de-contextualized appropriations, it borders on the anachronistic to say that the so-called neglect of Cha "in

⁸ Cf. Elaine H. Kim, *Asian American Literature: An Introduction to the Writings and their Social Context* (Philadelphia: Temple University, 1982).

⁹ And what would be "unracialized Korean"? And where does the stress fall: on the *unracialized* Korean American or on the unracialized *Korean American*?

¹⁰ Elaine H. Kim, "Interstitial Subjects: Asian American Visual Art as a Site for New Cultural Conversation," in Elaine H. Kim, Margo Machida, and Sharon Mizota, *Fresh Talk, Daring Gazes: Conversations on Asian American Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 47.

¹¹ Susan Sontag, "The Anthropologist as Hero," *Against Interpretation* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1966), 69. Consider, too, the title of a major study of the poet of Négritude, Aimé Césaire, by M. a M. Ngai, *Aimé Césaire: un homme à la recherche d'une patrie* (Dakar-Abidjan: Nouvelles Editions Africaines, 1975). The Aimé Césaire who, in an interview with the *Magazine Littéraire*, could say, "Je n'ai pas du tout quitté la Martinique avec regret, j'étais très content de partir. Incontestablement, c'était une joie de secouer la poussière de mes sandales sur cette île où j'avais l'impression d'étouffer. Je ne me plaisais pas dans cette société étroite, mesquine; et, aller en France, c'était pour moi un acte de libération." "Un Poète politique: Aimé Césaire," *Propos recueillis par François Beloux, Magazine littéraire* n° 34 November 1969. This same person who did not quit Martinique with regret would be the poet who returned (*Cahier d'un retour*) in a lifelong quest for the *pays natal*.

¹² Martin Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism" (1947) in *Basic Writings* (Harper: San Francisco, 1993), 243 and 241.

debates concerning innovation in twentieth-century art and cultural politics of race can be explained in part by her opacity, incoherence, and seeming inaccessibility.”¹³ As the early response to *Dictée* and Cha’s experimental film and performance work shows clearly, she was approached as a young emerging practitioner with a place in a community of avant-garde artists from San Francisco. With her move to New York (1980) and appointment as Instructor in video art at Elizabeth Seaton College and part-time work in the Design Department of the Metropolitan Museum (1981), followed in 1982 by a residency at Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Cha was following a predictable institutional path for the talented, young emerging artist entirely typical of the period. Her association with the Tanam Press founded by Reese Williams gives her membership of a group and community where her work will have an audience, however small—that she, in line with avant-garde inculcation, did not expect otherwise is shown clearly by her letter to her mother written when she was a student in Paris¹⁴—but even more important where she will be assured a venue for the publication of her work, whence the substantial critical anthology *Apparatus: Cinematographic Apparatus: Selected Writings* (1981) edited by Cha at a time when the use of psychoanalysis by the new film theory had yet to be institutionalized and codified, followed by *Dictée* (1982), and no doubt there would have been others.¹⁵ As it is,

¹³ Thy Phu, “Decapitated Forms,” 19. Cf. Helena Grice, who writes: “After graduating, Cha embarked upon a varied and experimental career as a film-maker and artist, and her work won several prestigious awards, including a Beard’s Fund award in 1982. Her auto/biographical text *Dictée* was first published by Tanam Press in 1982, just before she was tragically killed in New York City, on 5 November of that year. Critical recognition of *Dictée* has thus largely occurred posthumously, with a range of articles discussing the text appearing with increasing frequency from 1983 onwards. This critical attention has recently *culminated* in the publication in 1994 of a collection of essays on *Dictée*, entitled *Writing Self, Writing Nation*.” Helena Grice, “Korean American National Identity in Theresa Hak Kyung Cha’s *Dictée*,” in Alison Donnell and Pauline Polkey, eds., *Representing Lives: Women and Auto/biography* (Basingstokes and London: Macmillan Press, 2000), 43 (my emphasis).

¹⁴ Cha writes to her mother from Paris in 1978: “I think I am getting some answers from deep inside. It will be blown out some day. I believe it. It is not only for myself. I like to let other people know that there is the pure, lily-like simplicity and beauty somewhere in the world. Of course, I will get a lot of sufferings and heartache because of the crazy and strange world but I will be satisfied with illuminating my ideas like a clear mirror *to one or two persons*. . . . Anyway if I am good someone will listen to my voice.” *In Honor of Theresa Hak Kyung Cha* (1983, my emphasis. Privately published book in the Theresa Hak Kyung Cha Archives, Berkeley).

¹⁵ Consider, for example, Reese Williams’ reflections on the commencement and ending of Tanam Press in his “Preface” to *Fire Over Water* (dedicated “In Memory of Theresa Hak Kyung Cha”), the final volume produced by Tanam Press: “I remembered my first impulse to publish which took form as *Hotel* (Tanam Press, 1980). This book, a collection with seven contributors, was not “edited” in the usual sense of the word. Instead of selecting work that I felt merited greater attention, I invited seven people to create new work for *Hotel*. *It was understood that we would go with whatever they came up with, and that their “being together” would be the book*.” Reese Williams, ed., *Fire Over Water* (New York: Tanam Press, 1986), 1 (my emphasis). To date there has been no consideration of the possibility that aspects of Cha’s practice of photography in *Dictée* may well have been part of a shared practice with Reese Williams and others published by Tanam Press. To look at the books published by Tanam Press—beginning with Reese Williams’ own works—*Figure-Eight: A Fable* (1981) and *A Pair of Eyes* (1983) and including Werner Herzog, *Of Walking on Ice* (1980) and *Screenplays* (1980)—is to see an ethos

we find in Cha's developing oeuvre a certain use of psychoanalysis, with a certain use of semiotics—inflected by Constructivist principles¹⁶—alongside a pervasive Jungianism entirely characteristic, indeed, definitive of the ethos of Tanam Press, though such a conjunction was also present in the work of Olson and certain of his collaborators such as Robert Duncan.¹⁷ The death of Cha leaves in abeyance how this admixture of Jungianism, Constructivism, Semiotics and Psycho-Analysis could have been sustained given subsequent conceptual developments and alliances in what came to be known as "Theory."¹⁸ It is as well, though, to recall P. Adams Sitney's statement of thesis for his study of Visionary Film:

I will show in this book how the trance film gradually developed into the architectonic, mythopoeic film, with a corresponding shift from Freudian preoccupations to those of Jung; and then how the decline of the mythological film was attended by the simultaneous rise of both the diary and the structural film.¹⁹

centered upon the innovative use of photographic image and text in relation to film. Where, for example, Cha chooses not to identify any of the photographic sources for *Dictée*, Williams gives a whole page of credits for *A Pair of Eyes* (including a still from Godard's *Pierrot le Fou*), in contrast, no credits or sources are given for *Figure-Eight*.

¹⁶ The same Constructivist principles whose trajectories may be situated relative to Gertrude Stein, International Constructivism, Dziga Vertov—compare, for example, James Cha's photograph of Cha's hands over a typewriter (1979) with stills of the typewriter from *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929)—along with Mallarmé's *Un Coup de dés* and which is practiced in the work of Lynn Hejinian, Marjorie Welish—above all her work as a painter—and the French (at times English?) writer, distinguished curator and Matisse scholar Dominique Fourcade.

¹⁷ Here one might consider the significance of the use of hand of sheet mica from the Hopewell Culture as the cover of *Fire Over Water*, the discussion and (cover) illustration of this hand in Joseph Campbell's *The Way of Zen* (vol. I, 1983), and the profound significance of the work and iconography of the hand in the oeuvre of Cha.

¹⁸ It should not, however, be thought, given the role of Lacan's thought in the development of "Theory" and Film Theory in particular, that there is necessarily incompatibility of Lacanian and Jungian thought on all points. It remains that Jung's questions to Freud on the nature of schizophrenia spurred Freud to think about the language of psychosis in such a way that it is arguable that the distinctive Lacanian conception of the psychoses in terms of paranoia would scarce make sense, and this all the more when it is realized just how much certain of the conceptual categories of Lacan's medical doctoral thesis is indebted to, and emergent from, the reigning Bleulerian nosographies of the later 1920s. Cf. John Forrester, *Language and the Origins of Psychoanalysis* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1980), 110-111ff, and cf. the interview with Wladimir Granoff, "Des années de très grand bonheur," *Le Désir d'analyse* (Paris: Aubier, 2004), 138. Jungianism, Freudianism and Lacanianism are on the similar territory precisely where it is a question of the archaic and the psychoses, which is also the terrain of *Dictée* from Demeter, to the illness of the Mother to the incipient madness revealed in the letter to Laura Claxton.

¹⁹ P. Adams Sitney, *Visionary Film: The American Avant-Garde, 1943-1978* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 31.

In other words, the developments of avant-garde film, both before and after the rise of structural film, was one in which Jungian thought played a key role, one furthermore, as can be seen in the person of Stan Brakhage—and, in poetry, Charles Olson—that was in some respects shared with the development of American advanced painting of which Abstract Expressionism was only the most prominent component.²⁰ It remains that Cha died at the very moment where it could be reasonably assumed that, with an acknowledged body of work, she could have found an institutional base—if such indeed should have been her wish—with a body of work that could, in the customary way, have elicited response first in the restricted community of small presses and exhibitions before finding—or resisting—larger accreditation. Wendy Hui Kyong Chun is deeply unfair to an early response such as that of Michael Stephens—whose essay “Korea: Theresa Hak Kyung Cha” begins with a chapter entitled “Notes from an abandoned work”—for the terms of Stephens’ response (Beckett, Olson, with the necessity of following Cha’s movement toward the place of Korea) have in no way been superceded, and only very rarely deepened.²¹ Chun is, however, pointing to an important issue about the reciprocal tensions between reception and the rhetoricity of the work—for which the inaugural model for later modernism is assuredly Mallarmé—when she says that though the “readings [of *Writing Self, Writing Nation*] are crucial, I also contend that DICTEE exceeds any project to tether it to Korean and Korean American experiences.”²² Likewise is Anne Cheng, in a probing essay, pointing to something important in her grounding of the récit *Dictée*—she is rare in referring to the work as Cha herself referred to it, namely, as a récit or narrative—when she begins by re-iterating what is already present in Stephens’ (1986) essay, namely, that “Cha’s ‘novel’ [the scare quotes are Cheng’s] has more in common with poetic experimental writing dating back to the 1970s (Charles Olson, Robert Duncan) than with the majority of ethnic autobiographies flourishing in the 1980’s,” before commenting that “although, and perhaps precisely because, *Dictée* is not interested in identities, it is profoundly interested in the processes of *identification*.”²³

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²⁰ On the use of Jungian terms of reference in American art of this period, cf. Michael Leja, *Reframing Abstract Expressionism: Subjectivity and Painting in the 1940s* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993), and also Daniel Belgrad, *The Culture of Spontaneity: Improvisation and the Arts in Postwar America* (Chicago: University of Chicago of Press, 1998).

²¹ Cf. Michael Stephens, “Korea: Theresa Hak Kyung Cha: Notes from an abandoned work,” *The Dramaturgy of Style: Voice in Short Fiction* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1986).

²² Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, “The Limits of Thinking Theory: Responding to the Theory/Practice Debate in Asian American Studies” (paper presented at the University of North Carolina, 1999), 14, <<http://www.brown.edu/Departments/MCM/people/chun/papers/limits.PDF>>.

²³ Anne Cheng, “History in/against the fragment: Theresa Hak Kyung Cha,” *The Melancholy of Race* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 140 and 141. Here might be the place to make a simple observation on the forms “DICTEE” and “Dictée”: in French orthography, as Cha knew, the “é” requires no (acute) accent when capitalized and so I shall follow the practice of Cheng in writing “Dictée.” That the capitalization DICTEE might be significant for its use of sans serif as a mark of a certain modernism would require further development, but it may also point out the use of capitals to suggest the title and movement of a film.

“Experience / whose line doth sound the depth of things”

There could be no better way, I would suggest, of beginning to respond to the question of density and complexity and the effects which flow therefrom than to confront the opening event of language in this work as it gives onto an opening scene, itself given over to another event where language and action resist each other in what I shall argue is part-and-parcel of a sustained thinking of logics of separation and the experience of resistance. As one turns the cover of the book of *Dictée*, the first leaf—call it the frontispiece—shows, not a photograph, but a *photocopy* (Fig. 1), that is, an image of diminished light which is a photomechanical copy in relation to a prior image.²⁴ Given the prevalence of this practice of image-making in the work of Cha (for example, *Chronology*, 1977) and her contemporaries, it can be inferred from the image-quality

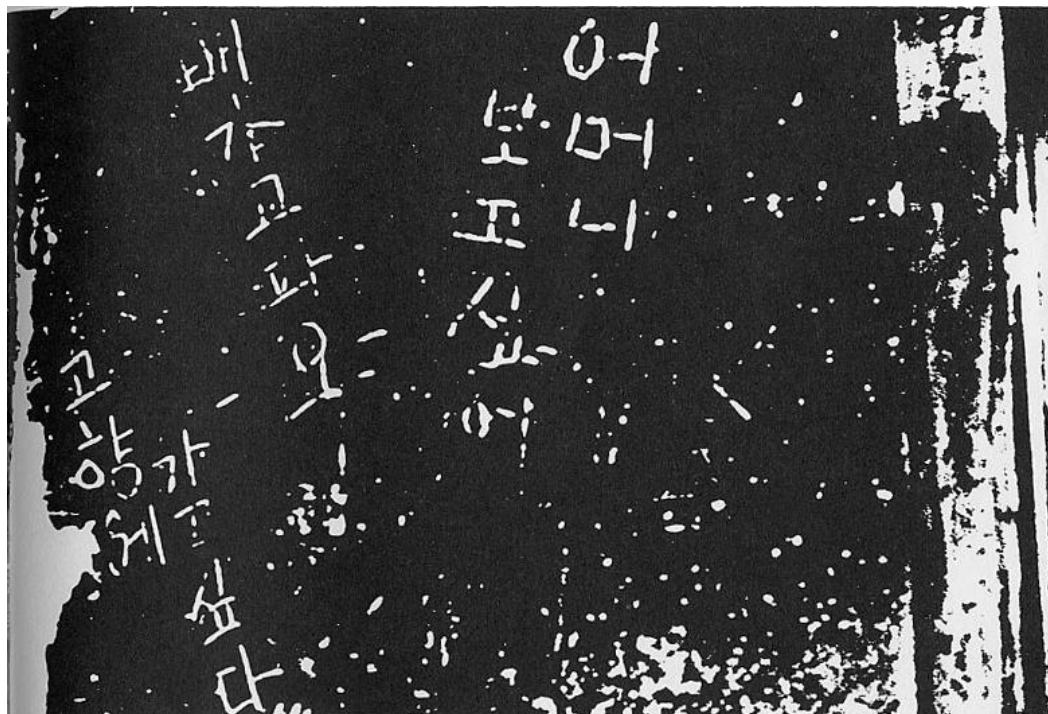


Fig. 1: Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, Frontispiece, *Dictée*, 1982

and *texture* that it is the result of several copies of copies.²⁵ There is no doubt that any one literate in Korean (or even only familiar with the Korean alphabet Hangul) would readily recognize the writing presented in this

²⁴ Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *Dictée* (New York: Tanam Press, 1982). All subsequent references to *Dictée* will appear in text as D followed by page number.

²⁵ This aspect of the image of the frontispiece as photocopy has not always been appreciated even as it has been felt. For example, “Theresa Hak Kyung Cha’s *Dictée* begins with a blurred photograph,” says Elisabeth A.

image as Korean, and not unlikely that any one literate in contemporary Korean history, which is to say, Korean history from the period of the Japanese colonial occupation of Korea, would recognize this image without necessarily being able to read the text, which is also to say that the image functions symbolically, not unlike the manner in which a Latin tag functions. Not unlike, but not exactly the same. The question, then, would not be first to do with decipherment, but rather that concerning the function of the image, or, in other words,

Frost, “‘In Another Tongue’: Body, Image, Text in Theresa Hak Kyung Cha’s *Dictée*,” in Laura Hinton and Cynthia Hougue, eds., *We Who Love to Be Astonished: Experimental Women’s Writing and Performance Poets* (Tuscaloosa and London: The University of Alabama Press, 2002), 181, whilst another, earlier commentator, Eun Kyung Min, will observe that “The frontispiece to *Dictée* consists of a grainy reproduction of writing in Korean script” (Eun Kyung Min, “Reading the Figure of Dictation on Theresa Hak Kyung Cha’s *Dictée*,” 313) and Juliana Spahr will note this “single, originary photograph (which looks badly photocopied and several generations from the original),” commenting upon “its blotchiness and obvious distance from the original [which] suggests an impure product, an image that is several removes even from Cha” (“Teretium Quid Neither One Thing Nor the Other,” 150).

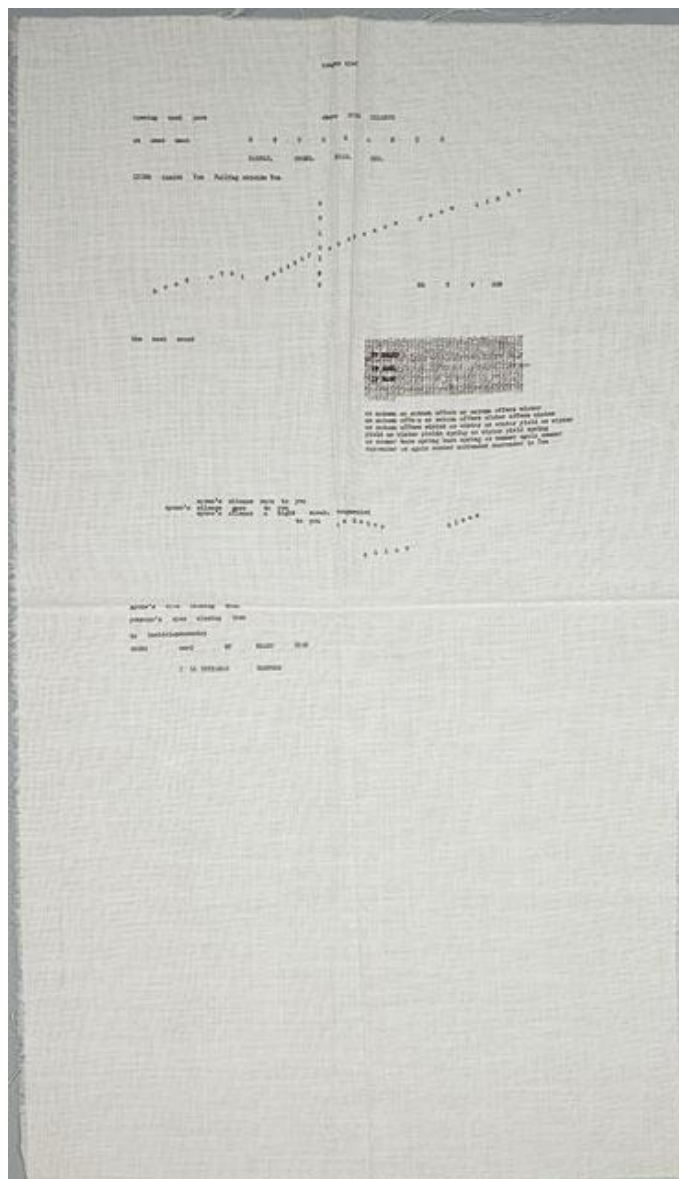


Fig. 2 Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *Tongue Tied*, 1976. Typewritten text on white cloth, 26 X 15. Collection Berkeley Art Museum

its depiction, and in this respect the quality of the depicted image most pertinent to the argument to be developed in this essay is its texture or the working and wearing away of surface: it is faded, appears rubbed down, worn in such a way as to minimize the perceptible and articulable difference between “writing” and support, between lighter and darker, in such a way, in short, as to make the document presented appear, on

the one hand, faded, but also, on the other hand, fragile, indeed, papyrus-like, as though an archeological document, suggestive of the very texture of memory fading to the archaic. But the archaic of what? After title page and copyright declaration, comes a dedication (a declaration of filial piety) “To my mother and father,” then a blank, white page followed, on an unnumbered page, by the invocation as epigraph, attributed to Sappho:

May I write words more naked than flesh,
stronger than bone, more resilient than
sinew, sensitive than nerve

Another blank page (all white), followed on the right by two columns *in parallel*: on the left column, the names of the muses (with a variant muse “Elitere”—in French, “Eutere” is a variant of “Euterpe”) and their corresponding domains, terrains of privilege: Clio/History, Calliope/Epic Poetry, Elitere/Lyric Poetry, etc., Blank, and then, page 1—there is no use of roman numerals for numbered pages—the opening event:

Aller à la ligne C’était le premier jour point
Elle venait de loin point ce soir au dîner virgule
les familles demanderaient virgule ouvre les guil-
lemets Ca c’est bien passé le premier jour point
d’interrogation ferme les guillemets au moins
virgule dire le moins possible virgule la reponse
serait virgule ouvre les guillemets Il n’y a q’une
chose point ferme les guillemets ouvre les guille-
met Il y a quelqu’une point loin point ferme
les guillemets

Open paragraph It was the first day period
She had come from a far period tonight at dinner
comma the families would ask comma open
quotation marks How was the first day interroga-
tion mark close quotation marks at least to say
the least of its possible comma the answer would be
open quotation marks there is but one thing period
There is someone period From a far period
close quotation marks

Between the tercet opening “May I write words more naked than flesh” and “Aller à la ligne” with its accompanying English parallel—the issue of precedent order or no will remain open—is a world of difference, a difference in no small part embodied in and articulated through rhythm and breath: the vocalic ease of the epigraphic verse

May I write words more naked than flesh,

stronger than bone, more resilient than
sinew, sensitive than nerve

paves the way for the encounter with a multiply-domained phenomenology of resistance: the absence of rhythmic ease, the presence of saccadic breath, along with syntactic and visual dissonances brought about, we shall begin to apprehend, by the layout of linguistic use and mention as though the one might be continuous with another, without that is, any marker of hierarchy, and all in such a way as to emphasize, foreground and to dramatize the materiality and physicality of language. In his discourse on “Différance” pronounced in the halls of the Société française de philosophie in 1968, Jacques Derrida had tried to habituate his audience to the silent and necessarily unpronounceable *a* of *différance* by citing the examples of diacritical or phonetic marks which, though necessary for the functioning of language, cannot themselves be pronounced, which are necessarily inaudible, silent. Indeed, Derrida pointed out, the kind of non-phonetic markings which he has in mind such as punctuation or spacing can scarcely be considered signs properly so-called.²⁶ *Dictée*’s opening onto *Aller à la ligne / Open paragraph*, makes the material infrastructure of diacritical markings (*point, virgule / period, comma*) audible but in such a way that the diacritical markings are themselves without such markings as would enable the hearer readily to discern phonological hierarchy the effect of which, the first principle of Cha’s poetics, is to make *mention* continuous with *use* in a scene of utmost complexity and richness. The scene, the opening event of language, which may be construed as a figuration of a primal scene of language acquisition, is not singular but multiple and constitutes at the same time, possibly, the second instantiation of what the title “Dictée” might encompass—blurring the line between use and mention—firstly, the invocation to the muse, in this case, by indirection to Sappho, the tenth Muse, where what the poet writes is dictated by the Muse; then, too, “Dictée” may refer to the act of learning by dictation. The framework of utterance, of enunciation, then, is at the level of an imaginary, and the site of transmission of knowledge.²⁷

What is presented in this opening scene, this opening tableau? The emergent scene is that of a person (which may be, but by no means exclusively, figured as a foreign exchange student) in a foreign land, in the evening at dinner with a host family anchored in a French-language landscape who begin to put questions to the visitor (she who *venait de loin / had come from afar*) about her/*the first day*, since the absence of phonological hierarchy results in the effect of *she* being enclosed, wrapped in the day. There is no suggestion within the depicted scene of fluency on the part of the visitor who responds to the *questioning*, and the difficulties and resistances of utterance are doubled, shadowed in the foregrounding of orthography in that way in which when one is learning a language one can become acutely aware of its physicality and individuality as one makes each utterance an intended, explicit, and projected effort before speech, in other words, as though one thinks about and translates from one’s native language into the foreign tongue before utterance, the effect of which is always to slow down utterance, to make sentences thereby devoid of rhythm, in short clumsy, and as a result to feel the physicality of language as obstacle through clumsiness of speech, hence to the question posed “au moins / virgule dire le moins possible,” the hesitations and doubts of which are shadowed in the *effort* of “at least to say” and “the least of it possible.” Just as use and mention are subject to cultural as well as

²⁶ Cf. Jacques Derrida, “Différance,” *Marges de la philosophie* (Paris: Seuil, 1972), 5.

²⁷ In every class in which I have taught *Dictée*, students, in order to come to terms with, to make more tractable, this opening text, have re-written the passage without the mention of orthographical terms as injunctions, thereby shifting the visual arrhythmia of utterance and image to a presentation scene.

linguistic conventions—for instance, intonation alone may suffice in certain contexts to mark mention rather than use—reading on the page is no less conventionalized: English and French, by convention, require reading from left to right, top to bottom. The presentation of “Aller à la ligne” followed by “Open paragraph,” encourages the idea—that is, encourages by convention—that *Open paragraph* is a translation of what precedes it, namely, the passage beginning *Aller à la ligne*. Had the page begun with *Open paragraph*, then a conventionalized reading would instead have encouraged one to believe rather that *Aller à la ligne* is a translation of what preceded, namely, *Open paragraph*. Note, though, that from the first there is richness, complexity and much that makes it difficult to sustain the English as an evident translation of the French, for “Aller” is an infinitive which homonymically is the imperative “Allez”: “to go to the line” is not “Go to the line!” “Open paragraph” may sound contextually legitimate, but it is this contextualism that gives the idea of a separate subsequent translation by eschewing, putting aside the literalism of the terms present, a literalism that is essential to Cha’s poetics. In view of the fact, too, that there are many passages elsewhere in *Dictée* where the English is composed within the shadow of French syntax—and vice versa—it is by no means obvious that *Open paragraph* is simply a translation of a prior French passage, i.e., that it comes second, and not, in other words, to be taken holistically, harmonically, one might say, together with *Aller à la ligne* as though once read the reader should then grasp the two passages, in English and French, as two simultaneous scenes unfolding in parallel if not side by side (left to right) then as though on a screen split horizontally (top and bottom) as though watching a foreign film with sub-titles or in which the French and English would precisely be *not* subtitles but *as* they are; rather, the passages are in parallel because in parallel temporalities yet linked at a point of common perception, as though the page could be folded to show the two passages as near mirror images one of the other without knowing which image is the reflection of which substance. The mark of this possibility, to which we shall return below, is the use of literalism as a technique in Cha’s poetics: it is intended to be “Aller à la ligne”: both “to go to the line” and “Go to the line!” which literally is not “open paragraph.”

The opening event and scene is a primitive scene in that the reception of a stranger (from a far) is a mytheme, above all when the stranger is met at evening’s fall— “at the end of a day’s reaches”²⁸—and thus at the phenomenological threshold of day and night.²⁹ This opening is also primitive in that it dramatizes language in a place of emergence where time is not wholly present, and hence when translation not yet fully

²⁸ This verse is from Robert Duncan’s “Tribal Memories Passages 1,” which opens:

And to Her-Without-Bounds I send,
 wherever She wanders, by what
 campfire at evening,

among tribes setting each the City where
 we Her people are
 at the end of a day’s reaches

(Robert Duncan, *Selected Poems* [New York: New Directions, 1993], 78).

²⁹ Given the prevalence of filmic techniques and issues in film theory in *Dictée*, we might here speak not only of the phenomenological threshold of day and night but equally, that is to say, at the same time, of light and darkness, that is, the conditions of entering or leaving a movie theatre.

operative: “Il y a quelqu’une point loin / There is someone period From a far period”; it is, finally, but by no means least, a primitive scene because in poetically blurring the distinction between use and mention—re-writing this passage to make graphic the orthography is but an escape, as it were—not only is the materiality and physicality of language made a substance and subject of language, but, crucially, language use is made subject to a *threshold experience* the exploration of which will result in a distinct spatiality and anachrony of time—the emergence of a *passé anachronique*—as can be seen in the pages following “Aller à la ligne,” after, that is, a blank on page four, titled “Disease,” for the blank white page following “Aller à la ligne” marks a transition of register, a distance crossed, but it also carries expressive value, that of a pause, a calm between two different forms of complex deployments of breath and syncopated breathing as the line (*ligne*), marker and holder for threshold and transitional placement, moves experience, the experience of the reader-viewer-audience, to allude to Jonson’s *Under-Woods*, “whose line doth sound the depth of things.” For the movement of line is at once punctually horizontal—upon and across the white surface of the page—and vertical, as the image upon a screen where the apparatus, the materiality supporting the cinematic situation, is laid bare in precisely the manner in which the materiality of language has been laid bare through the phonologically non-hierarchical deployment of use and mention. The event of language is carried through and by the material equivalence of the page to the screen in the approach to the line—*Aller à la ligne*—and the scene of the paragraph opened, that is, an event in the beyond (*para*) of writing (*graph*) is announced, whence, beginning from the event of language, the encounter with resistance and difficulty as embodied in the fractured and fracturing forms of the “Disease,” a figure, as we shall come to see, which embodies the forms of fortune teller (Disease de bonne aventure), shaman (Mudang), and *récitante* (Sprechstimme).

3

One way in which *Dictée*’s exploitation of a materiality of equivalence between screen and page can be appreciated is by considering aspects of the sixth division of *Dictée* titled “Erato Love Poetry” which will enable us to return to an understanding of the function of the photocopied image used as frontispiece for the work. The parallelisms of which we have been speaking—night and day, light and darkness, spatial parallels, etc.—are immediately presented on pages 94 and 95 which must be apprehended simultaneously and not in sequence: the left page containing 24 lines beginning “She is entering now” juxtaposed with the right page of five lines interspersed with paragraphs of white beginning “Columns. White. Stone.” The simultaneity of presentation and apperception is then underscored by imagery within the page, that is, the columns which are both vertical (hence top to bottom of the page) and horizontal (there is more than one, and hence an implied rhythm). The reading is not left to right, that is, from page 94 to page 95: either it is simultaneous—it could also be at the same time the script of a scenario—or, the materiality of the hand and the page is thematized as the sequence of reading moves to alternate paging thereby making one aware of the hand turning the page simultaneously with the eye searching for a point of continuation. So, for example, page 97 which is blank until three lines which *fall* at the bottom of the page, ends “With the hand placed across on the other’s lips, moving, form- “ which then continues at the top of page 99: “ing the words.” The top half of page 99 is a paragraph of lines, followed by a paragraph of blank, whilst page 98, to which the technique of reading that the text imposes returns us, opens on a paragraph of blank followed by two paragraphs of lines in the latter half of the page, in other words, an inverse mirror image. This particular mode of patterning continues for much of “Erato

Love Poetry” with variations on the patterning, and variations of implied acts of mimetic accompanying. The connotations which mark out the possibilities of mimetic doubling are many: the use of white in the punctuation of the page as marking the implied imagery of white columns, for example, or large vertical white pages with few lines of text at the bottom as marking the *fall* of the verticality of white columns; throughout *Dictée* is strewn imagery of surfaces, kinds of surfaces, “Stone. Abrasive and worn” (D 95), “Fine grain sanded velvet wood and between the frames the pale sheet of paper” (D 131), and words too can be a surface hence like columns can be weathered, whence, “Words cast each by each to weather” (D 177), and the white page can stand in for and accompany, even enact the apperception of such surfaces, resistant, as with stone, or instead as a medium of suspension, where someone may be “suspended, in a white mist, in white layers of memory. In layers of forgetting, increasing the density of mist, the opaque light fading to absence, the object of memory” (D 108); or it is a white cloth, “Whitest of beige” (D 113). It is, too, a membrane, whence “Contents housed in membranes” (64). Above all, however, is the white page a screen—“Whiteness of the screen” (D 95)—in relation to which the play of black and white is materially equivalent to the play of black ink on white page, the support on to which a medium (ink, light, blood) may spill: From the opening of “Urania Astronomy,” for example, “Contents housed in membranes. Stain from within dispel in drops in spills. . . . *Stain begins to absorb the material spilled*” (D 64 and D 65).

For much of “Erato Love Poetry” there is a very careful play upon devices of framing as means of staging the question of transition and threshold and liminal experience (or suspension). Nominally, the transition is between what is outside and what is inside a film, who—or what—is viewing and who—or what—is being viewed, then, between entering a movie theatre and entering a filmic space. The parallelism of these *situations* is carried through syntactical parallelism. The division opens:

She is entering now. Between the two
white columns. White and stone.
Abrasive. Worn.

The doors close behind her. She
purchases the ticket, a blue one. She
stands on line, and waits. Etc

Columns. White. Stone. Abrasive and
worn. touch [etc.].

Once entered, there is a startling moment which figures the moment of transition, spatially, temporally, phenomenologically and, crucially, topographically:

[she] climbs three steps into the room. The whiteness of the screen takes her back wards
almost half a step.

The slight spacing between “back” and “ward” should not go unnoticed, is not a fault of typography—in the right column we have “Takes her backwards”—since this marks a journey, a moment of haltingness, a psychic movement hinted at in the near implicit slant rime of *half a step* with *half asleep*, as the mark of a zone of transition that is phenomenological and now topographical in the Freudian sense of this term, for the hinted near rime of “back [pause] ward almost half a step [to half asleep]” articulated the transition with which Cha’s generation of film theorists influenced by Roland Barthes were deeply preoccupied, namely: is the entering into

the space of the cinematic experience—or, the space projected through the cinematic apparatus—a regressive experience, a regression from the Symbolic to the Imaginary? Or is it indeed the source of, the transition to, a distinctive pleasure of the Imaginary? That this is the domain of questioning and experience pertinent to this division of *Dictée* is re-inforced in the continuation of the narrative through the crossing of threshold without markers of distinction:

Whiteness of the screen. Takes her
backwards.

She enters the screen from the left,
before the titles fading in and fading out.

Later we will learn, tracking the movement of a character on-screen, “Then you, as viewer and guest, enter the house,” (D 98) thereby foregrounding the issue of cinematic identification made possible through the entering, fading in and fading out. The *fading in and fading out* is the mark of a phenomenological experience, potentially a topographical stage (of reversion, regression to the Imaginary), but also the marker of a discourse: of the status of black-and-white-film, and of the status of cinematic experience. Hence of the title of his essay contribution to *Apparatus*, “Blinking, Flickering and Flashing in the Black-and-White Film,” Marc Vernet comments;

“Black-and-white” is hyphenated because it is not so much a question of their opposition as it is of their conjunction – their fusion, one in the other at the same time.

“Blinking, Flickering, and Flashing,” thinking first of Gaston Bachelard, of his work entitled *La flamme d’une chandelle*.³⁰

If the allusion to Bachelard may be construed as a marker for the register of the imaginary—not necessarily to be taken in the same sense as Lacan’s *Imaginaire*—then the fusion of the black-and-white in film, and behind it, the implicit reference to the scenes of blinking eyes intercut with shutter blinds from Vertov’s *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929),³¹ serve to situate the problematic of the imaginary with the symbolic which for *Dictée* is worked through a consistent parallelism of screen and page, whence the attention to the formality, the grain of light and dark, black and white where word and filmic image meet, after *she* has

[entered] the screen from the left, before the titles fading in and fading out. The white subtitles on the background continue across the bottom of the screen. The titles and names in black appear from the upper right hand corner, each letter moving downwards on to the whiteness of the screen. She is drawn to the white, then to the black. In whiteness the shadows move across, dark shapes and dark light. (D 94)

³⁰ Marc Vernet, *Apparatus*, 357.

³¹ The passage from Henry James contains the following variations on the metaphors of shades, reflections, pulse and half lights: “At the end of two flights he had dropped to another zone, and from the middle of the third, with only one more left, he recognised the influence of the lower windows, of half-drawn blinds, of the occasional gleam of street-lamps, of the glazed spaces of the vestibule” (James, cited in Cha, *Apparatus*, 411).

What is here presaged, in an almost glorified myopia of insight, is the near dissolution of word into texture, light and shade: dark shapes and dark light, itself articulating the (irresistible?) temptation: *She is drawn to the white, then the black*, leading to a situation where “In the whiteness the shadows move across, dark shapes and dark light,” that is, a situation of primal, maybe even foundational indistinction and indifferenciation. *She is drawn to the white, then the black*. In Barthes’ essay “Upon Leaving the Movie Theater,” which forms the programmatic introduction to Cha’s *Apparatus*, the question is posed:

A filmic image (sound included), what is it? A lure [*leurre*]. This word must be taken in its psychoanalytic sense. I am locked in on the image as though I were caught in the famous dual relationship which establishes the imaginary. The image is there before me, for my benefit: coalescent (signifier and signified perfectly blended), analogical, global, pregnant. It is a perfect lure [*leurre* is also *bait*]. I pounce upon it as an animal snatches up a “lifelike” rag.³²

That there is an older, definitive form of this question was something clear to the film theorists of Cha’s generation. There are, in effect, not one but two contributions that Cha makes to her edited anthology *Apparatus*: first, the conceptual constructivist work “Commentaire” which has received acknowledgement,³³ but also another work—which I do not believe has been recognized as such—dispersed in sections throughout the anthology consisting of quotations. Instead of writing introductions to each work or section of the anthology, Cha, as editor, interposes, like found objects, black pages on which are written in white, quotations. Using only the information provided in Cha’s texts, in order, they are quotations from Plato, *The Republic*, vii, 514, trans. by Francis M. Cornford (*Apparatus* 23), Diderot (*Apparatus* 39), Balzac (*Apparatus* 65), Apollinaire, “Le Roi Lune” (1902-1908) (*Apparatus* 371), and Henry James, (*Apparatus* 411).³⁴ In other words, it is not incidental that alone of all the passages Plato’s *Republic* with the passage from Apollinaire’s “The Moon King” are named, even as the quoted passage from *The Republic* would have been readily recognized as the ur-text on the “Allegory of the Cave”:

Next, said I, here is a parable to illustrate the degrees in which our nature may be enlightened or unenlightened. Imagine the condition of men living in a sort of cavernous chamber underground, with an entrance open to the light and a long passage all down the cave. Here they have been from childhood . . .³⁵

From Plato’s “Allegory of the Cave,” all the subsequent quotations—from Diderot, Balzac, Apollinaire, and James—are concerned with illusionism, specters, ghosts, shadows and, if not imprisonment, then with constraint, in other words, with the whole panoply of ontological fictions which extend, or stretch, existential commitment beyond substance, and further with how, and in what support, something is projected the source of which may not be known but which may yet be recorded. In the case of the passage from Balzac this leads

³² Roland Barthes, “On Leaving the Movie Theater” (1975), in *Apparatus*, 3.

³³ Cf. John Cho, “Tracing the Vampire,” *Hitting Critical Mass: A Journal of Asian American Cultural Criticism* 3 (1996), 87-113.

³⁴ The Cha archives, though, provides a file with the sources of the quotations.

³⁵ Plato, *The Republic*, as cited in Cha, *Apparatus*, 23.

to the view that the future is no more difficult to know than the past, which, in the terms being developed here, is to say that the conditions of film lead to or presuppose an anachrony of the syntax of time, a capacity identified with the seer by Balzac, with the Diseuse by Cha:

That certain beings should have the power of foreseeing events in the germ of causes, just as the great inventor perceives an art of science in some natural phenomenon unobserved by the ordinary mind [let us note that for Vertov this particular capacity of perception will be a mark of the superiority of the cinematic eye, MSR], this is not one of those violent exceptions to the order of things which excite unthinking clamor; it is simply the working of a recognized faculty, and of one which is in some measure the *somnambulism of the spirit*. . . . Observe also that to predict the great events of the future is not, for the seer, any greater exhibition of power than that of revealing the secrets of the past.³⁶

Above all, these passages are concerned with the uncanny as a condition not merely of film, but with filmic temporality as a mark of threshold experience, itself an experience for which there is no clear marker—no clear and distinct idea—to disambiguate illusion from reality, whence the passage from James, describing the terms of an encounter, the terms of which, as with the “Allegory of the Cave,” recall “the marble squares of [one’s] childhood”—which are surely also the squares and piazzas of de Chirico—in which the protagonist finds himself confronted with someone, or something, “Rigid and conscious, spectral yet human, a man of his own substance and stature.”³⁷ Everywhere in these quotations the presence of the uncanny, which is to say, filmic effect, is linked to the imaginary and the possibility of illusionism—hence the significance of Apollinaire’s title “Le Roi Lune : the Moon King,” which now returns us to what Barthes characterized as the pre-hypnotic condition of the cinematic condition:

There exists a “cinematic condition”: and this condition is prehypnotic. Like a metonymy become real, the darkness of the theater is foreshadowed by a “crepuscular reverie,” (preliminary to hypnosis, according to Freud and Breuer) which precedes this darkness and draws the subject, from street to street, from poster to poster, to abandon himself into an anonymous, indifferent cube of darkness where the festival of affects [fêtes d’affects] which is called a film will take place.³⁸

The implicit identification made by Barthes, and through him subsequent film theorists such as Jean-Louis Baudry, between the analytic situation and the cinematic apparatus or situation is such as to say that the movement of affect that is known as the transference is wholly a function of the cinematic situation itself. Thus just as the love produced in transference is a false love produced by the very framework of the analytic situation itself, likewise the transference produced in film experience is wholly a by-product of the cinematic situation, and hence the interpretation of the transference required in analysis must find its equivalent in the

³⁶ Balzac as cited in Cha, *Apparatus*, 65. My emphasis.

³⁷ Henry James, as cited in Cha, *Apparatus*, 412.

³⁸ Barthes, in *Apparatus*, 1.

cultural work of the critical interpretation of the condition of film, of the cinematic apparatus.³⁹ The whole project of film theory since the 1970s is encapsulated in these few lines from Barthes:

How does one pry oneself from a mirror? Let me risk a response that will be a play on words: it is by “taking off” (in the aeronautic and the hallucinogenic sense of the term). It is true that it is possible to conceive of an art that would break the circle of duality (dual circularity), filmic fascination, and would loosen the glue’s grip, the hypnosis of verisimilitude (of analogy) by resorting to some (aural or visual) critical faculty of the spectator—isn’t that what is involved in the Brechtian effect of distancing? There are many things that could facilitate the awakening from hypnosis (imaginary/ideological); the very technique of epic art, the spectator’s culture, or his ideological vigilance; unlike classical hysteria, the imaginary disappears the moment it is observed.⁴⁰

That *Dictée* is engaging in these conceptual and aesthetic issues is not in doubt, rather it is how it engages them, how, in other words, it works, brings it off, to allude to Barthes, once more. First, let it be noticed that *Dictée*, following Barthes’s “Upon leaving the Movie Theater,” implicitly distinguishes between *object* and *situation* in the organization of the filmic space. Comparing televisual and cinematic space, the first difference, says, Barthes, is the absence of darkness when watching television. “Consider, on the other hand, the opposite experience, the experience of TV . . . : nothing, no fascination; the darkness is dissolved, the anonymity repressed, the space is familiar, organized (by furniture and familiar objects), tamed.”⁴¹ We have previously observed the manner in which certain pages in “Erato Love Poetry” not only imply but necessitate a parallel apprehension, as also the manner in which the text moves in sequence from, say, 98 to 100, from 97 to 99. We are now better placed to understand the significance of this formal structuring, to understand, in other words, what is being articulated through this structuring movement, above all as this relates to our argument that in *Dictée*, from its inception, its opening scene, there is implicitly deployed a conception of the material equivalence of screen and page. What we are now in a position to appreciate is that the alternation of page sequence is the way in which *Dictée* conveys autonomy of voice, that is, sound, from image, that is, what is projected onto the screen, without it always being utterly clear which is which, which is also to say that the exploitation of a relative autonomy of voice from image goes hand-in-hand with the interruption of the diegesis.⁴² (Here it can be said that Cha’s poetics deploy the avant-garde experiments with sound as an independent phenomenon to be found variously in the films of Guy Debord (Fig.3), Lettrisme, Marguerite Duras, Alain Resnais all the way back to Russian experiments in asynchronism as a principle of sound film). So we see an argument developed, say, from 98 to 100 which functions as a commentary:

³⁹ Cf. Sigmund Freud, “Further Recommendations in the Technique of Psycho-Analysis. Observations on Transference-Love (1915),” *Collected Papers*, vol. II, ed. Joan Riviere (London: Leonard and Virginia Woolf at the Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1924), 387.

⁴⁰ Barthes, in *Apparatus*, 4.

⁴¹ Barthes, in *Apparatus*, 2.

⁴² So, much of “Erato Love Poetry” consists of large passages taken from Sainte Thérèse of Liseux’s *The Story of a Soul*, with cinematic directions, with passages of description drawn from Dreyer’s *Gertrude*.

One expects her to be beautiful. The title which carries her name is not one that would make her anonymous or plain.

This commentary (whether as voice-over soundtrack, or as internal voice) continues:

Then you, as a viewer and guest, enter the house. It is you who are entering to see her,

at which point we recover Barthes' distinction between object and situation—and here attention should shift to the stripping away of objects:

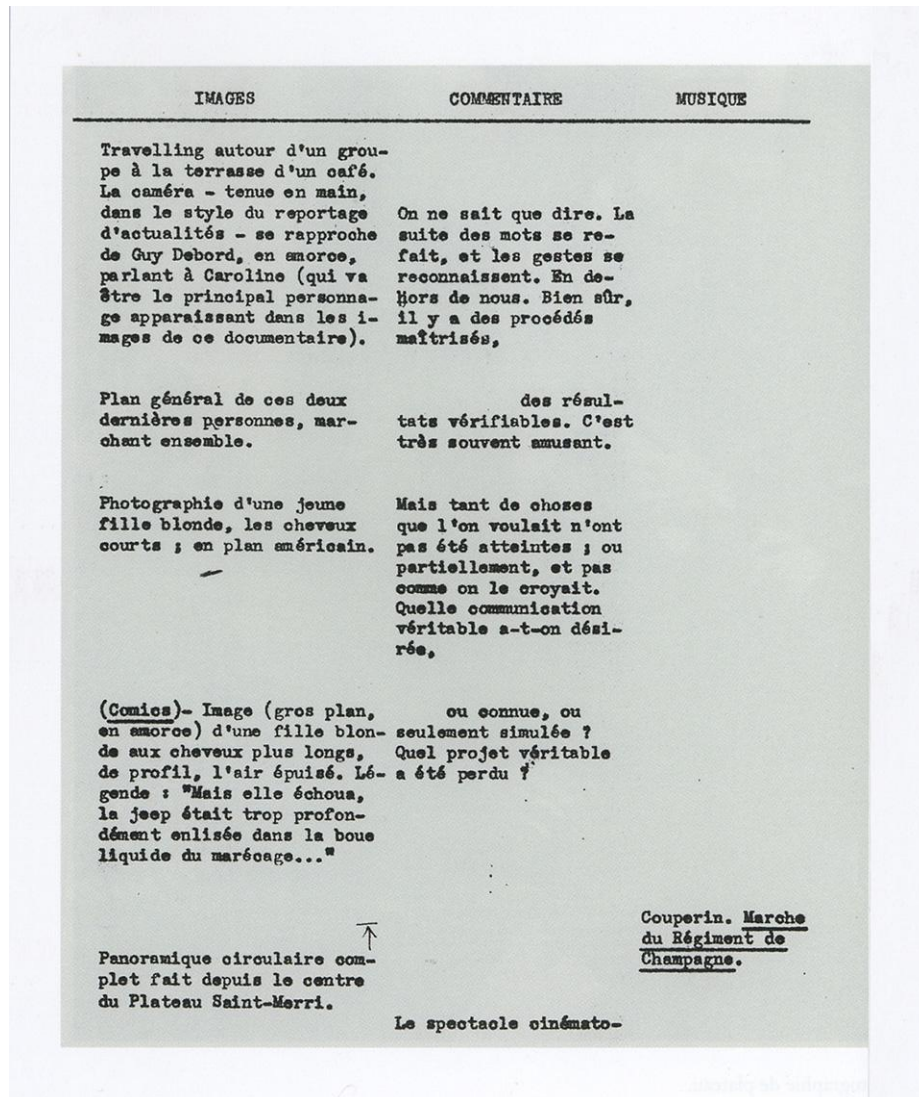
Her portrait is seen through her things, that are hers. The arrangement of her house is spare, delicate, subtly accentuating, [turn leaf to page 100] rather, the space, not the objects that fill the space.

Simultaneously, pages 95, 97, 101 *see* the unfolding of a projected story the terms of which will return the reader of *Dictée* to its beginnings: rhetorically in the non-hierarchical deployment of use and mention in *Aller à la ligne / Open paragraph*; phenomenologically in the experiences portrayed under the inaugurating figure of the Diseuse, namely, the *pain* to speak, but above all in the frontispiece. For if pages 94, 96, 98, 100 of “Erato Love Poetry” convey a commentary, then pages 95, 97, 101 convey *in the same time* the projected story of:

Mouth moving. Incessant. Precise. Forms the words heard. Moves from the mouth to the ear. With the hand placed across on the other's lips moving, form- [turn leaf from page 97 to page 99] ing the words. She forms the words with her mouth as the other utter across from her.

Which, as we shall see below, recapitulates and extends the inaugural experience of the “Diseuse” (D 3-5) in which is portrayed “She [who] mimicks the speaking . . . [whose] lower lip would lift upwards then sink back to its original place” (D 3). This synchrony of page and screen—what *Dictée* names as “the other overlapping time” (D 99)—would thus be to make of “Erato Love Poetry”—and much else in *Dictée*—a double channel work of sound and image, which then allows one *to hear* that commentary spoken as, indeed, a form of *dictation*—and *commentaire* (see fig. 3. Guy Debord, scenario from *Critique de la séparation*, 1961).⁴³

⁴³ This relating of “Diseuse” and “Erato Love Poetry” is a structural feature of the poetics of *Dictée*, the *the other overlapping time* being an example of atonal (eternal) structure in which comparable events and actions are repeated as variations of a given form or structure, or repeated—resurrected—as a means of difference-in-sameness. Another example of this atonal variation is the treatment of movement, blood and sound in “Melpomene Tragedy” (82) and “Terpsichore Choral Dance” (162).

Fig. 3: Guy Debord, scenario from *Critique de la séparation*, 1961

The separation, however, between commentary and story, is not straightforward—is, indeed, partly fictional—for we see (or glimpse) and hear (or catch) on both sides of the screen/page, within both channels, as it were, “Drawn to the white, then the black . . . dark shapes and dark light” (D 95 and D 94), all the more so when such “dark shapes and dark light” are apprehended as also acoustic shapes and light, which is to say in terms of timbre (of the voice or sound emanating from some other source).⁴⁴ Consistent with the separation of sound and image in the tradition of advanced film important to Cha—pre-eminently Duras and Resnais’ *Hiroshima mon*

⁴⁴ One of the early intertitles of Dreyer’s *Vampyr* reads: “In the moonstruck night light and shadow, voices and faces, seemed to take on meanings” (Carl Theodore Dreyer, *Vampyr* [1932]).

amour (1959)—there is also a separation in “Erato Love Poetry” not only of sound and image but of diegesis: the two narratives—or scenarios—in parallel throughout this division are figured in a telling way: the opening photograph on page 93 is a photograph—as some have correctly seen—of St Thérèse of Lisieux, but what has not been understood is its function, namely, that it is a photograph of St Thérèse of Lisieux as Joan of Arc (1894) (with flag and sword) in the performance of a play she wrote for her sister.⁴⁵ “Erato Love Poetry” closes with a still photograph of Maria Falconetti as Joan of Arc in Dreyer’s *La Passion de Jeanne d’Arc* (1928) which serves to underline the fictionality and artifice in construction of *Dictée*, but no less the rich projective possibilities of the interplay of complex temporality and performative masks which refers always to the mediumicity of the apparatus and the practice of what may be characterized as a phenomenology of saturated description.⁴⁶

The technique, the form, the problematic of *Dictée* are, it may now be appreciated, announced, declared from the near opening of the work in its epigraph attributed to Sappho:

May I write words more naked than flesh,
stronger than bone, more resilient than
sinew, sensitive than nerve

What is here presented may be understood as the infrastructure of the body: flesh, bone, sinew, nerve; just as “Urania Astronomy” provides the reader with a plate (D 74) showing the infrastructure of breathing: nasal

⁴⁵ On this photograph, cf. Megan Sexton’s poem, “A Photo of St. Thérèse of Lisieux dressed as Joan of Arc, 1894,” *The Southern Review*, Winter 1998; and for another photograph from the play showing St. Thérèse as Joan in chains against the same wall as that shown in *Dictée*, 93, cf. <<http://www.sttherese.com/St%20Therese%20Calendar%202007.pdf>>.

⁴⁶ The text, and strategies, of “Erato Love Poetry” are much richer, more complex, even, than my presentation and analysis would suggest. Throughout this study, there is mention of Dreyer and Huillet and Straub. The work to be done on Cha’s poetics would require much deeper research into her understanding of Dreyer, Huillet and Straub, each of whom has produced a new conception of realism in which textual realism (what I have termed a phenomenology of saturated description) is crucial, for which the style of dramaturgy would, in traditional terms, seem almost stilted, wooden—I should say post-symbolist—all the more so as the appreciation of *Gertud* fell to a younger generation of writers, artists and critics. At the final stage of preparing this manuscript there appeared an important study by James Schamus of *one* scene from Dreyer’s *Gertud*—drawing upon and extending the phenomenology of saturated description internal to *Getrud*—which I think would be a key starting-point for a renewal and extension of Cha studies. Cf. James Schamus, *Carl Theodor Dreyer’s Gertud: The Moving Word* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008). On styles of acting and dramaturgy in Symbolist acting—the influence of which is still available in the work of a Beckett—cf. František Deak, *Symbolist Theater: The Formation of an Avant-Garde* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993); on the transformation of one style of impersonality in Symbolist dramaturgy to another style of impersonality in Constructivist dramaturgy, cf. Edward Braun, “1905: The Theatre Studio,” and “1921-1923: Biomechanics and Constructivism,” *Meyerhold: A Revolution in Theatre* (London: Methuen, 1995).

passage, oral passage, pharynx, larynx, trachea, etc. along with other plates showing the anatomical infrastructure that supports the actions of breathing, likewise in “Erato Love Poetry” the language of cinema experience is not made separate from its technical language of process, its infrastructure:

Extreme Close Up shot of her face. Medium Long shot . . . She enters from the left side, and camera begins to pan on movement . . . Camera holds for a tenth of a second. . . . The clock in Extreme Close Up. . . . Camera is stationary . . . The screen fades to white. (D 96)

Hence again, the opening scene, page one of *Dictée*

Aller à la ligne C’était le premier jour point
Elle venait de loin point ce soir au dîner virgule
les familles demanderaient virgule ouvre les guil-
lemets Ca c’est bien passé le premier jour point
d’interrogation ferme les guillemets au moins
virgule dire le moins possible virgule la reponse
serait virgule ouvre les guillemets Il n’y a q’une
chose point ferme les guillemets ouvre les guille-
met Il y a quelqu’une point loin point ferme
les guillemets

Open paragraph It was the first day period
She had come from a far period tonight at dinner
comma the families would ask comma open
quotation marks How was the first day interroga-
tion mark close quotation marks at least to say
the least of its possible comma the answer would be
open quotation marks there is but one thing period
There is someone period From a far period
close quotation marks

which presents the diacritical infrastructure of language which cannot be sounded in use but without which sense cannot be heard. Each of these parallelisms encompassing body, language, page and screen foregrounds the *apparatus* of representation and articulation in such a way that method is made a subject and the subject an action in the text—the scenario of *Dictée*.

There is, in other words, a performative confounding of use and mention, a confounding of object language and metalanguage, through which is figured a chiasmic relation of orders: sound and image, commentary and story, going in-and-out of black-and-white, perception and apperception, attention and

subliminality. This is, indeed, the subject of Cha's 1980 work *Commentaire* (as it were, her second contribution to *Apparatus*), a work of sixty-eight pages consisting of four black and white photographs by Reese Williams and Richard Barnes and two stills from Carl Theodor Dreyer's *Vampyr* (1932, black and white). The work opens on a full black page, and closes on a full white page, with page two of black ground showing a still of the Vampire from Dreyer's *Vampyr*.⁴⁷ The head of the Vampire (Fig. 4) is so positioned that it looks upside down, but this is so because in the film the Vampire (protagonist) is holding a candle looking into a coffin at the (presumed) body of the character Allan Gray (antagonist). The other still from *Vampyr* comes five pages from the end and shows the face of Allan Gray (Fig. 5) in the coffin. The viewer can now begin to understand the earlier (phenomenologically) inverted position of the Vampire-- which doubles as a figure of retinal inversion⁴⁸ - for the coffin has a square window cut into it revealing Gray's face - the viewer (no less than the audience, in other words) is in the coffin of the apparatus. The particular moment from which the still (Fig. 5) is taken is crucial in Cha's deployment of liminality: the antagonist Allan Gray, in pursuit of the Vampire, becomes weakened, sits down on a bench as his body dissociates (separates) into an out-of-the body experience: his spectral figure continues the search for Gisèle, the younger daughter of the manor taken by the Vampire's assistant, whilst his own physical body is taken and placed into the coffin. The still of Allan Gray in the coffin is precisely the moment where his coffin is being carried in a night landscape of clouds and moonlight. Though presumed dead, his eyelids remain open and the camerawork seeks to capture not only the texture of the movement of the coffin being carried, but also to capture--as figured through the eyes of Allan Gray--the blurring of the landscape underneath the coffin riming with the vision of the cloudy, moonstruck night: this is what is depicted in *Commentaire*'s use of this passage as a film still: the clouds as though they formed landscape in movement under the coffin. This key moment of liminality figures the preoccupation with threshold, both phenomenological thresholds and linguistic thresholds, that is the dominant subject of *Commentaire* which is taken up again in *Dictée*--and not only in the more obviously cinematic passages, for here it can be comprehended that Cha's poetics, in exploring the modes of liminality and threshold experience, is moving toward the de-marcation of a zone of transcription--what I have suggested may be conceived as a *pays de l'autre*--populated by figures of the third and thirdliness: the Mother depicted in *Dictée* in a state of *sinbyong*,⁴⁹ the Disease of *Dictée*, Allan Gray [sic] of *Vampyr* (as deployed in *Commentaire*), precisely where Gray is neither living nor dead, precisely where the Disease is neither wholly in this world nor the next, but a vehicle for the embodiment of acoustic forces, and precisely where the Mother is the third moment between the mystical morphology of simultaneous movement and stillness (cf. D 50-51).⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Uniquely in *Apparatus*, the only unpaginated pages are those of *Commentaire*, running from 260-328, and the black pages on which the quotations from Plato, Diderot, Balzac, Apollinaire and James are written, pages of quotations which I have referred to as akin to found objects, and which I have suggested are to be taken collectively as a work (intervention) by Cha.

⁴⁸ That is, whether for camera obscura, camera, or film production, which thus opens the possibility of a related alterity between Allan Gray and the Vampyr.

⁴⁹ *Sinbyong* is the Korean term for the illness experienced by a woman (an more rarely a man) which marks her as as Mudang or Shaman.

⁵⁰ Within modernist poetry, this notion of the third plays a key role in certain inaugural works such as T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, especially in the division of "What the Thunder Said":

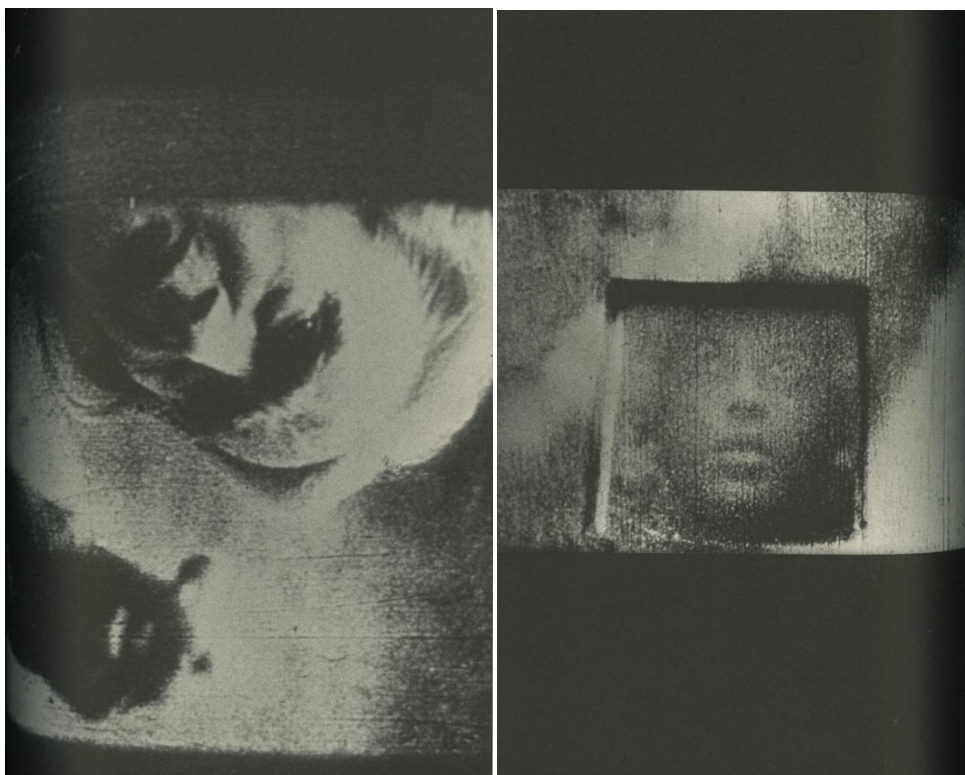


Fig. 4 (left): Opening still (Vampire) from *Commentaire*, 1980
 Fig. 5 (right): Closing still (Allan Gray), from *Commentaire*, 1980

Who is the third who walks always beside you?
 When I count there are only you and I together
 But when I look ahead up the white road
 There is always another one walking beside you
 Gliding wrapt in a brown mantle, hooded
 I do not know whether a man or a woman
 –But who is that on the other side of you?

(*The Waste Land* [1922], ll.360-66, in *Collected Poems: 1909 - 1962* [New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1991]). Within the philosophical discursive form of this modernist sensibility, one finds the notion of the third (and thirdliness) variously articulated in Blanchot (and through him Derrida), psychoanalytically (in Wladimir Granoff's magisterial *La Pensée et le féminin* [Paris: Minuit, 1976]), and in Gillian Rose where the third is part of her conception of configured middle. See Gillian Rose, *The Broken Middle* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1992).

In its most banal sense (as depicted in Fig. 3 and our discussion above), *commentaire* means the voice-over accompanying a passage of film; but once Cha's work is situated within the experimental cinematic tradition which separates the voice from the image and which renders autonomy to voice over image, it becomes possible to appreciate *Commentaire* as a work of voice, a work in voice, and a work in the decomposition (separation) of voice into voices through the combinatorial possibilities of phonemes on a ground that may be configured as page (black or white), or film screen or dream screen. (There is a key moment in Dreyer's *Vampyr* when faint voices are heard by the characters—of Allan Gray with the Vampire's assistant—and the question is asked, "Did you hear?—The child.") Thus from the opening of *Commentaire* in terms of the parallelism between screen and page, on page four we come on the word (black on white) **COMMENTAIRE**, which will be decomposed, re-combined and put through assorted permutations: sometimes broken down to: "comment, taire," followed phonetically by, "comment taire," which immediately makes the commentary silent (as the screen of *Vampyr* is silent): but also "comment," the French how, why, what,⁵¹ followed by "taire," to say nothing of, not to say or tell or mention, to pass over in silence, but also to conceal, to suppress—to suppress what? Well, the comment (as the English to comment), but also that on which the voice of cinematic experience is built, namely, the childhood of experience. At other times, the generative principle of combinatorial movement—extending the principle of double channel work—might be by associative homology (or homophony) between French and English: from TAIRE, to TEAR;⁵² or, white on black, a particle, such as "comment" (in French), is tacitly taken over into English: AS, LIKE / HOW to suggest modality: conjunctively, then adverbially. These associative possibilities which are based upon the principle of double channel work make it all but impossible to know how the words of *Commentaire* could be pronounced by one person, as distinct from plural soundings and voices, though the implied temporality of multiple voices would not, in principle, present a problem for cinematic rendition—which is to say, that *Commentaire* rejoins the poetics of (im)-possible articulation essayed by Mallarmé but which is taken up as an explicit model for film construction and experience by two other collaborators to Cha's *Apparatus*, namely, Danièle Huillet and Jean-Marie Straub, whose "Every Revolution Is a Throw of the Dice"⁵³ immediately follows Cha's *Commentaire*. The

⁵¹ The range of *comment* in French is far wider, especially when used for emphasis.

⁵² Here may be the occasion to suggest how one might construe "Elitere" the name given by Cha instead of Euterpe for the Muse of Lyric Poetry. Since *Elitere* is made up—though I am open to correction—one approach would be to read it homonymically beginning with the fact that French as well as English possess a variant for Eurtepe, namely, *Eutere*. Reading *Elitere* homonymically we construe: *elle y taire* / *tears*: there she weeps, there she says nothing, passes over in silence. Elitere, the Muse of lyric poetry—a late Classical attribution for the earlier Muse of Music—thus comes to present lyric poetry as not only the giving of pleasure or delight, but as a poetry of circumscribed and affective silence upon a site of Anamnesis.

⁵³ Cf. Danièle Huillet and Jean-Marie Straub, "Every Revolution Is a Throw of the Dice," *Apparatus*, 329-354. This text—a scenario—opens with a consideration of "The Typography of the *Coup De Dés*": "An original page from Stéphane Mallarmé's *Coup de dés* (whose ninth folio is reproduced below) can serve as a starting-point for a demonstration of the *parallel construction* of Jean-Marie Straub's latest film (color, 35 mm, 11 min)" (my emphasis). One might also bear in mind Pierre Boulez' setting of Mallarmé's sonnet "Une dentelle s'abolit" as a parallel exploration through music of the (im)-possibility of plural, simultaneous voicings. Cf. Pierre Boulez, "Improvisation sur Mallarmé II: Une dentelle s'abolit," with soprano Phyllis Bryn-Julson and the BBC Symphony Orchestra, on *Pli Selon pli*, Erato (CD), 1983.

approach to near impossibility of vocal articulation thus enables *Commentaire* to make the syllable and phoneme visual and moving and thereby to make the visual speak, and thus moves poetry toward cinematic experience through a play of word and world of which gesture is a middle term. One of the many ways in which this play of world and word is conveyed is in the *écriture* (that is, rhythm) of the implied gesture of the implied (brushlike) handwritten moments in *Commentaire* among which are *noir*, *noirceur*, *blanc* but also *blanchir*, *blanchiment*, *blanchissement* and *blancheur*, for these gestures in Cha's *Commentaire* allude to a beautiful observation by François Truffaut in his essay on "La Blancheur de Carl Dreyer (The Whiteness of Carl Dreyer)" that "When I think of Carl Dreyer, what comes to mind first are those pale white images, the splendid voiceless close-ups in *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* that play back exactly the acerbic dialogue at Rouen between Jeanne and her judges."⁵⁴ Truffaut continues by extending his associations of Dreyer and whiteness, *blancheur*, to comment upon whiteness (instead of black) as indicative of a form of burial—and one is reminded of the use of white as a color of mourning or death in many ancient traditions as well as in certain moments of modern painting such as Newman—before finally suggesting how the movement of the camera in *Vampyr* achieves an autonomy from simple reference by a play of forms and gestures in the allusion to handwriting ("a young man's pen"): "Then I think of the whiteness of *Vampyr*, though this time it is accompanied by sounds, the cries and horrible groans of the Doctor (Jean Hieromniko), whose gnarled shadow disappears into the flour bin in the impregnable mill that no one will approach to save him. In the same way that Dreyer's camera is clever in *Jeanne d'Arc*, in *Vampyr* it frees itself and becomes a young man's pen as it follows, darts ahead of, prophesies the vampire's movements along the gray walls."⁵⁵

Within *Commentaire* there are several modes of play in question: (1) The combinatorial play of word and syllable (and phoneme); (2) the play through the implicit parallelism of page and screen of the transposition of black and white, *noire et blanc* at the level of the page; (3) the play of black and white, *noir et blanc* at the level of the word or phoneme; (4) the implied play of reference and extension—a play of forms—and it is in this context that the photographs by Williams and Barnes are important: one set of two photographs (Reese Williams?) depicts first a blank white screen in an urban setting framed by palm tress, then the interior of a half-empty theatre with, again, a blank white screen, whilst the other photographs (Richard Barnes?) depict first a whitewashed wall with peeling paint, and a second photograph which consists of a blown-up detail (in grayer tonality) of a portion of the right side of the same wall;⁵⁶ (5) finally, as a variation upon the concern with combinatorial method linked to gesture, there is a pervasive play of framing. This elaborated play of combinatoriality is of interest here in terms of the developing argument about threshold, for

⁵⁴ François Truffaut, "The Whiteness of Carl Dreyer" (1969), *The Films in My Life* (translated by Leonard Mayhew) (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978 and Da Capo Press, 1994), 48. On cinematic whiteness, also cf. Christa Blumlinger, "Blancheur d'images," in *Jean-Luc Godard: Documents* (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 2006), 337-339.

⁵⁵ François Truffaut, "The Whiteness of Carl Dreyer," 48. My emphasis.

⁵⁶ The name of the village in which the action of the *Vampyr* takes place is *Courtempierre* which, on one literal reading, could be short-weather-stone. It is also (more) relevant to consider that the photographs in Cha's work of clouds are acknowledged to have been taken by her husband Richard Barnes, and it is my suggestion here that the photographs of the wall function both as figures of resistance (a block to a certain kind of play of extension) as well as an invitation to extension through imaginative projection (like the wall—and clouds—of Leonardo).

what *Commentaire* achieves as its subject, following Dreyer, is a spectralization (the graying, as it were) of voice and image—Barthes’ “Like a metonymy become real”—as a means of exploring the attempted materialization of non-material substance, the moving stuff that is voice (sound) yet not wholly within voice (the child), as though voice might itself be the source of spectrality.⁵⁷ The most exemplary figure of this movement of non-material substance is (Fig. 5) the still frame used by *Commentaire* of Allan Gray being carried in his coffin, for this is the image and moment, *Commentaire* seems to suggest, that most concentrates the formal modes of Dreyer’s compositional approach: in phenomenological terms, liminality; in formal terms framing: there are few films where the play of self-conscious framing through camerawork (rather than editing) is so astounding and poetic: from the opening scenes of the lake so framed as to be an oblong plane, then the succession of windows, doorways, skylights, shutters, squares within walls, openings within walls, windows sectioned into four, followed by one square window above two smaller square windows, trapdoors, the window cut-out from the coffin, the various square(s) now echoing the square of the shadowy edges of both windows and projected light on screen.⁵⁸ With a basic set of combinatorial terms—black, white; word, syllable; page, screen—*Commentaire* takes up the play of framing from Dreyer’s *Vampyr* through the edge of page (and screen): the word moved to the edge of the page, turned to the next (HOW TO), through the variation of width to black borders; through tonal texture as transition between black and white (the descending gray lettering for

WENT PAST

MINUTE

OR

MOMENT),

⁵⁷ Which, in psychoanalytic terms, would be to comprehend voice as a superego (and archaic) formation (André Green) or as the residue following the murder of the child necessary to reach symbolicity (the Serge Leclair of *On tue un enfant*).

⁵⁸ And does the following succession of screens, veils and doors from “Aller/Retour” (meaning *roundtrip*) not recall the movement of Dreyer’s framing?:

Inside. Outside.
 Glass. Drape. Lace. Curtain. Blinds. Gauze.
 Veil. Voile. Voile de mariée. Voile de religieuse
 Shade shelter shield shadow mist covert
 screen screen door screen gate smoke screen
 concealment eye shade eye shield opaque silk
 gauze filter frost to void to drain to exhaust

(Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, ““Elitere Lyric Poetry,” *Dictée*, 127).

with

SILENCE

at the utmost edge of the page (screen) now working lexically, thematically and phenomenologically in terms of absence such that the use of SILENCE is not readily distinguishable from the mention of “SILENCE,” no more than the screen from the page, absence of sound from the silencing of sound or the impossibility of sounding: the last four words of *Commentaire*—each occupying a single page—are TIME TAKES TO HUSH, followed by a double page of white bordered with black—like those *cartes de visite* which once upon a time announced not the visitor but the death of the person whose name is borne upon the card—immediately followed by the frozen image—*temps figé*—of Allan Gray’s framed head seen through the window of his coffin. The direction of these words pointing both beyond themselves (reference) to a possible event, or to the medium (in the apparatus of cinema or reading and thus as signification), in an economy of spectrality conditioned by the indistinguishability of use and mention, for by the end of *Commentaire* no means are available, no indication discernable for it to be known if it is meant be spoken or is itself a silent work of movement—the hand turning the page as a primitive stand-in mechanism for the rolling projector—no less than a metacommentary on the status of being a “Commentaire” (as Fig. 3 above, for example).

5

Here, I should like to pay closer attention to the terms *use* and *mention* in this economy of articulation and spectrality (the cave, de-materialization, light and dark). The concept of use and mention as logical categories as developed in Bertrand Russell’s theory of descriptions (or logical types) was a means of avoiding logical paradoxes of the sort “The set of all sets which is not a member of itself.” It was shown by Russell that by recognizing hierarchies or (types) of statements it could be appreciated that the statement “X is a member of Y” is not the same kind of statement, did not carry the same status as, “The set of all sets that is not a member of itself.” In transposing from the logical to the semantic this clarification of types of statements, logicians and semanticists came to be able to clarify what it means to say that the use of a statement is distinct from the mention of—discussion about—a statement, in other words to create a metalanguage (mention) the conditions of use of which are distinct from statements in the object language (the language of use). There are, though, circumstances in which no clear distinction can be drawn between use and mention, between language and metalanguage, between act and reflection upon the act, between medium and support: Lacan’s formula for this was that in matters of unconscious activity *Il n’y a pas de métalangage*; for Derrida and his followers, this became the recognition that there is no means available for distinguishing in principle the primary from the secondary (text), or in terms of genre, the poetic from the philosophical; a Cavell re-situates these matters at a phenomenological level made continuous with a drama of epistemology, namely, that skeptical claims against knowledge cannot in principle be defeated in order to vindicate the possibility of a secure mode of knowing, for the medium in which epistemic claims are made is continuous with and made possible by the same medium in which knowledge is undergone. All of these forms are implicitly articulations of the awareness of the necessity of separation from a medium as condition of there being knowledge at all which nevertheless re-

cognizes that the medium from which separation is sought is the stuff of knowledge itself. In modern philosophy, Hegel has set the terms of this drama, a drama of immediate experience, but it can be said that avant-garde experience in its push for forms of simultaneity of experience—collage, montage, *cadavre exquis*, spatialization of time, the anachrony of the unconscious, and myth—as encapsulated emblematically in Breton's search for "un nouveau temps du verbe être (new tense [time] of the verb to be)"⁵⁹ has found in film the form for the pursuit of a dramatological epistemology of separation and limitation, separation and binding, separation and release, the acknowledgement that the presupposition of knowledge is at one and the same time the repressed of knowledge. On a certain interpretation, Plato's "Allegory of the Cave" is not merely—or only—a pre-figuration of a thinking of the unconscious or of the ontology of filmic *aisthesis*, but an implicit recognition, admittedly against the grain, of the unconscious conditions of knowledge.⁶⁰ Whence Jean-Louis Baudry, in his essay "The Apparatus," an extended reflection on the metapsychology of the conditions of the cave/unconscious and sleep:

One constantly returns to the scene of the cave: real-effect or impression of reality. Copy, simulacrum, and even simulacrum of simulation. Impression of the real, or more-than-the-real? From Plato to Freud, the perspective is reversed; the procedure is inverted—so it seems.⁶¹

So it seems, indeed. What Baudry is working toward is an insight that has long been part of Surrealist experience and slowly articulated into philosophical discursivity through Lacan, Girard, Derrida and indeed others, and it is an insight that is profoundly Hegelian, namely, the doctrine of negative infinity: opposites born of human temporalisation are opposites only in appearance, that no negation by the simple act of negation can escape that which would be negated for all are constrained by a common medium, whence the inavoidance of the question of violence in representation: Is violence inherent in the very coming into being of representation (as it is, say, for a Melanie Klein no less than a Lacan), or is violence a function of a given social (patriarchal) arrangement, as a certain Feminism or Marxism – not to be confused with "Communism" – might imply? Let us quote Baudry at length from his opening page on "The Apparatus" as he works his way through the vocabulary of staging, places—to be more precise, the metapsychological *question of lieux*—⁶² and the gradual dissolution of left and right positionalities:

⁵⁹ André Breton, "RÊVE," *Littérature*, nouvelle série, no. 7, December 1922.

⁶⁰ Though it should be pointed out that an older tradition of interpretation of Plato—as found in the anthropologically inflected Jane Ellen Harrison no less than a Simone Weil—would not find such a view at all against the grain, for in this tradition Plato's work made little sense when separated from the Orphic tradition or the traditions of initiation associated with the Pythagoreans. Cf. Jane Ellen Harrison, *Epilegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* (1921), and *Themis: A Study of the Origins of Greek Religion* (1912, 1927) (New York: University Books, 1962).

⁶¹ Jean-Louis Baudry, "The Apparatus," in Cha, *Apparatus*, 41.

⁶² Cf. Pierre Fédida, "Théorie des lieux," *Le Site de l'étranger: La situation psychanalytique* (Paris: PUF, 1995), 267-298, and on the metapsychology of sleep, Pierre Fédida, "Le Conte et la zone de l'endormissement," *Corps du vide, espace de séance* (Paris: Jea-Pierre Delarge, 1977), 155-191.

From Plato to Freud, the perspective is reversed; the procedure is inverted—so it seems. The former comes out of the cave, examines what is intelligible, contemplates its source, and when he goes back, it is to denounce to the prisoners the apparatus which oppresses them, and to persuade them to leave, to get out of that dim space. The latter, (on the contrary, - no, for it is not a matter of simple opposition, or of a simplifying symmetry), is more interested in making them go back there precisely where they are; where they didn't know how to find themselves, for they thought themselves outside, and it is true that they had been contemplating the good, the true and the beautiful for a long time. But at what price and as a result of what ignorance; failure to recognize or repress, compromise, defense, sublimation? Like Plato, he urges them to consider the apparatus to overcome their resistances, to look a little more closely at what is coming into focus on the screen, the other scene. The other scene? What brings the two together and separates them? For both, as in the theater, a left side, a right side, the master's lodge, the valet's orchestra. But the first scene would seem to be the second's other's scene. It is a question of truth in the final analysis, or else: "the failure to recognize has moved to the other side." Both distinguish between two scenes, or two places, opposing or confronting one another, one dominating the other [even as these] aren't the same places.⁶³

"One constantly returns to the scene of the cave," says Baudry, and this is indeed, the *place where Dictée* opens, its primal scene, and with it the presence of childhood. We note, again, the prevalence in the found quotations of *Apparatus* of the strategic presence of childhood proximate to the form of the cave—for is this not part of the irony that the cave in the "Allegory of the Cave" may well itself be a Form/Idea?—thus: Plato: "Here they have been from *childhood*"; Diderot: "I had the impression of being inside a place that is called this philosopher's cave (Plato's). It was a long and dark cave. I was seated among many men, women and *children*" (39); and finally from James: "the marble squares of [one's] *childhood*." Though there has been some discussion about when the inscribed message of the Frontispiece of *Dictée* (Fig. 1) could have been written, it is accepted that the statement which can be translated as "Mother / I miss you / I am hungry / I want to go home" is figured as a cut into the wall of a coal mine in Japan where, it is to be understood, the Japanese had abducted Koreans for slave labor. This is how Cha would have understood it—but this is not, for *Dictée*, its first significance, its function. The surface of the image—as we have said above, a *photocopy* and not a photograph—brings attention to itself, its disintegration of boundaries, its appearance of decay, its darkness with glimpses of light-words: the image in a state mid-way between recuperation and loss, between light and dark is the cave—the coal mine—wherein or whereupon a cinematic situation, that is, a wall-support, obtains for the projection through a light-source of images of which we—the audience—have only this surviving film still, *of a source of which we are necessarily ignorant*. This could not have been known *ab initio*, from the beginning of the first reading of *Dictée*, for we had to allow the work to instruct us in the appropriate mode of attention, we had to come to understand the work as performing a material equivalence between screen and page, commentary and voice, sound and image such that we could then understand the Korean inscription—to be read from right to left and top to bottom—as being echoed in the diegetic commentary of "Erato Love Poetry":

⁶³ Jean-Louis Baudry, "The Apparatus," in Cha, *Apparatus*, 41.

The titles and names in black appear from the upper right hand corner, each letter moving downwards onto the whiteness of the screen (D 94)

The same form of movement that is exploited in a work such as (Fig. 2) *Tongue Tied*, the obscurity of which dissolves before the eyes as one suddenly realizes that it is to be read from right to left twisting (diagonally) from top to bottom, for example:

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l
l
a
f

g
n
i
s
r i

⁶⁴ Compare, in this respect, e.e. cummings (as quoted in *Paterson*, itself quoted from an interview between Mike Wallace and William Carlos Williams):

(im)c-a-t(mo)
b,i,:l:e
FalleA
ps!fl
Oattumbll
sh?dr
IftwhirlF
(UL) (IY)
&&&

which may be provisionally transcribed to ease out the perceptual tease: “cat immobile Fall leaps Float tumble sh? [? = balloon string, or ball of string, say] drift whirl Fully and etc etc.” To re-introduce the formatting and silent signs (brackets, dashes, question mark, ampersand) is to begin to recognize in what the poetry consists, namely, the sudden perception of silence in slow motion—thus “sh” becomes the beginning of the sound (exclamation) to enjoin silence!—the ever so slightly delayed recognition almost concurrent with the event of (just past) immediate experience. The ampersand not only repeats the gesture but indicates the shape of the cursive movement apperceived: fall, leap, float. Cf. William Carlos Williams, *Paterson* (1958), Book Five (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1983), 224.

The commentary—not unlike *Commentaire* and Dreyer’s *Vampyr*—is juxtaposed with the projected story wherein:

The shadows moving across the whiteness, dark shapes and dark light (D 95).⁶⁵

The coal mine of the figured frontispiece is but the configured cave for the *scene of childhood*, its place, its losses, fragilities and possibilities, the figure of *a source of which we are necessarily ignorant*, no less than its alterity and otherness from “us,” from “where” we are “now”;⁶⁶ it is to make of the cinematic situation what Pierre Fédida said of the analytic situation, it is *le site de l’étranger*. To return to Baudry’s entering himself into the re-cognition that there is no scene—no truth—separate from alterity:

The other scene? What brings the two together and separates them? For both, as in the theater, a left side, a right side, the master’s lodge, the valet’s orchestra. But the first scene would seem to be the second’s other scene. It is a question of truth in the final analysis, or else: “the failure to recognize has moved to the other side.” Both distinguish between two scenes, or two places, opposing or confronting one another, one dominating the other [even as these] aren’t the same places.⁶⁷

We might now look at (Fig. 6) the photograph on the cover of *Dictée* and recognize⁶⁸—even before the specific location can be *named*—that what is depicted are (archaic) tombs, which is thereby to make of *Dictée* not only a commemoration, but more specifically a *tombeau*, the inside—or otherside—of which is the speckled play of light and dark in the image of the frontispiece (Fig. 1), marking a moment and space of transition, which would be also to imply not merely a movement through otherness but a *form of descent* through what the work itself names as a “Tombe des nues de naturalized” (D 20) to the first encounter with the day, that is, the very light of day—

⁶⁵ Within this play of dark and light there are multiple allusions to key moments, scenes and debates in film history where the status of the spatiality of the image-projection—the *lieu* of the cinematic image—is the question which, unavoidably, cannot be held separate from questions of receptivity. Consider, for example, the opening extract of Reese Williams’ *A Pair of Eyes*: “Screen, the receptive, comes up from Silence, as pinning rebus of the perfected cries of monkeys and dogs, an unknowable space, vast enough for the words, *mother, father, soul, home* and *world* to continue branching forever without meeting a blockage.” This passage is printed facing a blown up black and white film still from Godard’s *Pierrot le fou* (as identified by Reese in a note). Reese Williams, the second cycle from *A Pair of Eyes* (n.p., in *Wedge*: nos. 3,4,5, 1983, Partial Texts: Essays and Fictions). This same issue of *Wedge* contains Cha’s *Clio History* (with calligraphy in seal script) as *Wedge Pamphlet no.8*

⁶⁶ Though there is not space to do so, it would be of great value to consider Renée Green’s juxtaposition of Robert Smithson (of great import, I would suggest, to both Cha and Reese Williams) and Cha in her video installations “Partially Buried in Three Parts” (1996-99) which raises important questions concerning *natal patria* and the (im)-possibility of return to the place of birth.

⁶⁷ Jean-Louis Baudry, “The Apparatus,” in Cha, *Apparatus*, 41.

⁶⁸ And might we not know be able to see the image as so constructed, so cropped as to suggest the angle – and view – of wide screen cinemascope, the tombs receding in perspective, moving away *à perte de vue*?

*C'était le premier jour*⁶⁹—as though the first, which is to say originary day of a new existence, that is, a dying to new birth, before the second encounter, namely, the encounter with *families* (*les familles* : *the families*)—surely the plural is here significant—whose questions to the one who had come “From A Far” (D 20) would indeed be questions of relation: nationality, kindred and blood relation, questions, then, of ancestry through and “From a far period” (D 1), an anthropologically primitive form of enunciation and relating which shadows from beginning to end the attempts of utterance in *Dictée*, as prayer, as invocation, but also submission as act of humility. Consider, for example, the following commonplace from the great ethnographer Germaine Dieterlen, commenting upon a scene which she witnessed through listening, that “for those interested, a prayer, an invocation, are effective for those who hear them. One evening [Un soir], very late in the night, I heard singing. It was a man come from afar [venu de loin] to honor his late mother. Near the house where she was born, he sang the title [devise]⁷⁰ of her family and repeated his song tirelessly.”⁷¹ This encounter is the form of the encounter in which *she who had come from afar* / *Elle [qui] venait de loin* participates in *Dictée* as part of the experience of transition and *katabasis*. The speckled play of light and dark of the frontispiece, thus, encompasses, through the form of a cave, the suggestion of a place of birth and transformation, at the same time that it suggests the origin of filmic experience in light and dark as a form or kind of *ur-writing*—for this is what much of the film theory of Cha’s generation is hinting at, working around, through the exploration of the cinematic condition and situation as a recapitulation of the unconscious, namely, that *archi-writing* and film originate in the same *place*, share the same childhood, the same displacements—

⁶⁹ Consider, here, Wallace Steven’s verse that “The oldest-newest day is the newest alone,” “An Ordinary Evening in New Haven,” *The Auroras of Autumn, The Collected Poems* (New York: Knopf, 1982), 476. Consider, too, Aimé Césaire’s variation on the structurally same topos of first day, from his “Poésie et Connaissance (Poetry and Knowledge)”: “Et voilà qui nous ramène aux premiers temps de l’humanité. . . . Même, je crois que l’homme n’a jamais été plus près de certaines vérités qu’aux jours premiers de l’espèce. Aux temps où l’homme découvrait avec émotion le premier soleil, la première pluie, le premier soufflé, la première lune. Aux temps où l’homme découvrait dans la peur et le ravissement, la nouveauté palpitante du monde.” Aimé Césaire, “Poésie et connaissance,” *Tropiques*, no.12 January 1945, 158. Another, especially beautiful variation upon the topos of the first day, is Maurice Blanchot’s closing chapter XII of *Thomas l’Obscur* which renders the first day as simultaneously a *katabasis* and a regression in time, to a condition where all things interpenetrate—on the model of sound—in the realization of a song of creation. Cf. Maurice Blanchot, *Thomas l’Obscur* (Nouvelle version) (Paris: Gallimard, 1950).

⁷⁰ Dieterlen’s French is *devise* which is also *devise* in English meaning the law to transmit or give property by will, hence my use of “title” as to give, transmit, confirm, establish title.

⁷¹ Germaine Dieterlen, “Entretien avec Germaine Dieterlen à propos de Marcel Griaule et du cinéma ethnographique,” in C.W. Thompson, ed., *L’Autre et le sacré: Surréalisme, cinéma, ethnologie* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1995), 441.



Fig. 6. Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, detail, Cover, *Dictée*, 1982

whence the quest and search to capture in acoustic and visual traces (Fig. 8) the forming of words, the birth to language as Memory, as a species of Anamnesis:

Mouth moving. Incessant. Precise. Forms the words heard. Moves from the mouth to the ear. With the hand placed across on the other's lips moving, form- [turn leaf from page 97 to page 99] ing the words. She forms the words with her mouth as the other utter across from her. She shapes her lips accordingly, gently she blows whos and whys and whats. On verra. O-n. Ver-rah. Verre. Ah. On verra-h. Si. S-i. She hears, we will see.

There is so much being deployed in and through this passage - use of double channel, confounding of use and mention, synaesthesia—but attention should be drawn to the hint at, the approaching of and play with a dissolution of word not merely to syllable (phonology) but the re-turn to or emergence of breath (gesture): in shape: “Ver-rah,” in sound: “Ah.” Breath, then, as threshold - but as we shall see in the following section devoted to a close reading of the continuation of the opening of *Dictée*, the section entitled “Disease,” amongst the key moments explored is that of pain as a threshold phenomenon: pain as physiological, pain as psychological, through which a work of cultural pain is articulated.



Fig. 7 Detail, “Polymnia Sacred Poetry,” *Dictée*

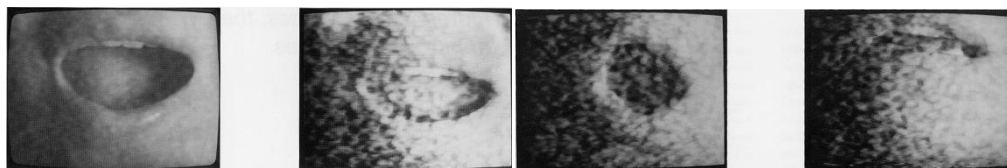


Fig. 8. Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *Mouth to Mouth*, 1975. Single-channel videotape with sound (of Korean vowels). Collection Berekely Art Museum.

6

From this account of the opening scene and the event of language we shall proceed to an examination and reading of *Dictée* as a work of, a reflective movement around the conditions of communication (use, mention) in relation to conditions of crisis (forms of pain), in other words, as a work of liminoid moments in Victor Turner's sense of this term, that is, moments of individual and cultural qualitative change, crisis, collapse and re-definition. This is what is encompassed in speaking of *logics of separation*. In this light, though we shall consider questions of the genre of *Dictée*—what it means to say that *Dictée* is a *récit*—as preparatory to an approach to the dominant and three interrelated moments of liminoid forms of communication as especially emblematic of the accomplishment of *Dictée*: (1) The birth and accession to a heightened condition of communication in the Disease where pain may be ambivalently embodied through a depiction of physical hurt and sickness; (2) the scenes depicting the sickness and illness of the Mother, but with this difference that the experience of sickness is now a sign of election, of sickness as a state of what in Korean is termed *Sinbyong*; and

something, as far as this study is aware, which has hitherto gone unnoticed, namely, (3) the hints, glimpses and proximities of madness in *Dictée*, above all as these come to be concentrated in the person revealed through a letter to Laura Claxton. Underlying these concerns from beginning to end, we shall argue, is a critical theory through a poetics and staging of breath and translation (Laplanche) in the temporality of *passé anachronique* (Fédida). In the process we shall come to re-think the project of Theresa Hak Kyung Cha as this leads to her conception of exile, historicity and the implications of alterity that emerge from her *oeuvre*. By way of introducing this account of the role of liminoid states cutting transversally across pain and communication, Sinbyong and madness, we shall close by concentrating on a scene depicting the accession to alterity and symbolicity through the acoustic mask of the Disease, *she who mimicks the speaking*.



Fig. 9. The framing of *Dictée*: the wide-angle (cinemascope) effect of perspective.

PART II

She mimicks the speaking: Disease

7

Above, in my commentary upon “Aller à la ligne,” I had said that there is no suggestion within the depicted scene of fluency on the part of the visitor in the opening scene, and there is little doubt that an initial and legitimate response to this would be to think that this is so because the subject is that of language-acquisition—French, say, though by no means necessarily so—and thus any lack of fluency would be but a mark of wanting mastery. A close reading, however, gives no clear warranty for such a view: amongst the many reasons that there may be for want of linguistic fluency, there may be physiological as well as cultural factors, or, put in other words, the *one from afar* may be in some kind of altered state as well as an environment, a place, in some way new; there may, indeed, have been some kind of trauma which might necessitate the acquisition of a language in non-pathological contexts: one thinks, here, of the aphasias, the many neurological syndromes that mark an impairment of language use—of which Bergson and Cassirer were amongst the first to realize the philosophical significance—as well as physiological shortcomings. It is clear that such concerns belong to *Dictée* as well as to Cha’s larger preoccupations—possibly, even, derived from Roman Jakobson—as can be understood by the chapter of “Urania Astronomy,” prefaced by a Chinese acupuncture chart, and which opens on the following scene:

She takes my left arm, tells me to make a fist, then open. Make a fist then open again, make the vein appear through the skin blue-green-purple tint to the translucent surface. (D 64)

The actions which make up this scene are readily recognizable, and available: a subject, in this instance, a medical subject, follows the instruction—“She takes my left arm, tells me to make a fist, then open. Make a fist then open again”—consistent with testing for blood pressure in order to show the color of the veins which will then be prepared for the extraction of blood: “She taps on the flesh presses against it her thumb. . . . She takes the cotton and rubs alcohol lengthwise on the arm several times. . . . She takes the needle with its empty body to the skin.” If, though, this is the scene, the scene carries something else—for there is “No sign of flow”—namely, the way in which parts of the body (in one sense, given the right circumstances, any part of the body) in a form of corporeal *plasticity* may become lighter as a condition of something else happening, coming about through it, what, later on in the same section, would be characterized as “One empty body waiting to contain” (simply, no more than potentially *to contain*: simply the infinitive as the condition), all the more so where that which extracts—which is not to be identified with the needle for *the needle* is but a metonym for the fact of agency—is not unrelated to what remains empty, expectant, whence, at the end of the first division of “Urania Astronomy” we find:

Something of the ink that resembles the stain from the interior emptied onto emptied into upon this boundary this surface

quickly followed by “More. Others,” the periods serving rhetorically to enclose in such a way as to make for shortness of breath,⁷² that is, an unconnectedness with an outside, whence the imprecation, the *forceful* wish, as though, in certain instances, akin to an exorcism or execration:

Expel. Ne te cache pas. Révèle toi. Sang. Encre.
[Expel. Do not hide yourself. Reveal yourself. Blood. Ink.]

so that, as is shown in the closing utterance of the division, there can be revealed that which is “Of its body’s extension of its containment.”

The issue in *Dictée* will be the way in which Cha’s poetics consistently allow the physiological and the spiritual, the physical and the psychological to become blurred, to become, as it were, part of a calculated vacancy the various modes and types of which fly under the conceptuality and metaphor of materiality—of language or apparatus or body.

If this physicality may point to language use in terms of embodiment, or, more precisely, failure of the physical body as necessary preparatory to elevated modes of embodiment - the container must be emptied in order to receive as well as to extend itself, for example - we might come to understand *Dictée*’s formal density as cultural, linguistic and experiential, and the “Disease”—whose significations are multiple throughout—becomes the figure of this threshold, this movement of liminal and liminoid experiences for which the body (a cultural, physiological and linguistic body, the body marked by punctuation and voids) becomes the means of passage and transition. Let us take the “Disease” section of *Dictée* (D 3-5), which follows the blank page (D 2) after *Aller à la ligne*. Immediately we are told:

She mimicks the speaking. That might resemble speech. (Anything at all.) Bared noise, groan, bits torn from words. Since she hesitates to measure the accuracy, she resorts to mimicking gestures with the mouth. The entire lower lip would lift upwards then sink back to its original place.

At this point in the physical act of reading, it is by no means clear that it would not be the question of someone, a person, learning a language, and going through the range of mimicry, physical and linguistic, required to embody language as speech. That this moment, this passage of *Dictée*—of the Disease—is of central importance in the development and comprehension of Cha’s enterprise is shown by the frequency with which commentators have turned to it. In her forceful essay, Ann Cheng interprets it thus:

The opening pages of *Dictée* demonstrate the emergence of the speaking subject as echo: “She mimicks [sic] the speaking. That might resemble speech. (Anything at all.) Bared noise, groan, bits torn from words. Since she hesitates to measure the accuracy, she resorts to mimicking gestures with the mouth. The entire lower lip would lift upwards then sink back to its original place. She would then gather both lips and protrude them in a pout taking in the breath that might utter something. (One thing. Just one.) But the breath falls away. With a slight tilting of

⁷² We shall return below to a consideration of the physiological significance of shortness of breath.

her head backwards, she would gather the strength in her shoulders and remain in this position.” The Beckettian, infantlike creature coming to speech dramatizes the beginning of speech as imitation. Since listening remains one of the only physical activities of the human body that occurs simultaneously inside and outside the body, we might understand listening here to be initiating a boundary contestation. The sound that penetrates the infant is also the sound after which the infant fashions him/herself; the moment of shattering retroactively constitutes the possibility of boundary not experienced before. The infant mimes the sound he/she hears and, in the act of mimicry, experiences him/herself as at once possible and other—what Lacan calls the loss of self to self. . . . there is no speaking subject as such that is not already an echo.⁷³

Now, Cheng is undoubtedly right that there is a marked preoccupation in Cha’s poetics with movements of echo, and more broadly with modes of sounding; likewise is Cheng correct to say that there are concerns, here and elsewhere in Cha, with mimetic capacities, a pervasive concern with the childlike, and a deep and defining concern as well as with modalities of passage and transition between interior and exterior. For this preoccupation with transition and passage listening will become a privileged figure, a figure, too, for the emergence of *subjection*. It is, though, also noticeable, that any source of “the speaking” that might be mimicked in this passage—and Cheng’s *sic* serves to mark the antique orthography of *mimick* which should alert us to something happening—is either withheld or is not available there precisely where one might infer a (native) speaker or child in the process of learning or acquiring a language. This leads the auditor or reader, as a result, to realize that precisely where speaking is presented but not configured with an identified or identifiable subject we find that resemblance and measure, which is to say, the affective proportionalities that make for mimetic identification, begin to move away from the sense of apperception—one notices that Cha’s text parenthesizes what resemblance strives after as “Anything at all.” Indeed, the terms of affective proportionalities, that is, mimesis, sought after begin to move from the initial sense of the concrete as the increasingly foregrounded and *dramatized* failure of enunciation would seem not so much imminent (an event coming about), as immanent (but contrasively something unfolding). The mark of this immanence is the semantic ambiguity, and hence richness, due to the rhetorical use of punctuation. For example:

She mimicks the speaking. That might resemble speech.

Is “that” a relative pronoun? And if so, for what does it stand in? Does it stand for *the speaking* or *the act of mimicking*, *the speaking which might resemble speech*? As it is, there is no grammatical marker to facilitate the distinction (say, between relative and demonstrative) and this is a consistent aspect of Cha’s technique, a singular way in which she makes her verbal acts rich and dense, at once an event in which and through which the linguistic and the phenomenological overlap.

⁷³ Anne Cheng, “History in/against the fragment: Theresa Hak Kyung Cha,” *The Melancholy of Race* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 161-62.

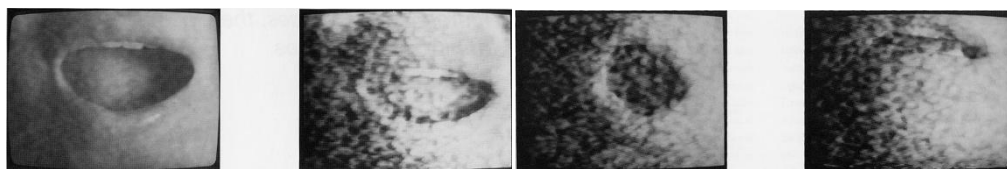


Fig. 8. Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *Mouth to Mouth*, 1975. Single-channel videotape with sound (of Korean vowels). Collection Berkeley Art Museum.

The division titled *Disease*, though, however richly, however densely and, indeed, however chromatically, presents a form of experience at the same time that this experience, and the poetic experience which it doubles, seeks a form of language; hence, significantly, the work begins in the prepredicative dimension of experience *par excellence*, namely that of sound, with the co-presence of the social dimension of experience ironically intimated through *distortion*—whence the import of resemblance as the mark of mimetic capacities. “She mimicks the speaking,” for speaking is not hers, and her action is one of a resemblance which is not yet an exact resemblance. Instead there are: “Bared noise, groan, bits torn from words” (D 3). This is the prepredicative dimension of the cry, noise and sound before sound becomes intelligible whether as music, song or, indeed, speech. It is, too, crucially, the *dimension of pain* laid bare as “noise, groan, bits *torn* from words” (my emphasis). The activity of resemblance is an effort, a work of the body—underwrit by pain—for she would mimick not only speech, for “she resorts to mimicking gestures *with the mouth*” (my emphasis). This centering of the means of measure along with the processes of resemblance on the mouth (Fig. 8) indicate something of the positionality of the body and the intention incarnate in its being as there is slowly introduced the suggestion of a prospect in which she is both acting and observing her action whoever or whatever else might be present to witness the sociality of the situation, an observation, a self-observation that begins to move outside of chronological time into an anachrony of time (Fig. 8), as much part of the page as part of the screen (see for example, D 97-99): “The entire lower lip would lift upwards then sink back to its original place” (D 3). And always, the effort is one of resemblance as “She would then gather both lips and protrude them in a pout taking in the breath that might utter some thing.” And as though to emphasize that it is *some thing*, and not “something,” the parenthesis tells us: “(One thing. Just one.)” The lip that falls “back to its original place” becomes shaped as that which is physical opens, gives way to air, that is, breath: “She would then gather both lips and protrude them in a pout taking in the breath that might utter some thing. (One thing. Just one.) But the breath falls away.” With the lip back in place without utterance of any kind, and breath—now the marker of transition, of passage—become in a sense thingified, some thing that may fall away, attention shifts to the *Disease* in changed physical configuration: *With a slight tilting of her head backwards, she would gather the strength in her shoulders and remain in this position* (my italics). But these are neither the actions nor the operant intentionalities of a child learning to speak. It is with this poised, positioned passivity of the *Disease* that we, as readers—or implied auditors in a powerful dramaturgy—begin to apperceive the kind of archaic sounding (or archaic utterance) that might be mimicked, for to this poised passivity is conjoined the indefinite and the anonymous:

It murmurs inside. It murmurs. Inside is the pain of speech . . . It festers inside. The wound, liquid, dust. Must break. Must void.

As the internal pain grows commensurate with the desire to speak, the body undergoing, subject to these (physiological and psychic) experiences prepares itself for an event, an event wished for, anticipated, even if feared:

From the back of her neck she releases her shoulders free. She swallows once more. (Once more. One more time would do.) In preparation. It augments.

And one observes the return of sounds, but no longer the sounds of groans or bared noise, but instead pitch and drone, that is, the self now entering a new structuring field of musicality, not yet this or that particular music, but of the elements which transform the inarticulacy of sound from background field of indetermination to field of attention. Whence: "It augments. To such a pitch. Endless drone, refueling itself. Autonomous. Self-generating," for now the entry into the autonomous field of musicality—autonomous, self-generating—is to have entered an experience that figures the sustaining field of social attention that is the habitus for musicality, for it is only when sound, begun as bared noise, as groan, as bits torn from words, becomes the right pitch, the right drone that effort (will) can be let go and others enter (passivity). So:

Swallows with last efforts last wills against the pain that wishes it to speak.

She allows others. In place of her. Admits others to make full. Make swarm. All barren cavities to make swollen. The others each occupying her. Tumorous layers, expel all excesses until in all cavities she is flesh.

The right degree of pitch reached and sustained – the very definition of *drone* – not only can others enter in, and all the autonomous, self-generating forms attendant with them, but *she* can now (*inside the pause*) transcend her simple passivity and enter in to others (*inside her*), *re-find* the utterance of which she had been dispossessed (*the voice wraps another layer. Thicker now even. From the waiting*), indeed, become echos of herself as well as echos for others, for this is where *Dictée* begins to show what is actualized in echo as medium for the play of acoustic mirroring, for call (*she might make the attempt then*) and response (*the echo part. At the pause*):

She allows herself caught in their threading, anonymously in their thick motion in the weight of their utterance. When the amplification [of the drone, of pitch] stops there might be an echo. She might make an attempt then. The echo part. At the pause. When the pause has already soon begun and has rested there still. She waits inside the pause. Inside her. Now. This very moment. Now. She takes rapidly the air, in gulfs [also implicitly, in gulps], in preparation for the distances to come. The pause ends. The voice wraps another layer. Thicker now even. From the waiting. The wait from pain to say. To not to. Say.

"She takes rapidly the air in gulfs, in preparation for the distances to come": this is where though the ambiguities—of pain, of sound, of utterance—are not resolved, are indeed not meant to be resolved, it becomes clear what *kind of experience* is being articulated through the Disease, namely, a shamanistic displacement. Compare, for example, the following passage from J. H. Prynne's early period poem on shamanistic displacement, "Aristeas, in Seven Years" (1969), and we comprehend a comparable set of typologies at work:

Gathering the heat to himself, in one thermic hazard, he took himself out: to catch up with the tree, the river, the forms of alien vantage
and hence the first way by theft into the upper world . . .

And his songs were invocations in no frenzy of spirit, but clear and spirituous tones from the pure base of his mind; he heard the small currents in the air & they were truly his aid. In breath he could speak out into the northern air and the phrasing curved from his mouth and nose, into the cold mountain levels.⁷⁴

feed-back within the self as a set of subsystems and between selves and cosmos, the control of blood-flow and circulation before the construction of culturally specific significations of vacancy, trance and possession.)

The characteristic intermingling of physiology and culture in *Dictée*, of which “Disease” is a determinant moment in the generation of the work, begins to reach a point of pressure in the experience of embodiment: the weight “stretches evenly, the entire skull expanding tightly all sides toward the front of her,” and soon “*Inside her voids*,” (D 5) the body takes on, assumes—*She relays the others*—weight and pressure, but it does so in a way that shows the pressures to be moving simultaneously in contrary directions: but soon it is a pressure that turns “her inside out in the same motion, shifting complete the whole weight to elevate upward” (D 5). The body is everywhere wrought and figured in contradictory directions simultaneously, and it is this giving over of the body to contradictory motions, voids and voicings that marks the effort of *Dictée*, of the Disease: the scene depicted, re-enacted is an initiation scene as a body is emptied in preparation for the entry of a greater force: this is an out-of-the-body experience, which, in time, may be more specifically culturally located as a Korean *naerim-kut* during which there is an initiation for a Shaman (in Korean, a Mudang) in preparation for the displacement and vacancy of the body preparatory to possession. The kinds of contradictory energies of displacement and possession depicted in “Disease” are to be found also depicted in the great final chapter, “The White Darkness,” of Maya Deren’s *Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti*. The sense of relay and habitus in the self-awareness in trance and possession:

As sometimes in a dream, so here I can observe myself . . .

It is when I turn, as if to a neighbor, to say, “Look! See how lovely that is!” and see that the others are removed to a distance, withdrawn to a circle which is already watching, that I realize, like a shaft of terror struck through me, that it is no longer myself whom I watch.⁷⁸

The crossing of the *line—pourquoi aller à la ligne?*—into lived separation and doubling:

No sooner do I settle into the succor of this support than my sense of self doubles again, as in a mirror, separates to both sides of the invisible threshold.

The experience of voids—“How,” asks Deren, “could I know a void as void?”⁷⁹—and dead space with *dead time*:

I feel that the gaps will spread and widen and that I will, myself, be altogether lost in that dead space and that dead time.

The experience of voices and sounds:

these . . . voices—great, insistent, singing voices—whose sound would smother me. . . . The singing is at my very ear, inside my head. This sound will drown me!⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Maya Deren, “The White Darkness,” *The Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti* (1953) (New York: McPherson and Company, 1970), 258-59.

⁷⁹ Maya Deren “The White Darkness,” 260.

The tension of surfaces:

My skull is a drum . . . The white darkness . . . is a great force which I cannot sustain or contain, which surely will burst my skin.⁸¹

And finally, the experience of the anachronization of time as chronology and sequence give way, sometimes to inversion, sometimes to simultaneity, sometimes to totality: for “Disease”: “All the time now. All the time there is. Always. And all times”; for “The White Darkness”:

the body growing lighter with each second . . . the sound grown still stronger . . . then suddenly: surface; suddenly, air; suddenly: sound is light, dazzling white.⁸²

That Cha’s poetics of the Disease is a literary use of the anthropological experience of vacancy preparatory to trance and possession is further underscored by the not infrequent use of out-of-the-body experience *specifically as a form of inaugural experience*: this is present in many of the key inaugural texts of modernism: in H.D.’s (late Modernist) *Helen in Egypt* above all in the encounter between Helen (*both phantom and reality*) and Achilles in the Underworld, the Underworld which is precisely the domain and *state* which, being that of an anachronized time, permits a new agency to Helen who is still Helen of Sparta, Helen of Troy, “Helena, hated of Greece,” but also Helen capable of “the difficult task of translating a symbol of time, into timeless-time.”⁸³ It is to be found, too, in Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, beginning with its epigraph from Petronious on the Cumean Sybil trapped in a state of aimless transition (in-betweeness) waiting for, but also in a permanently deferred death, which figure is replicated in the forms of Tiresias, Phlebas the Phoenician, and the girl of the Hyacinth Garden, “neither / Living nor dead,” who yet “knew nothing, / Looking into the heart of light, the silence.”⁸⁴ There is, though, another modernist work along with *The Waste Land* and *Helen in Egypt* which, in addition to Deren and the tradition identified with *The Waste Land*, I believe to be essential to the poetics of Cha, namely, the opening of Pound’s Canto I, the Nekuia episode from Book 11 of the *Odyssey* only partially translated by Pound, beginning, famously, *in medias res* (as figures of separation and separatedness) and closing on a colon. We begin with the libations poured to the ancestors:

Here did they rites, Perimedes and Eurylochus,
And drawing sword from my hip
I dug the ell-square pitkin;
Poured we libations unto each the dead

⁸⁰ Maya Deren, “The White Darkness,” 259-60.

⁸¹ Maya Deren, “The White Darkness,” 260.

⁸² Maya Deren, “The White Darkness,” 261.

⁸³ H. D., *Helen in Egypt* (New York: New Directions, 1961, 1974), 13.

⁸⁴ T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*, ll. 41-42 in *Collected Poems, 1909-1962* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1991), 54.

followed by the *passage* into this world from the next, another world (*pays de l'autre*) always present in parallel, always present in latency:

Dark blood flowed out in the fosse,
Souls out of Erebus, cadaverous dead, of brides
Of youths and of the old who had borne much;
Souls stained with recent tears, girls tender,
Men many, mauled with bronze lance heads,
Battle spoil, bearing yet dreary arms,
These many crowded about me; . . .
I sat to keep off the impetuous impotent dead,
Till I should hear Tiresias,⁸⁵

in other words, until the true prophetic voice should arise. In *Dictée*, this true prophetic voice will devolve to the Diseuse, and the mimicking speech both her invocation (Muga, the song sung by a Korean Shaman) and her incarnation as Diseuse (Mudang). Here, “Polymina Sacred Poetry,” the closing division of *Dictée*, makes clear the role of shamanism, that the Diseuse is, in a manner of speaking, a form of Princess Pari (Pari Kongju), the deity at the source of Korean shamanism whose epic is sung in the *kut* for the dead to guide their souls to the Heavenly Kingdom.⁸⁶ In the classical tale of Princess Pari, she is abandoned by her parents (Pari may be translated as Abandoned One), the King and Queen, because she is not a boy. When, however, the King and Queen fall ill, only the Abandoned One, Pari, will undertake the risk, that is, the *journey*, to find the medicinal water that alone can save them. She journeys to the underworld and after many trials—over nine years in all⁸⁷—she returns only to find her parents dead, but is able to revive them with the waters. Hereafter, Pari becomes the goddess and guide of the Underworld. It is this story, of Abandonment, made materially equivalent to the story of Demeter and Persephone, that is, an allegory of Separation, that structures the closing of *Dictée*, where a child, in search of medicine for her mother, encounters “A young woman [who] was dipping into the well all alone and filling two large jars that stood beside her” (D 167).⁸⁸ There is a moment of transition and passage,

⁸⁵ Ezra Pound, *Canto I (A Draft of XXX Cantos, 1930)*, *The Cantos* (London: Faber, 1975), 3-4.

⁸⁶ Cf. James Huntley Grayson, *Myths and Legends from Korea: An Annotated Compendium of Ancient and Modern Materials* (New York and London: Routledge, 2001), 352. For a version of the tale cf. “Princess Pari,” trans. Lee Tae-Dong, *Korea Journal*, vol. 18, no. 6, 1978, 52-57.

⁸⁷ “Gow Gee Lin Wan Ninth, Unending series of nines, or nine points linked together,” it is written in *Dictée* (173): the novena (of Mary), the nine days of Devi, or the “Nine days queen Deo [Demeter] wandered over the earth / Constantly searching.” “Hymn to Demeter,” ll. 46-47 in *The Homeric Hymns*, Thelma Sargent, translator (New York: Norton, 1975).

⁸⁸ Here compare the “Hymn to Demeter,” where Demeter, “Her heart overflowing with sorrow . . . sat by the path / Near the Well of the Maiden, where housewives came to draw water.” “Hymn to Demeter,” ll. 108-109. But also, compare the opening of Joan of Arc’s dictated life: “Not far from Domremy there is a tree called the Ladies’ Tree, and others call it the Fairies’ Tree, and near it there is a fountain. And I have heard that those who are sick with fever drink at the fountain or fetch water from it, to be made well” (*Joan of Arc: In Her Own Words*, compiled and translated by Willard Trask [New York: Books and Co, 1996], 4).

of literariness and phenomenological transfiguration, as landscape becomes screen and thus support of projections, for the day is hot, “The sun became brighter at an earlier hour,” and so

The heat rises from the earth, diminishing the clear delineations of the road. The dust haze lingers between earth and sky and forms an opaque screen. The landscape exists *inside the screen* [my emphasis]. On the other side of it and beyond. (D 167)⁸⁹

The child and the young woman *mirror* each other, for “She too was wearing a white kerchief around her thick black hair braided in a single knot down her back, which swung forward when she leaned against the well” (D 167). The supernatural presence of the young woman at the well is marked in simultaneously linguistic, phenomenological and filmic registers: “Her eyes were dark and they seemed to glow from inside the darkness” (D 169). The child relates her story to the young woman “who listened and when the child finished her story, she nodded and gently patted the child’s head. She then brought over a basket and sat down beside her. The basket was filled with many pockets and she began to bring out one by one each pocket drawn with a black string. She said that these were special remedies for her mother and that she was to take them to her” (D 169). The young woman gives instructions to the child on the preparation of the special remedies and presents the child with a tenth pocket (*pojagi*), a gift, then said that the child should “go home quickly, [and] make no stops and remember all she had told her” (D 170).⁹⁰ As the child begins to leave, there is another moment of transition and passage, bearing with it the time of the encounter, as “Her steps seemed to move lighter than before. After a while she turned around to wave to the young woman at the well. She had already left the well. She turned and looked in all directions but she was not anywhere to be seen” (D 170).

The close of *Dictée* makes clearer the framing devices at play from beginning to end, for, consistent with the interpretation offered above of the frontispiece (Fig. 1) and the cover of *Dictée* (Fig. 6) as *tombeau* through which transition (which is to say, a *katabasis*) occurs to a new day—*C’était le premier jour*—to an encounter with ancestral specters, it may be said that *Dictée* offers its own variation upon the Nekuia episode in order to meet with, to embody “Souls stained with tears, girls tender, / Men many, mauled with bronze lance heads” as can be seen through the many forms of dismembered and sacrificed bodies strewn throughout *Dictée*, but above all as captured in the extraordinary phenomenon of Korean *Girl Martyrs for Liberty* in the context of the

⁸⁹ Which echoes Jean-Louis Baudry on the metapsychology of place discussed above.

⁹⁰ On the dismissive movement away from the encounter with the stranger, that is, with the suddenness of return from the sacred to the profane (see, as a type, the *Noli me tangere* episode of Jesus healing in Mark 5, 30-34, or Mark 7, 29-30) compare in this respect Cha with Prynne’s,

Go home said the
stranger to the
Boy’s mother he’s too
weak & she
cried bitterly & led
him to the door.

(J. H. Prynne, “Voll Vierdienst” [c. 1968], Poems, 36).

Japanese colonial response to the peaceful demonstrations which came to be known as the March 1, 1919 events which produced the Korean Jeanne d'Arc: Yu Guan Soon.⁹¹ We might now comprehend another central aspect of the framing function of the photographic iconography of *Dictée* beginning with the archaic tombs on the cover (Fig.6), through the figuration of transition (*katabasis*) in the speckled light of the frontispiece (Fig 2) with a return, in the final photographic plate internal to the book (Fig. 7), to the kind of space of the archaic and the mythographic in "Polymnia Sacred Poetry," which is to say, that the final scene effects a framing as the end recalls the opening: (Fig. 9) Space-Transition-Other-Space; then: a presentation of the invisible through a figuration of a threshold-line, without it being clear whither the direction: from the tomb or into the tomb; into this space or out of this space, within time or out of time, and its ruins . . .

8

The Genre of *Dictée* (I)

These works which help to situate the poetic practice of *Dictée* are indeed canonical works of High Modernism, but what Cha's work isolates, identifies and extends (since every significant work must re-define its relation to a medium that makes it possible) is the functioning of a device at once rhetorical: breath (its absence in "The White Darkness," its insufficiency in *Helen in Egypt*, its fading in the girl from the Hyacinth Garden, its cosmological property in *Canto I*); anthropological: the role of out-of-the-body experiences to mark an inaugural moment; and finally, prosodic: the caesura as figure of separation, sameness-in-difference, and as allowing presence to the distance and proximity between living and dead. It will be noted, though, that the personae in these works do not sing—"Deren" hears voices and song—whereas in *Dictée*, precisely what is thematised in the Disease is the line between speech and song, and it is here that another model—which is shadowed by Korean forms in the *P'ansori*—may be brought to bear upon the articulations of *Dictée*, namely the figure of the Récitant from Victor Segalen's *Les Immémoriaux* (1907) who performs in "gestes rigoureux, des incantations cadencées (rigorous gestures, cadenced incantations)":⁹² the Récitant, Térîi, belongs to an order of Maori society, the haèré-po (night-walkers), whose business it is to relate—*relay*, one should say following the diction of *Dictée*, relay in "Recitation. Evocation"⁹³—the immemorial stories of the tribe's foundation: "And it is the business of the night-walkers, the haèré-po with long memory, from altar to altar and from sacrificer to disciple, to give themselves over to the first stories and the exploits [gestes: deeds] which must not die." In

⁹¹ See Appendix I and for a fuller discussion of the extraordinary phenomenon of Girl Martyrs for Liberty, cf. Michael Stone-Richards, "Le temps de l'autre (II): French, Roman Catholicism and the Language of Religion," *Logics of Separation: Exile and Transcendence in Aesthetic Modernity* (forthcoming Peter Lang).

⁹² Victor Segalen, *Les Immémoriaux* (1907) (Paris: Plon, 1956), 4. On *Les Immémoriaux*, cf. Giorgio Agamben, "L'Origine et l'oubli: Parole du mythe et Parole de la Littérature," *Image et mémoire: Ecrits sur l'image, la danse et le cinéma* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 2004), 71-85; and cf. James Clifford, "A Poetics of Displacement: Victor Segalen," *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 152-163.

⁹³ "She relays the others, Recitation. Evocation. Offering. Provocation. The begging. Before her. Before them." Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, "Disease," *Dictée*, 4.

recounting, in “rigorous gestures, cadenced incantations,” the first stories of the tribe, the Récitant is also perpetuating the Origin of Word and Speech, and as though the existence of the tribe is linked to this Word and Speech, continuity and fluency of recitation is a condition of performance, whence the pain (épreuve: ordeal) as “suddenly the récitant began to stumble ... He stopped, and, refocusing his attention, restarts the narrative of ordeal. . . . A silence weighed, with a touch of anguish. Aie! what was presaged by the forgetting [l’oubli: oblivion] of the name?”⁹⁴

The failure of articulation in recitation returns us to one of the central preoccupations of breath as a means of approach to another sense of the kind of work that is *Dictée* and the sources of its mode of articulation. There is in *Dictée* a clear staging of the status of breath: the physicality and materiality of breath is given an ostensive presentation, boldly and baldly, in a diagram in the division devoted to “Urania Astronomy” (D 74). Look, here is the physiology of the production of breath: the passages (nasal and oral), the larynx, the trachea which carries air to the lungs, etc. There is, too, as we have already mentioned, the pervasive rhetorical use of punctuation by which is staged the articulation of breath and the control of breathing, the poetic manifestation of which is rhythm: rhythms of dis-articulation, dis-continuity, inter-ruption and inter-fence, rhythm, in short, undoing measure (proportionality and resemblance) in the laying bear of the material conditions for the production of song from sounds, groans, pain, immediacy and haltingness, a song, that is to say, which is not lyric fluency, as song approaches speech and speech reaches song. This is *Dictée*’s (and Cha’s) *Sprechstimme*—and at the same time a parallel with Korean *P’ansori*⁹⁵—a term created by Arnold Schönberg for the new mode of articulation for the kind of performance voice inaugurated in his chamber work *Pierrot Lunaire*, op. 21 (1912), a setting of 21 poems by the Belgian Symbolist Albert Giraud in a German translation by Erich Hartleben. *Sprechstimme* is a form of handling of the voice through pitch in such a way that it does not become singing proper but no longer remains speaking, but is speech sound producing *Sprechgesang*, speechsong. A very important aspect of the development of *Sprechstimme*, as Pierre Boulez has noted, is its development from the mode of recitation performed by the diseuse of late nineteenth- early twentieth-century European cabaret culture,⁹⁶ for precisely the significance here of the diseuse—or diseur, since there were male performers, too—is that she was not a singer: Yvette Guilbert was a *diseuse fin de siècle*, Damia a

⁹⁴ Victor Segalen, *Les Immémoriaux*, 7.

⁹⁵ *P’ansori*: *Pan* means a place of gathering and *sori* means song. The *P’ansori* is a dramatic form of recitation in Korean folk culture performed by one *Sorrigun* (singer, male or female) accompanied by one *Gosu* (drummer) on a small barrel drum. The recent, and successful, Korean film *Chunhyang* (2000) directed by Im Kwon-Taek dramatized one of the five existing forms (Madang) of the *P’ansori*. For a “classical” treatment of the vocal recitation of the *P’ansori* form, one may consult the performance of Kim so-hee on *P’ansori: Korea’s Epic Vocal Art and Instrumental Music*, Elektra/Wea, 1990 (compact disc), and the short story by Yi Ch’öngjun, “Söp’yönje. La Chanteuse de p’ansori,” in Patrick Maurus, ed., *La Chanteuse de p’ansori: Prose coréenne contemporaine* (Arles: Actes Sud, 1997), 215-230. I should not, of course, have been at all surprised when Patrick Maurus, in an editorial note to “La Chanteuse de p’ansori,” described *P’ansori* as a “narrative sung, or song narrated, perhaps as well considered as a sort of opera in solo, alternating songs, arias often close to *sprechgesang*.” Patrick Maurus, *La Chanteuse de p’ansori*, 231, n.2.

⁹⁶ Cf. Pierre Boulez, “Dire, jouer, chanter (sur le *Pierrot lunaire* et *Le Marteau sans maître*),” *Regards sur autrui* (Paris: Christian Bourgois, 2005), 75-93. For a further development of this theme of *Sprechstimme* emerging from the cabaret diseuse, cf. Michael Stone-Richards, “Cette musique de l’inconscient,” forthcoming.

singer. At its most minimal, the disease was a reciter of melodramas performed to musical accompaniment, and the accomplished disease was a skilled vocalist: whether of monologues in the genre of music-hall recitation or of melodies that are no more than elevated speech. In the elaborated figures of and on sound patternings that are strewn throughout *Dictée*, it should not be surprising that Sprechstimme is encountered, indeed, taken as a musical as well as both a linguistic and cultural model. Thus in the division “Terpsichore Choral Dance,” which contains the most sustained presentation of soundings in *Dictée* and Cha’s oeuvre—including the performances that remain in recorded forms—we encounter the search for “Other melodies”—and it is not possible that for Cha *melodies* does not here connote the genre of French art song—“Other melodies, whole, suspended *between song and speech*” (D 162, my emphasis). In the broadsheet announcing the publication of *Dictée*, there is also another allusion to Schönberg, this time as part of a concern with what is called the grammar of time—and which we have above characterized as the anachronization or degrammaticalization of time: “Dictee simultaneously experiments with time; Time which the characters experience . . . in Korean history, in ‘mythological’ Time. The grammar is applied in ways to establish a chronology which expands or condenses time, or makes it constant, atonal / eternal.” This grammar of time proposes that temporality be felt not in terms of past, present and future, but, being anachronized, be felt instead in terms of modes, modes of atonality, condensation, constancy - and are these not also modes of gestation?⁹⁷—producing thereby experiences which might then be best depicted in musical terms: its vocal articulation would be the steady monotony which is yet capable of sudden and radical shifts (whole octaves) that is Sprechstimme (or the non-diatonic performance of a Récitant such as Terrii in *Les Immémoriaux*, or the timbral performance of a cabaret diseuse), or the decentered movement of tonal (pitch) clusters each of which may be a new point of origination (*For the next phase. Next to last. Before the last.*) the mutual vibrations of which will condense “In deep metal voice” (D162), be constant in variation, whence the transferred patternings of “deep metal voice spiraling . . . shiver the air in pool’s waves” (D 162), but also atonal, a principle of generation through repetition and reversibility—like tone rows. This grammar of time can produce “Other melodies,” which is to say, other acoustic times, other temporalities, of *equal* importance, hence “Other melodies, whole,” and if whole then in an-other sense they must resist ordinary time and so they are “Other melodies [that] in still the silence,” not simply “instill” but “in still” actualize that which is still, unmoving, and which, now making breath material, do so with silence. The tension—and *Dictée* will speak of as well as announce “*the labor of figures*” (D 161)—is that between a voice of invocation, which is linked to “*The labor of voices*” (D 161), and a medium of stillness, which is figured here as the tension and passage between music and painting: *intones*, *in tones* (of sound) and *in tones* (of color)—the two caught in a spatiality of vibration at an abstract remove, which is the spiritual (meditative) distance. So:

Water inhabits the stone, conducts absorption of implantation from the exterior. In tones, the inscriptions resonate the atmosphere of the column, repeating over the same sounds,⁹⁸ distinct

⁹⁷ For a very complex development of the figure of gestation—linked to sound with more than a hint of theurgical invocation in the manner of the Mallarmé of “Prose (pour des Esseintes)”—see “Terpsichore Choral Dance,” *Dictée*, 156-162.

⁹⁸ Following through the analogy between paint and sound, layers of sound (repeating over the same sounds) would be sounds of *repentir*.

words.⁹⁹ Other melodies, whole, suspended between song and speech in still the silence. (D 162)

The explorations of atonality, ec-static movement and displacement in *Dictée* find themselves part-and-parcel of a continuous exploration of image and materiality: the *writing* of ink and blank page in parallel with the *light* of the black and white cinematic screen, framed by white, stone architectural columns. What is essential to the various modalities of exploring materiality—breath, ink, page, diacritical markings, sounds, close ups, nerve, sinew, etc.—is the underlying concern with what I have characterized variously as anachrony, anachronization of time, or, following Pierre Fédida, the eruption of the *passé anachronique* into the movement of the present which permits a view upon time as timeless (*zeitlos*), without governance, the image of which is the taking of distance in shamanistic displacement.¹⁰⁰ I should like to consider the significance of this term, *passé anachronique*, more carefully.

9

The Genre of *Dictée* (II)

The term *passé anachronique* is Pierre Fédida's translation of Freud's *zeitlos*. For Freud, the unconscious is by definition *zeitlos*, that is, without time, timeless, though its continuum with the preconscious means that it is not unrelated to temporality, indeed, through the preconscious the unconscious registers movements of pulse, fading and blinking—the very diction of 1970s film theory—but not the continuity of perceptual (temporal) succession for “die unbewußten Seelenvorgänge an sich ‘zeitlos’ sind (unconscious mental processes [by themselves] are ‘timeless’).”¹⁰¹ In translating *zeitlos* as *passé anachronique*, that is, a past with-out time, Fédida means to address (through the negative *ana-*), first, the sense in which unconscious elements, being independent of time, can also be understood to be independent of structure, which then enables him to foreground the active way in which the force of the unconscious intervenes, pierces, into the movement of self-consciousness disrupting thereby its habituations at any point or time: little surprises, those slips of the tongue as well as the more expansive experiences that we designate uncanny, déjà-vu where suddenly perceptions slip one into another, where something dreamt becomes something lived and something lived something dreamt, the passage of the one into the other become marked by indistinction. Such experiences, from the slight to the expansive, come about, says Fédida, because the intrusion of the movements of the unconscious into the

⁹⁹ Here we might notice the implicit rhyme—the vibration—of *words* with *chords*, which would evoke an intersection of horizontal and vertical listening.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Pierre Fédida's intervention in the debate with Jean Laplanche on *après-coup* in Jean Laplanche, “Temporalité et traduction,” *Psychanalyse à l'université*, vol.14, no.3, January 1989, 42-45. Fédida's intervention has been translated, with introduction, by Michael Stone-Richards as “From *après-coup* to *passé anachronique*: An intervention by Pierre Fédida,” in D.S. Marriot, ed., *Psychoanalysis and Poetics, Fragmente*, vol. 8, Summer 1998.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Sigmund Freud, *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* (1920), *Gesammelte Werke*, Band XIII (London: Imago Publishing, 1940, 1947), 27-28, and *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Pelican Freud, vol. 11, *On Metapsychology* (Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1987), 299-300.

movement of self-consciousness results in a transference of the properties of the place of the unconscious (chora) into the spatiality of perception leading to a de-grammaticalization of the syntax or governance of social time.¹⁰² This he terms the anachronization of time; and when the past - memory, recollection, even the archaic - is lived continuously with the present or as presentness such that presentness is not marked as such, in the way in which the confusion of use and mention is made possible by the absence of phonological hierarchy - consider, too, analytically, the re-living of the past in the experience of the transference, or the sudden re-living of a trauma - then we have a *passé anachronique*. Such a conception of the *passé anachronique* has implications not only for experience at an individual level but addresses that important question - important to Freud and Jung equally - touched on since the final chapter of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, namely, how is it possible that in the dreams of an individual there may be found symbols of ancientness of which the individual could not have had any personal knowledge, the problem, in other words, of the inheritance and transmission of phylogenetic traces. It is a small step from the recognition of the problem of the inheritance of phylogenetic traces to a pre-occupation with the language of myth (or rites) as living anachronism.¹⁰³ In this latter respect, it must be appreciated, that Cha's thinking—as witnessed in her MFA thesis, "Paths," and many other working documents in the Cha archives at Berkeley—is clearly Jungian rather than Freudian, and very likely mediated by aspects of the work of Joseph Campbell.¹⁰⁴ But in the way in which she deploys the topoi of vacancy, illness as elective sign, and out-of-the-body experience there is not theoretical specificity, rather the form of shamanistic displacement affords *Dictée* a structural means of controlling and deploying the anachronization of time, for once time is anachronized, and the *passé anachronique* thereby opened up, another topos is deployed, namely, displacement as voyage of an exilic, ec-static self where the future (*Diseuse de bonne aventure*) is no less open than other pasts (as the passage from Balzac used in *Apparatus* argues quite forcefully): hence the exilic voyage re-lives in nine divisions, each of which is presided over by a (Greek) Muse, nine narratives (i.e., récits) giving stories, histories and experiences through the (acoustic) masks (or voices, as Cha puts it) of Korean women,¹⁰⁵ counter-pointed from the ancient past to the contemporaneous present (which is always the *time of writing*, the time of the récit): beginning with (1) the 17 year old Korean revolutionary Yu Guan Soon—the picture of her on page 24 is a detail from a photograph of thirteen women carefully cropped to present nine young women used on the back cover of the book—who may be counterpointed with Jeanne d'Arc (and implicitly also with St

¹⁰² Cf. Pierre Férida, "Théorie des lieux," *Le Site de l'étranger: La situation psychanalytique* (Paris: PUF, 1995).

¹⁰³ For a development of this view of anachrony and phylogenetic traces in relation to myth and bisexuality, cf. Pierre Férida, "D'une essentielle dissymétrie dans la psychanalyse," *L'Absence* (Paris: Gallimard, 1978), 245.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. The Theresa Hak Kyung Cha Archive at the Berkeley Art Museum / Pacific Film Archive, University of California

<<http://www.bampfa.berkeley.edu/collections/bam/texts/cha.ead.html>>.

¹⁰⁵ In the broadside announcing the publication of *Dictée*, we read: "*Dictée* is a series of narratives in nine parts with each of the Nine Muses identifying each of the sections . . . The narratives trace names, events & histories of existing persons, individual personages in history & other fictitious characters embodied in nine female voices." When Cha here speaks of fictitious characters embodied in female voices, we should bear in mind the importance of Beckett, Duras and Yourcenar, above all the Yourcenar of *Mémoires d'Hadrien* which Yourcenar characterized as the "Portrait d'une voix." See Marguerite Yourcenar, *Carnet de Notes, Mémoires d'Hadrie* (Paris: Gallimard, 1963).

Thérèse of Lisieux);¹⁰⁶ (2) the Mother, who in the developing symbolism of three and nine may be taken as the simplest form of the timeless complex Mary-Demeter-Devi;¹⁰⁷ (3) a re-counting of Korea occupied by Japan and betrayed by an American government, a Korea since time immemorial caught between China and Japan; (4) the voyage moves from history to the skies in the form of an exploration of the proportionality of macrocosm and microcosm (i) through the image of the eternal starry sky as a membrane implicitly compared to the membrane of human skin (a medium of primal inscription) and (ii) language as a combinatory method (French into English, English into French, French and English in and as parallel, and so on) for movement between points of any structure of topological equivalence (for example, where microcosm = macrocosm) (“Urania Astronomy”); (5) a return from the west to Korea eighteen years after the first departure; (6) a presentation of *sympathetic* states articulating women in states of psychological *collapse* (the letter to Laura Claxton (D 146-48),¹⁰⁸ or the Mother on the threshold of a possession by divine sickness or *sinbyong* (D 50-53, but also D 3-5); (7) journeys into mythical—i.e., timeless—time (“Polymnia Sacred Poetry”) resulting in the feeling of re-joining the whole (the ten cosmic circles) before the culmination through the *time of writing* in re-birth (the condition of natality) and the recovery of the myth and language of childhood (“Lift me up mom,” D 179).

The above schematization represents the basic structure of movement permitted by the anachronization of time, an experience brought about through the Diseuse, she who is invoked in order to “break open the spell cast upon time” (D 123), to overcome *dead time*. We might put this schematization of exilic, ec-static voyage in thematic terms as follows. Once the mimicking subject of “Diseuse” finds itself sufficiently undone, exposed, voided, emptied, sufficiently absorbed into and by the anonymity of what is—the *il y a*—not to be confused with the social anonymity of the *they*, then the processes of subjection at work in the time of com-position and the time of writing, lead to an altered sense of the appropriation of subject, for we note the dominance in *Dictée* of the following: (1) scenes of inculcation: language and religion; (2) sacrifice (Yu Guan Soon, Jeanne d’Arc, the crucifixion of *Korean Christians* as represented in the photograph on page 39);¹⁰⁹ (3) liminoid states, that is, states of psychological and social crisis which result in a disintegration of current values and ideas of selfhood before the re-emergence of new values and ideas of selfhood (this is captured under the Korean term of *sinbyong*, the divine sickness that marks a person as being called to be a Mudang—the Mother, possibly, the Diseuse, certainly; or as in the case of the letter to Laura Claxton, the proximity of madness); (4) the play of forms, mythical and anthropological: Mary-Demeter, or the Novena of Roman liturgy compared to, or as an instance of, the Hindu devotion in the festival of Navaratri in which the goddess

¹⁰⁶ “Jeanne d’Arc” is also and at the same time a film by Carl Th. Dreyer, *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (1928), 35 mm Black and White. In *The Story of a Soul*, St. Thérèse of Lisieux had written: “When I read stories about the deeds of the great French heroines—especially the Venerable Joan of Arc, I longed to imitate them and felt stirred by the same inspiration which moved them” (St. Thérèse of Lisieux, *The Story of a Soul*, trans. John Beevers [New York: Image Books, 1957]), 49.

¹⁰⁷ Devi, the universal mother the worship of whom, says the Kena Upanishad, leads to knowledge of the self.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Appendix II below.

¹⁰⁹ On which photography cf. Cf. Michael Stone-Richards, “Le temps de l’autre (II): French, Roman Catholicism and the Language of Religion,” *Logics of Separation: Exile and Transcendence in Aesthetic Modernity* (forthcoming Peter Lang).

in the form of the Universal Mother (Durga) is worshipped for nine nights;¹¹⁰ (5) the many scenes of childhood from inculcation to recovery—for example, the child speaking to the mother the mother’s own story, rather than the child learning of its own past from the mother (D 45 ff.); and (6) history: French, Korean, Koreans of Hawai’i.

If the anachronization of time may be seen as not only a thematic aspect of *Dictée* but part of its structural production and generative strategy, then the way is open to see this anachronization as the means by which the récit or narrative form of *Dictée* becomes porous, not only to the power of memory, but also to a temporality of the now, the present, and as such capable of approaching at moments the conditions of autobiography, or diary or recollection, no less than the condition of history, or Bildungsroman, etc., for the movement of anachronization makes the time of the writing concurrent with the action of depiction—this is the conception of the récit (narrative) and thirdliness which Maurice Blanchot finds embodied variously in Rimbaud’s *Une Saison en enfer*, Proust’s *A la recherche du temps perdu*, and Breton’s *Nadja* (underwrit, to be sure, by a certain interpretation of *The Odyssey*),¹¹¹ for “the récit . . . is the récit of an exceptional event which escapes the

¹¹⁰ This observation on the role of play of forms in *Dictée* cannot be over-emphasized as it touches on the status of Cha’s style and poetics. There is much confusion, I would suggest, about the status of Korea and things Korean in Cha’s poetics. Clearly Korean history is of great importance and I shall have more to say about this, but “Korea” is not more important than the traditions of writing which inform *Dictée*, which, on the strong argument I have proposed, make the recovery of Korea possible. *Dictée* is a supremely literary work and the play of forms is one very telling example of this: Mary is Demeter is Devi in some very obvious sense. So, what of the Korean tale of Princess Pari that is found in “Polymnia Sacred Poetry,” the story of the meeting around the well? This is taken by many as a mark of the Koreanness of Cha/*Dictée*, and it is telling that those who make this argument always omit the many references to “screen” in this division of *Dictée*, its many internal references back to the scenes of *sinbyong* depicted in “Calliope Epic Poetry,” do not, in other words, read the work as an artifact self-conscious in its construction. For not the least of it is that the opening pages of the dictated life of Joan of Arc contain very similar scenes about the childhood of Joan of Arc in Domremy: “Not far from Domremy there is a tree called the Ladies’ Tree, and others call it the Fairies’ Tree, and near it there is a fountain. And I have heard that those who are sick with fever drink at the fountain or fetch water from it, to be made well” (*Joan of Arc: In Her Own Words*, compiled and translated by Willard Trask [New York: Books and Co, 1996], 4). Demeter is also to be found near a well. The anthropologically stable pattern is: drawing water is woman’s work, but the anthropologically inflected poetics is: the well becomes the place of encounter, hence, it is where Jesus meets the woman as outcast in the gospel according to *John* 4: 6-30 where Jesus meets the woman of Samaria at Jacob’s well. The play of forms is the manner of *Dictée*, and all the more so because it points to certain anthropological interests central to Cha’s poetics and the poetics of her generation. This is in part what I intend by *Dictée*’s use of variation in mythical forms as an eidetic phenomenology of myth.

¹¹¹ The contemporary writer more than any other whose work embodies this conception of the récit as a work of mixed genre in which the time of writing is the relation itself is W.G. Sebald, and in a manner that is manifestly continuous with the Surrealism of *Nadja*, if at a times more attenuated. One thinks of such works as *Vertigo* (1990), *The Emigrants* (1992), and *The Rings of Saturn* (1995). There are the found documents, photographs, objects, letters, the moments of the narrative that are essay-like, then the mark of a diary, or moments that bear the diction of autobiography, carrying the implication of an “I” in such a way that the

forms of every day time and the world of habitual truth, perhaps of all truth”;¹¹² in escaping the time of habits, the time of the everyday world and habitual truth, in its mode of anachronization, therefore, the “récit is not the relation of an event, but this very event, the approach of this event, the place where this event is called to produce itself, an event still to come and by the alluring power of which the récit itself can hope to become realized.”¹¹³ The anachronization of time, as a result, entails the process of authorship into a consciousness of the weight and process of writing which in *Dictée* is deployed through a presentation which manages to encompass both a stringent materiality—of word, of medium, of apparatus—as well as states and forms of experience—*sinbyong*; vacancy, shamanistic possession and displacement, madness, no less than variations on the myth of childhood so central to modern poetry from Baudelaire through Saint-John Perse, Surrealism, Négritude and beyond to Yourcenar and Duras so important to Cha. Above all, the understanding of the anachronization of time, the *passé anachronique*, permits one to grasp the role of film and cinematic experience—structural film and its theory—in the deployment of collage and montage as both technique and form, in the approximation of page and screen, and the persistently worked parallelism of the material and the psychic as a

reader cannot tell from the work itself where the ontology of the “I” is to be situated, and all is written in a tone or key of the memorial. One major difference, of course, between Sebald and Cha is that though wit there is in Cha, there is never a trace of cruel humor—*l’humor noir*—and the irony of Sebald is not Cha’s; also, where in Sebald it is clear that certain objects, documents or photographs are chanced upon or found objects, this is rarely if ever the case for Cha where every document (from a photograph of St. Thérèse of Liseux to a Chinese acupuncture diagram) is meant to be identifiable.

¹¹² Maurice Blanchot, “La loi secrète du récit,” *Le Livre à venir* (Paris: Gallimard: 1959), 13. It is interesting to note just how very rare it is, in Cha’s *oeuvre*, to encounter the banal everyday, the everyday in its plainness without any claim for its value. The rhythms and diction of the everyday as we find them, say, in an avant-garde poet such as the late Frances Chung has no counterpart in Cha’s *oeuvre*:

The echoes of the night trucks
bouncing off the cobblestones
on Canal Street play on the
silences in my bones. Playing
games with the red and green
light on the corner of Mott and
Canal, we find an excuse to run –
we who know that those who are
brave cross Mott Street on a
diagonal.

(Frances Chung, “The echoes of the night trucks,” *Crazy Melon and Chinese Apple: The Poems of Frances Chung* [Hanover and London: Wesleyan University Press, 2000], 4). The many scenes of childhood or interaction with the figure of the Mother in *Dictée* are always underwrit by transfigurative possibilities, as I argue elsewhere. See Michael Stone-Richards, “Sickness as election: Mother, *Sinbyong*,” and “Sickness: the approach of madness: Laura Claxton,” *Theresa Hak Kyung Cha: Commentaries* (forthcoming).

¹¹³ Maurice Blanchot, *Le Livre à venir*, 14.

means for exploring that condition where, in the words of Saint-John Perse, “L’exil n’est point d’hier! l’exil n’est point d’hier!” (Saint-John Perse, *Exil*, II), and this is so for one carries within oneself the memory of that to which no return can be made—exile, then, is lived as an existential interval—for exile is not elsewhere (of yesterday, for example), but always here and now because of “yesterday” become irretrievable save through memory, whence the force of Lyotard’s question: “How may it be known that what makes for a return is indeed that which had disappeared?” The persistent parallelism of materiality and psychic forms enables, finally, a strong sense of the term *dictée* to emerge, namely, as *trans*-scription, the possibly alternative inscription (proto-writing) made possible in/through trance-like states, through states that fail to be encoded in the socially available registers—whence the role of gender as intrinsic to the very form of the narrative of *Dictée*—no less than in states of collapse of signification (de-translations, as Jean Laplanche terms it) seeking new forms and articulations (re-translations). The opening scene and event of language of *Dictée*—the action of the text—gives onto, opens itself to, envisions these structural possibilities and imaginative variations within an interval, an opening, of acoustic distancing and an eidetic phenomenology of myth. Such are the issues propadeutic to any further study of how rhetoric—complexity and density, what *Dictée* characterizes as the modes of *thick weight*—becomes part of the way of understanding historicity and reading in *Dictée*.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ Cf. Michael Stone-Richards, “Le temps de l’autre (I): Translation as model” and “Le temps de l’autre (II): French, Roman Catholicism and the Language of Religion,” *Logics of Separation: Exile and Transcendence in Aesthetic Modernity* (forthcoming Peter Lang).

APPENDIX I

F.A. McKenzie, *Korea's Fight for Freedom* (New York and Chicago: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1920; rpd. Seoul: Yonsei University Press, 1969 and 1975 in the Series of Reprints of Western Books on Korea) and The Project Gutenberg EBook of *Korea's Fight for Freedom*, by F.A. McKenzie (for the use of anyone anywhere at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.net).

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Author: F.A. McKenzie

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XVII

GIRL MARTYRS FOR LIBERTY

The most extraordinary feature of the uprising of the Korean people is the part taken in it by the girls and women. Less than twenty years ago, a man might live in Korea for years and never come in contact with a Korean woman of the better classes, never meet her on the street, never see her in the homes of his Korean friends. I have lived for a week or two at a time, in the old days, in the house of a Korean man of high class, and have never once seen his wife or daughters. In Japan in those days--and with many families the same holds true to-day--when one was invited as a guest, the wife would receive you, bow to the guest and her lord, and then would humbly retire, not sitting to table with the men.

Christian teaching and modern ways broke down the barrier in Korea. The young Korean women took keenly to the new mode of life. The girls in the schools, particularly in the Government schools, led the way in the demand for the restoration of their national life. There were many quaint and touching incidents. In the missionary schools, the chief fear of the girls was lest they should bring trouble on their American teachers. The head mistress of one of these schools noticed for some days that her girls were unusually excited. She heard them asking one another, "Have you enrolled?" and imagined that some new girlish league was being formed. This was before the great day. One morning the head mistress came down to discover the place empty. On her desk was a paper signed by all the girls, resigning their places in the school. They thought that by this device they would show that their beloved head mistress was not responsible.

Soon there came a call from the Chief of Police. The mistress was wanted at the police office at once. All the girls from her school were demonstrating and had stirred up the whole town. Would the mistress come and disperse them?

The mistress hurried off. Sure enough, here were the girls in the street, wearing national badges, waving national flags, calling on the police to come and take them. The men had gathered and were shouting "Mansei!" also.

The worried Chief of Police, who was a much more decent kind than many of his fellows, begged the mistress to do something. "I cannot arrest them all," he said. "I have only one little cell here. It would only hold a few of them." The mistress went out to talk to the girls. They would not listen, even to her. They cheered her, and when she begged them to go home, shouted "Mansei!" all the louder.

The mistress went back to the Chief. "The only thing for you to do is to arrest me," she said.

The Chief was horrified at the idea, "I will go out and tell the girls that you are going to arrest me if they do not go," she said. "We will see what that will do. But mind you, if they do not disperse, you must arrest me."

She went out again. "Girls," she called, "the Chief of Police is going to arrest me if you do not go to your homes. I am your teacher, and it must be the fault of my teaching that you will not obey."

"No, teacher, no," the girls shouted. "It is not your fault. You have nothing to do with it. We are doing this." And some of them rushed up, as though they would rescue her by force of arms.

In the end, she persuaded the girls to go home, in order to save her. "Well," said the leaders of the girls, "it's all right now. We have done all we wanted. We have stirred up the men. They were sheep and wanted women to make a start. Now they will go on."

The police and gendarmerie generally were not so merciful as this particular Chief. The rule in many police stations was to strip and beat the girls and young women who took any part in the demonstrations, and to expose them, absolutely naked, to as many Japanese men as possible. The Korean woman is as sensitive as a white woman about the display of her person, and the Japanese, knowing this, delighted to have this means of humiliating them. In some towns, the schoolgirls arranged to go out in sections, so many one day, so many on the other. The girls who had to go out on the later days knew how those who had preceded them had been stripped and beaten. Anticipating that they would be treated in the same way, they sat up the night before sewing special undergarments on themselves, which would not be so easily removed as their ordinary clothes, hoping that they might thus avoid being stripped entirely naked.

The girls were most active of all in the city of Seoul. I have mentioned in the previous chapter the arrest of many of them. They were treated very badly indeed. Take, for instance, the case of those seized by the police on the morning of Wednesday, March 5th. They were nearly all of them pupils from the local academies. Some of them were demonstrating on Chong-no, the main street, shouting "Mansei." Others were wearing straw shoes, a sign of mourning, for the dead Emperor. Still others were arrested because the police thought that they might be on the way to demonstrate. A few of these girls were released after a spell in prison. On their release, their statements concerning their treatment were independently recorded.

They were first taken to the Chong-no Police Station, where a body of about twenty Japanese policemen kicked them with their heavy boots, slapped their cheeks or punched their heads. "They flung me against a wall with all their might, so that I was knocked senseless, and remained so for a time," said one. "They struck me such blows across the ears that my cheeks swelled up," said another. "They trampled on my feet with their

heavy nailed boots till I felt as though my toes were crushed beneath them.... There was a great crowd of students, both girls and boys. They slapped the girls over the ears, kicked them, and tumbled them in the corners. Some of them they took by the hair, jerking both sides of the face. Some of the boy students they fastened down with a rope till they had their heads fastened between their legs. Then they trampled them with their heavy boots, kicking them in their faces till their eyes were swelled and blood flowed.”

Seventy-five persons, forty men and thirty-five girls, were confined in a small room. The door was closed, and the atmosphere soon became dreadful. In vain they pleaded to have the door open. The girls were left until midnight without food or water. The men were removed at about ten in the evening.

During the day, the prisoners were taken one by one before police officials to be examined. Here is the narrative of one of the schoolgirls. This girl was dazed and almost unconscious from ill-treatment and the poisoned air, when she was dragged before her inquisitor.

“I was cross-questioned three times. When I went out to the place of examination they charged me with having straw shoes, and so beat me over the head with a stick. I had no sense left with which to make a reply. They asked: “Why did you wear straw shoes?”

“The King had died, and whenever Koreans are in mourning they wear straw shoes,’

“That is a lie,’ said the cross-examiner. He then arose and took my mouth in his two hands and pulled it each way so that it bled. I maintained that I had told the truth and no falsehoods. ‘You Christians are all liars,’ he replied, taking my arm and giving it a pull.

“. . . The examiner then tore open my jacket and said, sneeringly, ‘I congratulate you,’ He then slapped my face, struck me with a stick until I was dazed and asked again, ‘Who instigated you to do this? Did foreigners?’

“My answer was, ‘I do not know any foreigners, but only the principal of the school. She knows nothing of this plan of ours!’

“Lies, only lies,’ said the examiner.

“Not only I, but others too, suffered every kind of punishment. One kind of torture was to make us hold a board at arm’s length and hold it out by the hour. They also had a practice of twisting our legs, while they spat on our faces. When ordered to undress, one person replied, ‘I am not guilty of any offence. Why should I take off my clothes before you?’

“If you really were guilty, you would not be required to undress, but seeing you are sinless, off with your clothes,”

He was a humorous fellow, this cross-examiner of the Chong-no Police Station. He had evidently learned something of the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. His way was first to charge the girls-

schoolgirls of good family, mind you--with being pregnant, making every sort of filthy suggestion to them. When the girls indignantly denied, he would order them to strip.

"Since you maintain you have not sinned in any way, I see the Bible says that if there is no sin in you take off all your clothes and go before all the people naked," he told one girl. "Sinless people live naked."

Let us tell the rest of the story in the girl's own words. "The officer then came up to where I was standing, and tried to take off my clothes. I cried, and protested, and struggled, saying, 'This is not the way to treat a woman.' He desisted. When he was making these vile statements about us, he did not use the Korean interpreter, but spoke in broken Korean. The Korean interpreter seemed sorrowful while these vile things were being said by the operator. The Korean interpreter was ordered to beat me. He said he would not beat a woman; he would bite his fingers first. So the officer beat me with his fist on my shoulders, face and legs."

These examinations were continued for days. Sometimes a girl would be examined several times a day. Sometimes a couple of examiners would rush at her, beating and kicking her; sometimes they would make her hold a chair or heavy board out at full length, beating her if she let it sink in the least. Then when she was worn out they would renew their examination. The questions were all directed towards one end, to discover who inspired them, and more particularly if any foreigners or missionaries had influenced them. During this time they were kept under the worst possible conditions.

"I cannot recount all the vile things that were said to us while in the police quarters in Chong-no," declared one of the girls. "They are too obscene to be spoken, but by the kindness of the Lord I thought of how Paul had suffered in prison, and was greatly comforted. I knew that God would give the needed help, and as I bore it for my country, I did not feel the shame and misery of it." One American woman, to whom some of the girls related their experiences, said to me, "I cannot tell you, a man, all that these girls told us. I will only say this. There have been stories of girls having their arms cut off. If these girls had been daughters of mine I would rather that they had their arms cut off than that they faced what those girls endured in Chong-no."

There came a day when the girls were bound at the wrists, all fastened together, and driven in a car to the prison outside the West Gate. Some of them were crying. They were not allowed to look up or speak. The driver, a Korean, took advantage of a moment when the attention of their guard was attracted to whisper a word of encouragement. "Don't be discouraged and make your bodies weak. You are not yet condemned. This is only to break your spirits."

The prison outside the West Gate is a model Japanese jail. There were women officials here. It seemed horrible to the girls that they should be made to strip in front of men and be examined by them. Probably the men were prison doctors. But it was evidently intended to shame them as much as possible. Thus one girl relates that, after her examination, "I was told to take my clothes and go into another room. One woman went with me, about a hundred yards or more away. I wanted to put my clothes on before leaving the room, but they hurried me and pushed me. I wrapped my skirt about my body before I went out, and carried the rest of my clothes in my arms. After leaving this room, and before reaching the other, five Korean men prisoners passed us."

For the first week the girls, many of them in densely crowded cells, were kept in close confinement. After this, they were allowed out for fifteen minutes, wearing the prisoners' hat, which comes down over the head, after breakfast. Their food was beans and millet. It was given to the accompaniment of jeers and insults. "You Koreans eat like dogs and cats," the wardresses told them.

The routine of life in the prison was very trying. They got up at seven. Most of the day they had to assume a haunched, kneeling position, and remain absolutely still, hour after hour. The wardresses in the corridors kept close watch, and woe to the girl who made the slightest move. "They ordered us not to move a hand or a foot but to remain perfectly still," wrote one girl. "Even the slightest movement brought down every kind of wrath. We did not dare to move even a toe-nail."

One unhappy girl, mistaking the call of an official in the corridor, "I-ri-ma sen" for a command to go to sleep, stretched out her leg to lie down. She was scolded and severely punished. Another closed her eyes in prayer. "You are sleeping," called the wardress. In vain the girl replied that she was praying. "You lie," retorted the polite Japanese lady. More punishment!

After fifteen days in the prison outside the West Gate, some of the girls were called in the office. "Go, but be very careful not to repeat your offence," they were told. "If you are caught again, you will be given a heavier punishment."

The worst happenings with the women were not in the big towns, where the presence of white people exercised some restraint, but in villages, where the new troops often behaved in almost incredible fashion, outraging freely. The police in many of these outlying parts rivalled the military in brutality. Of the many stories that reached me, the tale of Tong Chun stands out. The account was investigated by experienced white men, who shortly afterwards visited the place and saw for themselves.

The village of Tong Chun contains about 300 houses and is the site of a Christian church. The young men of the place wished to make a demonstration but the elders of the church dissuaded them for a time. However, on March 29th, market day, when there were many people in the place, some children started demonstrating, and their elders followed, a crowd of four or five hundred people marching through the streets and shouting "Mansei!" There was no violence of any kind. The police came out and arrested seventeen persons, including five women.

One of these women was a widow of thirty-one. She was taken into the police office and a policeman tore off her clothes, leaving her in her underwear. Then the police began to take off her underclothes. She protested, whereupon they struck her in the face with their hands till she was black and blue. She still clung to her clothes, so they put a wooden paddle down between her legs and tore her clothes away. Then they beat her. The beating took a long time. When it was finished the police stopped to drink tea and eat Japanese cakes, they and their companions--there were a number of men in the room--amusing themselves by making fun of her as she sat there naked among them. She was subsequently released. For a week afterwards she had to lie down most of the time and could not walk around.

Another victim was the wife of a Christian teacher, a very bright, intelligent woman, with one child four months old, and two or three months advanced in her second pregnancy. She had taken a small part in the demonstration and then had gone to the home of the mother of another woman who had been arrested, to comfort her. Police came here, and demanded if she had shouted “Mansei.” She admitted that she had. They ordered her to leave the child that she was carrying on her back and took her to the police station. As she entered the station a man kicked her forcibly from behind and she fell forward in the room. As she lay there a policeman put his foot on her neck, then raised her up and struck her again and again. She was ordered to undress. She hesitated, whereupon the policeman kicked her, and took up a paddle and a heavy stick to beat her with. “You are a teacher,” he cried. “You have set the minds of the children against Japan. I will beat you to death.”

He tore her underclothes off. Still clinging to them, she tried to cover her nakedness. The clothes were torn out of her hands. She tried to sit down. They forced her up. She tried by turning to the wall to conceal herself from the many men in the room. They forced her to turn round again. When she tried to shelter herself with her hands, one man twisted her arms, held them behind her back, and kept them there while the beating and kicking continued. She was so badly hurt that she would have fallen to the floor, but they held her up to continue the beating. She was then sent into another room. Later she and other women were again brought in the office. “Do you know now how wrong it is to call ‘Mansei’?” the police asked. “Will you ever dare to do such a thing again?”

Gradually news of how the women were being treated spread. A crowd of five hundred people gathered next morning. The hot bloods among them were for attacking the station, to take revenge for the ill-treatment of their women. The chief Christian kept them back, and finally a deputation of two went inside the police office to make a protest. They spoke up against the stripping of the women, declaring it unlawful. The Chief of Police replied that they were mistaken. It was permitted under Japanese law. They had to strip them to search for unlawful papers. Then the men asked why only the younger women were stripped, and not the older, why they were beaten after being stripped, and why only women and not men were stripped. The Chief did not reply.

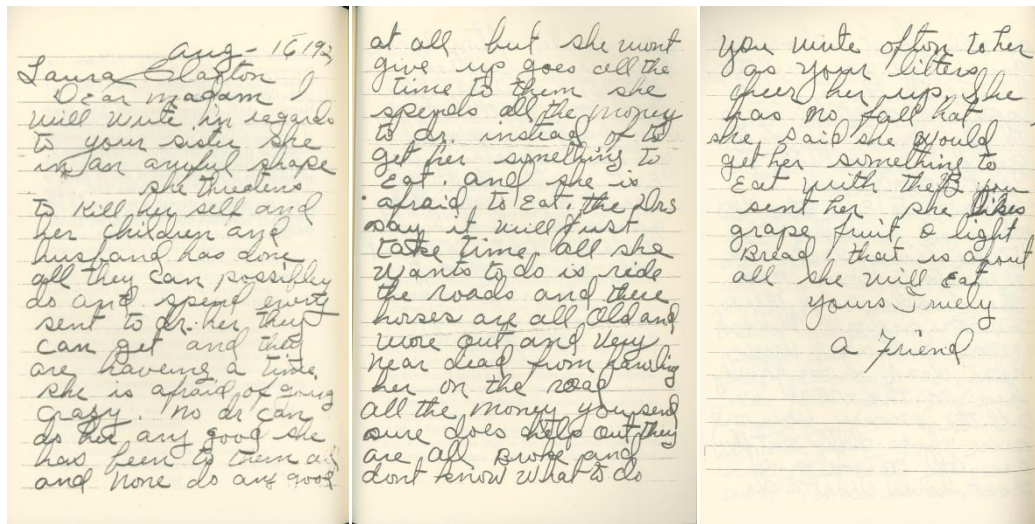
By this time the crowd was getting very ugly. “Put us in prison too, or release the prisoners,” the people called. In the end the Chief agreed to release all but four of the prisoners.

Soon afterwards the prisoners emerged from the station. One woman, a widow of thirty-two who had been arrested on the previous day and very badly kicked by the police, had to be supported on either side. The wife of the Christian teacher had to be carried on a man’s back. Let me quote from a description written by those on the spot:

“As they saw the women being brought out, in this condition, a wave of pity swept over the whole crowd, and with one accord they burst into tears and sobbed. Some of them cried out, ‘It is better to die than to live under such savages,’ and many urged that they should attack the police office with their naked hands, capture the

Chief of Police, strip him and beat him to death. But the Christian elder and other wiser heads prevailed, kept the people from any acts of violence, and finally got them to disperse.”

Appendix II



Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, Letter to "Laura Claxton," from
 "Thalia Comedy," *Dictée*, 146-48

Transcription

Aug. 16 192 [?]

Laura Claxton,

Dear madam I will write in regards to your sister she in an awful shape she threatens to kill her self and her children and husband has done all they can possibly do and spend every sent to dr. her they can get and they are having a time. She is afraid of going crazy. No dr. can do her any good she has been to them all and none do any good at all but she wont give up goes all the time to them she spends all the money to dr. instead of to get her something to eat. And she is afraid to eat. The drs say it will just take time. All she wants to do is ride the roads and there horses are all old and worn out and very near dead from hawling her on the road All the money send sure does help out They are all Broke and dont know what to do You write often to her as your litters cheer her up. She has not fall hat . she said she would get her something to eat with the \$2 you sent her

she likes grape fruit & light bread . that is about all she will eat

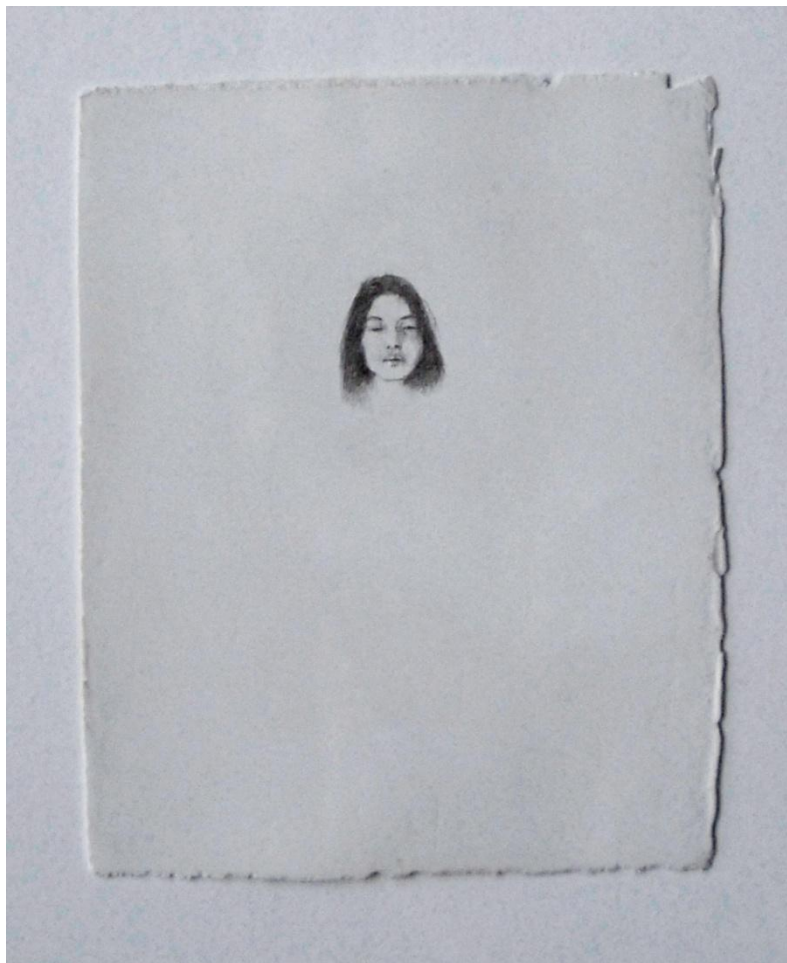
Yours Truly

A Friend

APPENDIX III

Benjamin COTTAM. *Theresa Hak Kyung Cha—Dead Artist*, 2003, silver point on prepared paper, 4 X 3.25 inches (10.2 X 8.3 cm) (Private Collection, Michigan).





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