The Writing of Devotion

Teresa of Avila
Richard Crashaw
Julian of Norwich
Cloud of Unknowing
John Donne
Thérèse of Lisieux
Emily Dickinson
Sri Chinmoy Kumar Ghose

by

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This work on *The Writing of Devotion* is written devotedly and dedicated to Sri Chinmoy Kumar Ghose

The Writing of Devotion

The study of devotional writing is a framework for the relationship between the self and the other, the writer and the reader, the lover and the beloved. The devotional site is the meeting place between those two, recorded in the devotional exchange or dialogue that marks the gap and makes it readable as an invocation, binding together mutual textual counterparts.

The textual figures profiled in this study range from the 14th to the 20th century, including Teresa of Avila, Julian of Norwich, the anonymous *Cloud of Unknowing*, John Donne, Richard Crashaw, Terese of Liseux, Emily Dickinson and Sri Chinmoy.

In the first chapter Teresa of Avila brings her beloved to life in the embodiment of Christ as a corporeal similitude, enacted through the ecstatic mnemonic practice that is her devotional discipline. The *Shewings* of Julian of Norwich record the devotional other as *object* and are read alongside the *Philosophical Investigations* of L. Wittgenstein. The disembodied other is conceived and represented in the context of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, an anonymous epistolary treatise written in the 13th century. John Donne's *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions* provides a figure of the self inscribed between recovery and relapse. That is the take-off point for an examination of Donne's rehearsal of the universal corporeal epitaph, written in the name of E. Drury, the subject of Donne's *Anniversaries*. The autobiographical *Story of a Soul*, authored by Térèse of Lisieux, performs the writing of devotion recorded as the reiteration of her own death sentence. Emily Dickinson rewrites the

death sentence and her rhetorical mastery engages and exposes her beloved reader in and through the poetic syntax that is the context of her devotional encounter. In the final chapter, the meeting place of lover and beloved is staged in the discipline of concentration, meditation and contemplation that is the devotional play of Sri Chinmoy, where the act of devotion becomes an ongoing ever-transcending doubling back and forth between two assumed identities—self/other, author/reader, lover/beloved—in perpetual reciprocal play.

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Introduction: The Writing of Devotion

The study of devotional writing is a framework for the relationship between the writer and the reader. The exchange of the written word that is inscribed in dedication, in devotion to the beloved, can moreover be described as the condition for all writing. We write to the other, for the other. We dedicate the text, we devote ourselves. The human drama that enacts the union of the lover and beloved is initiated the moment the lover calls on the beloved, invites the other to hear the summons, the demand. The act of devotion produces a written script that comes between the two, binding them as mutual textual counterparts and dividing them on either side of the exchange, by way of the text, the language that mediates. Betweenness acknowledges the gap, the line of division or written line that is both boundary and link. The meeting takes place in that margin, in recognition and recollection, in self-reflection, in recovery.

The meeting place is the text. It is the page that reflects back the image of the other, the typeface that remembers the figure of the beloved. That place, the locus of devotion where the act of devotion is recorded, amounts to the writing of the devotional dialogue or play that is the life story and character study of every woman and every man. The dialogue calls upon the absent other to appear on the scene. The call or invocation does not close the gap between oneself and another but marks the gap, makes it readable even as the repetition of the invocation performs the devotional discipline that produces the inscription, the text. The text is understood to include all grounds onto which any figure of the other is projected. The copying of the text figures the other

rhetorically as an absence, an apostrophe that is represented in language, as language. The representation displaces or replaces what it misses. And so the inscription is copied over again. The production of the visible discernable trace and evidence, the text of that ongoing encounter, becomes the go-between that performs the messaging. The act repeats in remembrance what it represents—the image of the image of the beloved. What is to be included in the study of devotional writing is, then, all that can or could be written, all imaging, all mediality.

What this dissertation seeks to do is profile or figure that devotional exchange—the cry that names the other—that is ultimately the very breath of the self. The textual figures range from the 14th to the 20th century, including Teresa of Avila, Julian of Norwich, the anonymous *Cloud of Unknowing*, John Donne, Richard Crashaw, Terese of Liseux, Emily Dickinson and, in this century, Sri Chinmoy. Each of those figures is set in the context or against the grain of a theoretical position that assesses one particular relation of the devotional topos.

The study begins in the 16th century with Teresa of Avila Teresa of Avila who brings her beloved to life in the embodiment of Christ as a corporeal similitude, enacted through the ecstatic mnemonic practice that is her devotional discipline. The visionary discipline she describes runs parallel to the development in medieval times of the imagery of the art of memory—making of "corporeal similitudes animated by devotional intensity" the living beings peopling our lives. Teresa writes in response to the accusations lodged against her by the court of the Spanish Inquisition. The eyewitness visions of Christ,

her King, are recounted as testimony in the autobiography of her *Life* and treated systematically in the written report of her progression through the *Interior Castle.* She is ordered by her confessor to transcribe in detail the discipline of her prayer life and she scrupulously obeys. Those writings become the script of her devotional play. Her unmitigated success is revised a century later, in passion or in parody, by Richard Crashaw who creates out of Teresa's memoir his own elaborate rhetoric. He not only caricatures her ecstatic imagery but he does more, he empties it. What he shows in the process is an exaggerated profile of the devotional structure, a rhetorical outline of her eyewitness account.

Teresa's consummate devotional exercise is backtracked and grounded in the 13th century by Julian of Norwich and her book of *Shewings.* Julian's personal devotional history is composed during the course of her life of renunciation, living it is supposed in seclusion as a lay anchorite in the church of St. Julian, after which she is named. Her act of devotion is distilled in the scene of her revelations where she is shown by her beloved a "quantyte" recollected in the palm of her hand, a "thynge" no bigger than a hazelnut. The object of desire—the other—appears in the guise of her hazelnut and the thing represented becomes the placeholder for "everything which is made." The thingness that embodies Julian's *all* is a quantity that is all and nothing, it is the materiality of everything represented as anything. And the object appears, according to Julian, in order to be crossed out *as representation*. The word itself stands for the object, the picture of the other, and so language is implicated, both as signifier and as fetish. The hazelnut is read alongside the

Philosophical Investigations of L. Wittgenstein, juxtaposed to what Wittgenstein describes as a proposition. The hazelnut is further read in the fix of the Benjaminian dialectical image—a snapshot perceived as the outline of a a discontinuous rupture—pictured as an unrepresentable totality, which she then cancels.

The disembodied other is revealed as the very focus and prototype of the devotional exercise according to the epistolary treatise, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, written by an anonymous 13th century author. Here the self, as author, is pictured in relation to the absent other. Once that state is admitted it is haunted. The beloved makes an appearance as spectre, a "ghostly friend in God", an unknowable cloud. As both the author and the other take on the uncanny characteristics of the cloud, the corresponding meaning of the text approaches the definition of a hypogram. The encoded clouded particle syllable in endless repetition wants to defer all meaning or knowing in order to get to the point of unknowing. That point functions as the blind spot through which one self sees the other. It is a sight unseen for the cure to this sought-after blindness, the vision of no other, is not to be so much as imagined. The so-called cloud does not, after all, veil the unseen beloved because behind, inside and outside the cloud is the cloud. That makes of the other an ultimate rhetorical figure. The devotional discipline in this scenario is maintained through the repetition of the invocation to a radically non-referential figure. The locus of the figure cannot in the end be placed in relation to the cloud because all endings, all beginnings and all spatial and temporal relations with the cloud are indeterminable, unknowable.

Recovery of the living body is recounted by John Donne in his *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions* and stages the likely afterword to the devotional relationship of Teresa of Avila. The act of devotion, derived by Donne on his imagined deathbed, performs not even recovery but relapse. Donne literally pins the rhetorical figure on the cap-C Creator whose creation, Donne argues, cannot but be bound in representation to the letter of the law. Proliferation of legal inscription replaces the law with a figure of the same. That profile, immediately defiled in the image of imagery, makes an empty idolatrous double of the literal real. The rhetorical recovery—and relapse—which Donne exploits, finds life to be a contagion whose breeding ground is the materiality of the body. Recovery is doomed to fall into more dire straits, leaving behind an invocation that is the inscription of the proper name on the gravestone. That is the take-off point for Donne's rehearsal of the universal corporeal epitaph, written in the name of E. Drury, the subject of his *Anniversaries*. The singularity Donne mourns, calling it after her, is the starting point of a doubling embodied by lover and beloved in the "two bodies" syndrome. That syndrome or symptom is read in the context of Kantorowicz's elaboration of the Elizabethan interpretation of the "universal body corporate". Ramifications of *The King's Two Bodies,* superimposed on the carcass of Elizabeth Drury, revel in the identity of E. Drury as beloved, a radical assignment projected in commonality with death. Recovery cannot but recur in relapse because the beloved represented in the doubled body cannot but be misread by Donne's profane misinterpreters who commit, unwittingly, the sin of idolatry by conceiving of the self in the image of the other.

Donne's death-wish is brought to life by Térèse of Lisieux, the proper sequel and nominal double of Teresa of Avila. The autobiographical *Story of a Soul* and recorded *Last Conversations* of Térèse re-enact her solitary pilgrimage into modernity, staged blindly in self-imposed exile. Her act of devotion, fashioned after the ghostly footsteps of her model and rival, is recorded as the reiteration of her own death sentence. Térèse, adopting the personna of the "Little Flower," acts out the doctrine of her "Little Way" before the audience of her sisters in the confinement of the Carmelite monastery in Lisieux. The act—"loving to the point of dying"—is literally inscripted unto death. Térèse records her martyrdom until the pencil falls from her dying hand and then her sisters assume the task of recording for posterity her every last word, taken in dictation. The martyrdom Térèse embodies is a pathbreaker for modern incoherence, for the act of faith she performs is carried out in the last 18 months of her life in the absence of faith, in her "night of nothingness," where the meaning of her martyrdom is finally, totally obscured. She confesses her faithlessness in fear of blasphemy. The performance of her act of devotion does not thus envision the living embodiment of her beloved, as in the case of her predecessor, Teresa of Avila, but instead performs a cancellation, envisioning the visionary topos as a nothingness, a "black hole." What makes her life story all the more fallible is its seemingly unintended and uncanny confrontation with nothingness. The writing of her life is, like that of Teresa three centuries before, carried out under order of obedience but the order is not enforced by an Inquisition, it is rather enforced by the audience of those sisters who devote themselves to her martyrdom. In fact they compete, in

the witnessing of her death, for her attentions. In that capacity, as witnesses, Térèse's sisters are themselves envisaged in her *Histoire d'une Ame*, which ultimately succeeds in capturing a world audience.

The ingenuous devotional exercise of Térèse is paralleled nearly simultaneously in the late nineteenth century by Emily Dickinson. The difference is that Dickinson's invocation to the absent exiled reader confronts the cancellation of the devotional structure intentionally. With a canny about-face, Dickinson seduces the unsuspecting reader with the submissive yet controlling force of her poetic syntax, establishing a calculated and highly wrought devotional rhetoric. Devotion, in the case of Dickinson, is engaged with a rhetorical other whose self-reflective posturing is exaggerated and exposed by Dickinson's unfathomable unrealized demand on the reader. What is, at first glance, a vulnerability exhibited in her poetry becomes in close reading a mastery. Dickinson's beloved reader is entirely under her power, in her grip. The devotional double bind is exquisitely performed as Dickinson dedicates herself entirely to the task of constructing the script of the drama---or trauma. What begins as an "intersubjective play of countertransference" becomes the site of a devotional exchange that redraws the boundaries between author and reader, putting each at the command and demand—at the mercy—of the other. The workings of Dickinson's poetic mastery are accomplished in and through the improbable "supposed person" she both impersonates and becomes. What is recovered *is* the text, the manuscripts of her handwritten, hand bound poems. The author, the poetess, cunningly eludes our desire to get at her. She inhabits the melancholic kingdom of her "Delinquent Palaces", the

mausoleum she makes of her father's home in self-determined seclusion. Dickinson's projected "supposed self" is read in the context of irreconcilable self imaging, a self-conscious doubling grounded in the ironic rigor of Paul de Man. Dickinson outdoes de Man, anticipating his ironic recovery in the undecidable syntax that figures her both as Player and Master. What Dickinson demonstrates is that she is her most devoted self and reader, concealed and confined in a textual production of hypnotic ironic raveling.

This century's rhetorical other is remodeled in the final chapter on the devotions of Sri Chinmoy, who stages the construction of the meeting place of lover and beloved through the discipline of concentration, meditation and contemplation. The devotional play, as Sri Chinmoy calls it, is an ongoing ever-transcending doubling back and forth between two assumed identities. The meeting between the two—self/other, author/reader, lover/beloved, child/Lord—is in constant reciprocal play. That dialectic, call it the articulation of the invocational cry, is celebrated as an inexhaustible temporal predicament and play. The temporal or temporary self, the fleeting meeting place with the other, is not discarded but cherished and treasured for its own sake. And the demand it makes is no joke. The cry is heart rending, gut wrenching and it sounds in and through all that we say or do. Literally the devotional play captures the two in a breathtaking exchange, and in the devotional writing of Sri Chinmoy, the invocation or cry is stated as the aspiration of the self, that is the very life breath. The "oneness" that Sri Chinmoy celebrates is a simultaneous exchange between the lover and beloved in and through the subtle body that sees itself eye to eye, *en abyme*. That love-play—a call and

cause for delight—does not perform a coup so much as enact a choice, to choose to involve the self in devotional dialogue. The invocation—the rupture of the silence—is enraptured in the sound of the cry of the name: "My Absolute Lord Beloved Supreme." And that is how Sri Chinmoy calls out to the other. Contemplative play joins the two—lover and beloved—in a mutual reciprocal unconditional surrender. The surrender, like the play, is ongoing and is already realized in the breath.

It is the question of unconditionality that turns out to be a key question here because conditional love situates the unconditional. That meeting between the singular and the absolute is the "yoking together of heterogenous orders", as Derrida describes the yoke effect ariticulated in *The Politics of Friendship*. It becomes the temporal reiteration and reenactment, moment to moment, that is the practice, that is the discipline, that is the yoga, that performs the possibility of the impossible meeting place. The meeting place between two separate and inseparable sites of selfhood does not and cannot seek closure because the oneness falls apart—that is what keeps it going. The visible trace of that ongoing movement is the written text, which Sri Chinmoy produces prolifically in volume after volume of devotional poems, plays, essays and dialogue. What he means to say is that all that is or can be said is devotional talk, the incantatory cry of invocation to the Supreme. The cry is manifested and translated into the dialogue of devotion that represents both the possibility of the encounter and its postponement, for such a predicament is fixed at the point of temporal representation, bound to infinite deferral. So does infinity play upon temporality to become the illusion of the real. Language is the

medium that conducts the temporal scene and through the medium of temporality, in the abundance of language, in abundant delight, Sri Chinmoy practices his devotional discipline. The act of devotion turns every move, all that one says or does, into an occasion of devotional invocation. The play recalls loss by representation and language is the means for bearing it, digging with every turn a little deeper into the devotional play. The text, like a Benjaminian dialectical image, is a reference point for historical movement and its remains. The movement is arrested in language, telling the performance of the devotional labor that produces history in the aftermath. Sri Chinmoy does not just bear the consequences of such an endeavor, he embraces the conditional, literal material of language as an available breeding ground and meeting place for the possibility of unconditional love.

To look for commonality in the study of these devotional dialogues is to exhibit symptoms of ironic recovery at the heart of the devotional relationship. If the self who proposes the meeting in the first place is to be anticipated in consummation with the other, then self-preservation is at stake. The self perpetuates itself through the re-assignment of the meeting place, always replaced, re-enacted, rehearsed, and the longing or seeking after the other is likewise perpetuated and comes to no end. That puts all players into play, assuming the identity of the self is situated in relation with some image, some aspect of the other. On such a basis we can compare and contrive likenesses in the devotional disciplines of this or that writer/author, recognizing in the face of various invocations a figure for the other, superimposed or sub-scribed on the surfaces of all text, all time.

The incessant rewriting of the devotional dialogue, which instills in the lover a state of preparedness for the expected and unprecedented arrival of the beloved, demands a no-show on the part of the beloved, if only because the showing is only a showing—a representation. The devotional play thus results on one hand in the mnemonic preservation of the self, caught in the act of devotion; while on the other hand it turns the prospect of selfhood into a representation of repetition, forgetting over and over what it began to recall. And what it forgets is placed in the devotional camp, along with *everything else*. So all we do becomes the doing of the devotional self, in expectation and in surrender to the other, and so does textual production participate wittingly or unwittingly in the devotional exchange. Language in either case anticipates and recalls the ironic context for this life everlasting play, where language signifying language in the lower, temporal case is the real ruse, as usual.

What remains when *this* is said and done is nothing but the doing. Whether the script is fully embodied, emptied, voided, decayed, however writing plays out the constraints of the rhetorical rule, the discursive site makes language available in order to speak, to say what is being called here, the invocation. The invocation presents the possibility out of which language wrests its ability and availability. If, as Sri Chinmoy says, "devotion is to do something" then the doing *is* something, the act of writing. That is what the author undertakes. To call the text devotional, to make it the invocational site, is to call by one name what will answer to any other. And yet it is just that that this study calls for. The naming of the other, in devotion, is to dedicate oneself.

Concentration, Meditation, Contemplation

CONCENTRATION

Suppose a starting point:

> First make a very small circle on the wall at eye-level, and inside it make a black dot. It should be black; not blue or red or any other colour. Then stand facing the wall, about three and a half feet away, and focus your attention on the circle. Your eyes should be relaxed and half-open. Let the force of your concentration come from the middle of your forehead. After three or four minutes open your eyes fully and try to feel that, from head to foot, you are all eyes. Your whole physical existence has become nothing but vision, and that vision is focussed on the dot inside the circle. Then start making the object of your concentration smaller. After a few seconds try to feel that your whole body has become as tiny as the dot on the wall. Try to feel that the dot is another part of your own existence. Then enter into the dot, pierce through it and go to the other side. From the other side of the dot, look back and see your own body. Your physical body is on one side, but on the strength of your concentration you have sent your subtle body to the other side of the dot. Through your subtle body you are seeing your physical body, and through your physical body you are seeing your subtle body. (*Meditation* 70-71)

The target is a dot located in a blind spot inside the circle drawn at eye-level, not terminating but tunneling through from point X to point Y, where the self in self-reflection is projected. Boring through an imaginary blind spot the self is directed to become, itself, a peephole, peering through an opening piercing the wall. The wall or partition is a veritable prop to provide the seeming separation between two likenesses on either side of a boundary drawn between origin and exile. The boundary functions both as meeting place and as the demarcation of a perceived difference that allows two subjects to exist in

separation. According to Sri Chinmoy the definition of selfhood perceived in confrontation with the wall can be penetrated by an act of will motivated by a longing for the other that goes so far as to see double. The subtle double is visible not merely in reflection but within the focus of what he calls concentration. The body and its double are more or less inseparable, caught up in the movement back and forth between the wall that divides and joins them. Sri Chinmoy identifies the two—self and other as lover and beloved. On that basis he defines the practice of the discipline of devotion.

This "how to" concentration exercise guides the reader—that is the seeker—step-by-step in the construction of a meeting place that like many of the devotional exercises Sri Chinmoy writes about is a method to bring the lover face to face with the Beloved. The encounter between the lover and Beloved is the context for the bulk of Sri Chinmoy's written works ranging from aphorisms, poems and plays; to stories, commentary and essays on devotional life. There is perhaps no rhetorical structure more familiar to his writings than the dialogical or Socratic method. In hundreds of texts he employs the Q&A that queries existence qua existence and dispenses advice or commentary in direct response to questions posed. Actual questions posed over the years in dialogue are transcribed as published text. Occasionally proper names appear alongside the query, assigning the inquirer in script-like fashion to the question. More often questions are posed anonymously. In the Sri Chinmoy handbook of devotional discipline entitled *Meditation, Man-Perfection in God-Satisfaction*, under the section "Understanding Your Inner Experiences," a seeker asks:

> Q: Sometimes after mediation I touch things and find that they are not solid; they are fluid. They lose their solid state. What does this mean?
>
> A: Actually they do not lose their solid state. After a deep meditation, when you touch a wall or some other solid object, if you feel that it is soft and that you can penetrate it, you have to know that your consciousness has become identified with the consciousness of your surroundings. When you have come out of a deep meditation and touch something, you can feel your own consciousness in that thing. The solid object has accepted you and embraced you; it has opened its heart's door to become one with you. (*Meditation* 252)

Things when touched after meditation, the seeker says, sometimes lose their solid state. Sri Chinmoy in reply specifies those "things" as "a wall or some other solid object". Walls it seems are exemplary solid objects, standing for things in their solid state. To touch a wall is, we know, to come into contact with what is outside the self and so walls define our limitations in the gross physical. The same wall will reportedly be penetrated after a meditation—after a *deep* meditation, as Sri Chinmoy says—accepting and embracing the seeker, opening its "heart's door". But in order to penetrate or pass through a solid state there must first be the perception of something solid in separation from the self. A prior otherness is thus the prerequisite of mutual states of consciousness, most frequently referred to in Sri Chinmoy's writings as "oneness."

Oneness means what it says—a singularity identified in common and Sri Chinmoy writes about various contexts of oneness, including one-pointed devotion: "When we offer devotion, what we are offering is our one-pointed

devotion to the Supreme, the Inner Pilot within us" (*The Inner World* 34). Sri Chinmoy's one-pointedness does not advocate a radical singularity so much as privilege an ongoing relationship between separate subjects who carry on the dialogue of lover and Beloved in a devotional play. Seeking is the activity that perpetually postpones their meeting and prolongs the lover's longing for the Beloved Other, the "Supreme" or "Inner Pilot" who is present, at a distance. But just as distance provides the between ground on which a meeting may take place, the same distance divides and keeps the couple apart, drawing a boundary between. The boundary is focused in a blind spot that at once creates and locates an opening collapsing into the self, singled out. The devotional relationship is then the vehicle of both arrival and deferral, materializing the veil or wall that not only maps out the meeting place but suspends the meeting by preventing the collapse of distance between two separate subjects. The distance and difference between the two is necessary because loss of subjectivity constitutes a threat to the devotional relationship. Even so the distance places the relationship in a state of estrangement that becomes a figure for the inaccessibility of any other. The Beloved, situated in a radical 'outside' is cast as the unthemetizable prior other (Levinas) or otherwise read in deferral as the non-arrival of the unrecognizable return (Blanchot). To locate the lover and Beloved in the midst of such a predicament is to turn the meeting into a rapid eye movement, flickering back and forth between two parties fixed at the point of destination—and departure. Sri Chinmoy's directions begin at such a point, at eye-level, with a dot inside a circle on the wall and target the blind spot, doubling forward and back in a subtle body that sees itself eye to eye, *en*

abyme. The love play falls between so-called separate selves, encircling the opening it makes.

A similar singular figure, circling an enclosure *en abyme*, is inscribed by Jacques Derrida in his text, *The Truth in Painting,* where the circle inscribed is the "metaphor of the circle of circles" (*The Truth in Painting* 27). That is what was figured by Hegel as the representation of the "totality of philosophy" (*The Truth in Painting* 26), recycling around in the "great circle of the *Geist*":

> Only philosophy in its entirety *(gesammte Philosophie*) gives us knowledge of the universe as a unique organic totality in itself, which develops "from its own concept." Without losing anything of what makes it a whole "which returns to itself," this "sole world of truth" is contained, retained, and gathered together in itself. In the "circlet" of this scientific necessity, each part represents a "circle returning into itself" and keeping a tie of solidarity with the others, a necessary and simultaneous interlacing. It is animated by a "backward movement" (*ein Rückwärts*) and by a "forward movement" (*Vorwärts*) by which it develops and reproduces itself in another in a fecund way (*fruchtbar*). (*The Truth in Painting* 28)

The mega-organic metaphor posited by Hegel in the process of reproduction is more than fecund and once found out is caught up in a dizzying encircling back and forth that can locate no beginning and no end. Instead of origin there is a simultaneous interlacing of the circle returning to itself. Derrida gives Hegel the credit for determining the indeterminability of this circlet of "scientific necessity":

> On the immediately following page, Hegel explains that on a circle of circles, one is justified in starting from any point.

> "There is no absolute beginning in science." (*The Truth in Painting* 28)

Science names "the whole of the *Encyclopedia* and the *Greater Logic*" (*The Truth in Painting* 28) that science undertakes, all of which conspires in relation with the living organism as a work of art. On the immediately preceding page, Derrida locates the totality of philosophy in relation to artwork: "The totality of philosophy, the encyclopedic corpus is described *as* a living organism *or as* a work of art" (*The Truth in Painting* 27). The circlet of scientific necessity thus encloses and is enclosed by a totality and so assigned is all the more encircled, expanding even as it falls into further replications of unrepresentable origin:

> It is still a circle, which redoubles, re-marks, and places *en abyme* the singularity of this figure. Circle of circles, circle in the encircled circle. How could a circle place itself *en abyme*? (*The Truth in Painting* 24)

The circle enclosed is, itself, a circle and nothing prevents an ever deeper pitfall into the selfsame circuitry, the metaphor of a totality. At the center is the center of an abyss:

> the inscription of a circle in the circle does not necessarily *give* the abyss, onto the abyss, *en abyme*. In order to be abyssal, the smallest circle must inscribe the figure of the largest. (*The Truth in Painting* 27)

Inside the smallest circle the figure of an "organic whole" reproduces the totality that collapses the circuitry *en abyme*. Like an eye fixed on its own blind spot the circle encloses the collapse into singularity (read individuality) and places the origin of the figure in an unrecoverable unity. Derrida points out

that the question of the origin of art or artistry implies: "an originary meaning, an *etymon*, a truth that is *one* and *naked* [*une vérité une et nue*]" (*The Truth in Painting* 20). Presupposing the figure of a one and naked truth would lead us to look for "one meaning" in multiplicity, for multiplicity counts in sheer number on what is typical in the many repetitions of things. But the search for one common meaning is caught up at the very beginning in an "apparent polysemy of *tekhne*"—literally in scads of words—and so the "simple kernel which supposedly lies hidden behind the multiplicity" is lost in many modes of representation (*The Truth in Painting* 21). These are the dire straits in which the desire for unity longs to be found out and in haste oversimplifies the simple kernel it overlooks. That oversight, what amounts to running in circles round an inaccessible one and only kernel is the starting point proposed by Sri Chinmoy for the fateful encounter with the one and only other. The site of the encircled dot is pierced through at eye-level by the one Sri Chinmoy addresses, in the second person singular, as the reader. He instructs that onlooker to "become nothing but vision", to see through the vanishing point, eye to eye with one's own subtle body and then look back. The glance that returns the self to itself is a piercing of the boundary of the body from one side to another, a passing through.

In the forward to *The Truth in Painting*, Derrida, as if in anticipation, instructs his readership to guard against the desire for oversimplification he calls "the idiom of the *passe-partout*" (*The Truth in Painting* 7), warning that such an impulse would tempt the reader to take the simple kernel as a universal placeholder, leaving no room for the *thing itself* or at least the outline of the

abyss of thingness (*The Truth in Painting* 7). Derrida writes: "If you rushed to understand in this way, I would have to issue a warning [avertissement]: this forward [avertissement] is not a *passe-partout*" (*The Truth in Painting* 12). He puts us, his readers, on the alert, as we wait to be fooled by the false expectation of a "master key". The danger, as Derrida sees it, is that the figure of the *passe-partout* seduces us, posing as "a transcendental pass, a password to open all doors" (*The Truth in Painting* 12) and in the process fails to identify the body of work, the work of art. Derrida faults the unmistakable figure of the *passe-partout* because it is traded too easily as a wild-card. The *passe-partout*, he says, must not pass for a master key" (*The Truth in Painting* 12). It is rather a structural limit, a border, a casement: "a frame within the frame" (*The Truth in Painting* 12). And at the very edge, inside the frame within the frame, appears a figure, a picture inscribed in the "empty enclosure":

> it plays its card or its cardboard *between* the frame, in what is properly speaking its internal edge, and the external edge of what it gives us to see, lets or makes appear in its empty enclosure: the picture, the painting, the figure, the form, the system of strokes [*traits*] and of colors. (*The Truth in Painting* 12)

Recap: the multiplicity made up of irreplaceable pictures is imposed in the empty enclosure of the *passe-partout* like a cover-up. In the place of *une vérité une et nue*, the art or tekhne—"the word, the concept, the thing" (*The Truth in Painting* 20)—in other words the text (call it history), is figured. That is all the *passe-partout* encloses, the inscription it "gives us to see, lets or makes

appear." Instead of a master key opening "to see or restore the true, full, originary meaning: one, naked" (*The Truth in Painting* 22), we get a false lead, a pretext that carries a warning to ward us off. The multiplicity of forms does not then converge in a simple kernel of truth, *"un sens un et nu"*, that is recognizable or in any way recoverable. We are left with the only possible convergence blotted out in an all too visible abyssal kernel.

Warned against the temptation of oversimplification, braced in expectation of a false lead, we return to exercise our concentration on the dot inside the circle on the wall, recovering as the focal point falls through the *passe-partout* in a blind spot *en abyme*. The case of the "simple kernel", a common singularity figured as a dot on the wall, the one that appears on wall maps of floor plans in every imaginable configuration, the one that announces to the passerby: you are here O like a bull's eye, like the direct hit of a target—point blank—is not so simple. The figure pictured in the mind is framed, an enclosure disclosed in a figure of itself, emptied out. Emptiness as the contents of the enclosure is not self-evident by any means and Sri Chinmoy issues his own warning to the twentieth century audience looking for a quick fix in the focal point. Regarding the exercise in concentration, he cautions: "But this method has to be practiced. There are many things which are very easy with practice, but just because we do not practice we do not get the result" (*Kundalini* 36). Practice, it turns out, is the result. That is the repetition reappointing the performance of the meeting place. The performance rehearses the passage of time recorded in the act of piercing through. But the process or practice of "doing", of *deepening*—the very act of devotion—is arrested in the

moment it is reached. That is, the moment of union or yoga. Yoga is defined as "a system of exercise," practiced to "attain liberation" (Websters). The systematic practice breaks down in the performance of the exercise, repeated again and again. It is the practice of yoga that *is* yoga. When asked by a child, "Is it true that anybody can become a yogi if he really tries?" Sri Chinmoy replies:

> What do you mean by really? If you mean sincerely, then certainly anybody can become a yogi.
>
> Yoga means union with God. A yogi is he who is one with God. Sooner or later, all human beings will realise God. But the person who takes to Yoga reaches God sooner. If you yourself want to become a yogini and realise God, then right now start praying. Especially if you want to reach God before the rest of humanity, please do not delay.
>
> Now, how do you go about praying? If you pray to God for candy today, tomorrow you will ask Him for ice cream and the day after tomorrow for something else. And God will give you everything you want, except Himself. But if you pray to God only for Himself and nothing else, He will give you all that He has and all that He is. In getting all that He has and all that He is, not only will you get your candy and ice cream and everything else that you wanted, but you will also get things that you had never imagined, things of an infinite nature. So pray to God every day to give you what you need and not what you want. Then He will give you what you actually need to become one with Him. (*Yoga and the Spiritual Life* 107)

Anybody who *really* "takes to Yoga" can become a yogi. And that, Sri Chinmoy explains, is to be understood as the difference between wanting "something else" and wanting "nothing else". Using the child's world examples of candy and ice cream, he stakes out the territory of wanting "what

you actually need" and applies it to the practice of prayer, that is the discipline of conversation with "God", that is yoga. Sri Chinmoy's advice to the child is "right now start praying". The *now* is not to be delayed. With regard to temporality the practice of yoga is the framework of the artwork at any given moment. It is the yoke. The yoke is architecturally the frame of the joint and technically the joint itself. It joins the body frame by frame, moment by moment, to produce the practice or discipline.

The function of the yoke or "yoke effect" is named by Derrida in *Politics of Friendship* as the crossing that joins together "two absolutely heterogeneous orders". That is the "*habitus* of this *contretemps*" (*Politics of Friendship* 15-16) that makes possible the endurance in time of the ordeal of time:

> The contretemporal *habitus* is the acquired capacity, the cultivated aptitude, the experimented faculty against the backdrop of a predisposition; it is the *éxis* that binds together two times in the same time, a duration and an omnitemporality at the same time. (*Politics of Friendship* 16)

The binding together of two times what Derrida refers to as the "temporal but also intemporal modality, a becoming-intemporal or omnitemporal of time" (*Politics of Friendship* 16)—limits the practice to the length of its endurance. The two modalities in and out of joint are joined or yoked together at the meeting place that marks the possibility of relationship—in friendship. The act of friendship, as Derrida explains, resides in the possibility of the act or offering of love and thus friendship endures moment by moment in its very possibility. Endurance is crucial for it has to do with manifestation or

"manifestability" (*Politics of Friendship* 19) and marks the arrival of the possible in time, that is: "the meeting of its presence in act" (*The Truth in Painting* 18). The possibility of presence is thus revealed as possibility, after the fact:

> 'In fact', 'in truth', it would be only the event of revelation that would open like a breaking-in, making it possible after the even—the field of the possible in which it appeared to spring forth, and for that matter actually did so. The event of revelation would reveal not only this or that God, for example—but revealability itself. By the same token, this would forbid us saying 'God, for example'. (*Politics of Friendship* 18)

The gist of possibility—the 'perhaps'—is that we read revelation backward: revealability in the act of revelation. That is the passage mapped out in the practice of devotion. That practice, the staging of "the event of revelation", Derrida suggests, will not be properly represented by nomenclature—this or that—but will be recognized none-the-less as the stage upon which exemplary possibility might appear to be performed, "and for that matter actually did [read said] so."

The passage of time recorded in the reappointing of the meeting place—crossed out in the obliteration of the actual meeting—is crossed over in yoking together "two absolutely heterogenous orders" (*Politics of Friendship* 16). Conjugation—likewise rooted in juga, yoga—joins what is related by difference; multifarious forms coupled in an accumulation of the same:

> This unifying feature *conjugates* man and animal, spirit and life, soul and body. It places them under the same yoke, that of the same liability [*passibilité*], that of the same aptitude to learn in suffering, to cross, to record and to take account of the ordeal of

> time, to withhold its trace in the body. This conjugation will warrant the poetic figure of the analogy which we will quote in a moment and which precisely names the *yoke*, the yoke effect. (*Politics of Friendship* 16)

Passage or *passibilité* in time is the ordeal of bondage, a test of endurance that joins in contretemps the body politic, warranting the arrest of the poetic figure. For the figure is the stopping point, bound in the act of representation. Derrida links in turn the yoke effect to the politics of friendship. The act of friendship—like a love offering—endures "the *passage* of time *through* time" (*Politics of Friendship* 16) only as it is reenacted in every successive moment. It is the practice, the mantra-like repetition that makes the discipline both discontinuous and durable.

Practice is the key, not a master key but an impossible turning, a methodology that endures by repeating the re-appointing of the meeting with one in the place of the other. In the process of reinscribing the meeting place we arrive at the point of separation, the designated limit that exchanges lover for Beloved across a necessary boundary, a prior otherness. The exchange Sri Chinmoy stages in one-pointed concentration is a *passe-partout* in so far as oneself pierces through and looks back at oneself. The passage is a doubling imposed at and by the boundary—in exchange. The exchange, forwards and backwards, is accomplished as a crossing over that is a crossing out. That is what appears as dialogue. Passage then, like punctuation—the puncture, the point of concentration—marks the separation between the self and other, the lover and Beloved. What part words play in the exchange of places or placeholders is orchestrated in the trading of names, a name-calling that calls

the other to respond, in recognition. Naming invokes word for word the one we call upon; the other, the object, the attribute. Nicknames, namesakes, anagrams, a thousand and one and only epithets, the sweetheart swears under oath to be true.

Sri Chinmoy's beloved other is the sought after one he calls "my Absolute Lord Beloved Supreme." The one Sri Chinmoy calls the Supreme (for short) engages the self in a dialogue of invocation on either side of a mutual wall that is the body's own partition. But the necessary boundary between, the limit that both binds the two together and keeps them apart, is not, it turns out, lamented in the writings of Sri Chinmoy. Subjectivity, however barred, is the preferred state because it both enables and indulges in the devotional relationship, it is the place of invocation, of the cry. So does the barrier wall that comes between double as a sounding wall, a wall that trembles when the membrane of the ear of the other[1] trembles, a wall that enforces and is enforced by a necessary distance—irreconcilable, unreachable, even untouchable—and so perpetual foreplay or love play is prescribed like a written guarantee.

MEDITATION

If concentration is projected toward a nondimensional point focused at the boundary between the lover and Beloved, then meditation empties into a

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[1]See *The Ear of the Other*: otobiography, transference, translation : textes and discussions with Jacques Derrida; edited by Claude Lévesque and Christie V. McDonald; translated by Peggy Kamuf, Nietzsche's Otobiography translated by Avital Ronell..

boundless spatial ground—background, foreground—that Sri Chinmoy commonly refers to as "sky-vastness." Meditation is not made for words but Sri Chinmoy uses at his disposal words to describe the silence he says is the "expression of the inexpressible" (*Silent Teaching* 13). He does not deplore the use of words but marks their unheard of task—signifying unspeakable silence. Meditation is not simply silence, it is something undisturbed and undisturbable that can, as Sri Chinmoy says, "silence the mind" (*Meditation* 7). The mind is silent when it is emptied of thought:

> When we meditate, we do not think at all. The aim of meditation is to free ourselves from all thought. Thought is like a dot on a blackboard. Whether it is good or bad it is there. (*Meditation* 34)

The dot that represents thought is what occupies the mind and, since thoughts appear in the medium of language, any discussion on the point—a dot—is at best thought provoking. Instead of faulting language for failing to transport thought beyond the medium of language or trashing language because it occupies the mind, Sri Chinmoy celebrates language as mediality and takes advantage of words to say things, as much as can be said, in book after book, writing about the subject of the silence he calls meditation. There is, Sri Chinmoy means to say, no harm in using words to go about emptying the mind, nor does the futility of the project discourage the effort. It is not that language fails to communicate but that the use of language as the purveyor of thought is undermined in the first place.

When Sri Chinmoy titles a book of poetry, *Silence Speaks*, he puts the spin of irony on something already turned around, for words say what they

mean in double talk. In order to mean what it says language must cross the silence barrier and that requires at the very least an act of faith that language cannot accommodate. Whenever subjects speak to one another they exchange words invested with unrecoverable meanings and so it is the function of language is to represent the impossibility of its task. Two subjects in conversation fulfill the "condition of separation" that determines the limits of dialogue as discussed by Avital Ronell in her study, *Dictations, On Haunted Writing*.[2] But whether the language barrier is modeled on the condition of separation that governs conversation, or is proposed as the condition for the possibility of friendship preserved in silence (*Politics of Friendship*, Derrida), or withdrawn on the condition of loss that prescribes the mourning of the other in time (*Leaves of Mourning*, Haverkamp); there is built into the structure a relation of irreconcilable difference. Language is figured over a distance it cannot cover or can only incorporate, preserving an outline of the text encircled, intact. The passage that portends to cover the said distance is always an exercise in temporality, a quest in *contretemps*. Figuring temporality—"the *passage* of time *through* time"—as a framework for the context of *Politics of Friendship*, Derrida remarks on the ordeal of crossing between what he calls temporal and intemporal modality:

> But it [the crossing] also marks—or rather, it hides in marking—the passage between two absolutely heterogeneous orders, the passage from assured certainty, calculable reliability, to the reliability of the oath and the act of faith. The act of faith

[2]See chapter six of this dissertation.

> belongs—it must belong—to what is incalculable in decision. (*Politics of Friendship* 16)

The passage between two absolutely heterogeneous orders is reconstituted as a swearing in and so the oath itself is an act of faith in language and so it bears the greatest brunt of the expression of duration. If silence does not speak without betraying its being in silence then any utterance asks the other to receive —in good faith—the oath. The oath does not and cannot by the same token command silence for silence does not speak. The announcement, an entitlement, saying silence speaks, is a gesture to point out the rupture language makes in determining a passage where no passage can occur. When Sri Chinmoy allows that silence speaks he speaks for utterance born out of silence in the rupture that makes silence possible. For silence is only possible in so far as it allows utterance, and to say that silence speaks is to take an oath, literally marking the impossibility of the project. Thus it is the yoking together of the temporal and intemporal orders that language repairs. Pairing or repairing is readable as repetition, a stuttering invocation that goes on and on. Duration is all the more situated in a dialectical relation that defines the temporal by way of the intemporal, grafting a prefix to the root that binds meaning to its opposite. Such a repair, by way of the dialectic, only demonstrates what is implicit in the structure of language, it is a crux that Derrida demonstrates over and over. Language, after all, cannot speak without exposing itself to silence. All utterance will be surrounded in silence no matter how much or how little is said and no volume of discourse, not a single sacred word, will do more than name the riveted site. Fastened word for word to the

abyss of silence, language can only address silence on its own terms. In poem #107 of *Silence Speaks, Part I*, Sri Chinmoy writes:

> My life's dedication-smile,
> My heart's aspiration-cry,
> The same dialect they speak
> In oneness and fulness sky.

The dialogue that takes place between the smile and the cry is dialectical, it is in relation to the difference between the smile and the cry. The smile and the cry converse in a dialect of mutual transgresssion or crossover that relies on gesture as a system of signification. That is the dialectical site. But if the smile and cry are bound by the same "dialect" to one another, they are bound, as well, in their relation to something else—that something else is what Sri Chinmoy calls "oneness and fulness sky." The problem is then compounded by a second order of relation for the oneness and fulness sky, in the vast silence of an unmarkable *tabula rasa*, does not converse on any terms with the cry and the smile. The oneness and fulness sky has nothing to say. It makes no gesture and marks no gesture. It does not know the dialect of diction and contradiction and yet is replete with a silence that bears the all-encompassing attributes of oneness and fulness. The silence cannot be misread for all readings are equally inadequate or untrue. When in *Politics of Friendship* Derrida, quoting Nietzsche, proposes the possibility of silence as the preserver of truth it is because: "Speech ruins friendship; corrupts by speaking, degrades, belittles, undoes the speech (*verredet*) of friendship..." (*Politics of Friendship* 54). But the reason speech ruins friendship is not because it ruins silence. Speech cannot ruin silence if it enters into no relation with silence.

And silence must be kept, Derrida quotes Nietzsche as saying:
" so as not to tell the truth, a murderous truth." (*Politics of Friendship* 54) The truth that may be told is necessarily corrupted, it cannot say what it means to say without misrepresenting its meaning in language. Silence, meanwhile, remains untellable, intact.

What, after all, is remarkable in the written works of Sri Chinmoy is not a broken silence but the evident delight he takes in speaking and writing in the face of silence. He not only fails to apologize for the failure of language to express the inexpressible, he positively relishes its temporal predicament, accepting the language game in service to the dialogue of the devotional play. Language makes possible the articulation of the devotional dialogue and, with all due respect, functions in its capacity as signifier, representing what the play is about. Sri Chinmoy does not say that language gets at the truth of silence, he rather gives up in words, offers up the text and its misrepresentation in order to write the dialogue of meditation. Not in stasis or in silence does he come to dispense with language but in the deluge of language, the innumerable iterations that add up to what is not about to stop. Sri Chinmoy issues an open invitation, inviting the play of language to exhaust itself. Indeed, the inexhaustibility of the devotional dialogue is the trademark of Sri Chinmoy's voluminous prose. When he titles one among hundreds of volumes of poetry, *Silence Speaks*, he does not mock silence. Silence speaks by not speaking and language accepts the impossible task of speaking instead, because it can do nothing else. We are reminded in poem number 96, part I of *Silence Speaks*, that nothing else is not to say no:

Never say no, never say no,
O never say,
When God's Compassion-Eye desires
Your heart to play. (*Silence Speaks, Part I*, no. 96)

To refuse to play is what language cannot do. Even to say so, to say no, is to play. To never say no is first of all a call for affirmation, to agree to play. But the saying is itself a double negative. And even that will not do for the language of the call—O never say—is built into an apostrophe, an invocation to silence, properly named "never say" in response to the desire to play. The desire is God's desire, or rather the desire of God's Compassion-Eye.[3] That is not only the capital "I" of the universal self but the seer of the sayer of the desire. And desire is compassionate, not to make passion its own but to make passion a passage into the heart of the silent one—that is, the reader. The heart of the reader, or "heart-home" as Sri Chinmoy typically refers to the subtle energy center of the heart chakra,[4] is read two ways. On one hand, the heart is

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[3]On the subject of 'God', Sri Chinmoy responds to a question posed by A. Guruge, a professor of religion at Northwestern University:

> A. Guruge: Are the Upanishadic and Adaita Vedanta concepts of *Paramatman* and *Brahman* compatible with the concept of God?
> Sri Chinmoy: *Paramatman* and *Brahman* of the Advaita Vedanta, *Purusha* of *Samkhya* and Yoga, and God of the English-speaking world are one and the same. I may use the term 'God', or I may use another English term, 'the Supreme', or 'the Absolute'. To me the word 'God' encompasses all the concepts from the different systems of religion and philosophy.
>
> When I use the term 'God', I am referring to the broadest possible concept of deity. 'God' is the Creator and the creation. He is at once cosmic Silence and cosmic Sound. 'God' is within us, all around us, far beyond us and, at the same time, He is us. (*Professor-Children* 125)

[4]Sri Chinmoy gives a brief summary of the chakras, as follows:

desired as the beloved playmate and, on the other hand, the play of the heart alone is desired. Either way the invitation to play depends on the willingness of the reader/player named 'never say' to comply. The poem does not command but implores the reader to join in the play—to not negate desire.

Not saying 'no' invokes the conventional rhetoric of negation that is the mode of much devotional writing. Indeed, the vedas[5] and upanisads[6], well known to Sri Chinmoy, speak happily in the rhetoric of negation, producing a body of knowledge that teaches the language of non-knowledge. The tradition

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> Kundalini Yoga is the Yoga of *prana*. *Prana* is the life-energy or life-principle of the universe. There are three principal channels through which this life-energy flows. These channels are *Ida, Pingala* and *Sushumna*. In Sanskrit these channels are called *Nadis*. *Ida, Pingala* and *Sushumna* are inside our subtle physical body, not inside the gross physical. *Ida* carries the current of life-energy in the left side of the body. *Pingala* carries the current in the right side of the body. *Sushumna* carries the current in the middle of the spinal column....
>
> *Ida, Pingala* and *Sushumna* meet together at six different places. Each meeting place forms a centre. Each centre is round like a wheel. Indian spiritual philosophy calls these centres Chakras. They are also called lotuses, because they look like lotuses. The six centres, as perhaps you know, are *Muladhara*, *Svadhisthana, Manipura, Anahata, Vishuddha* and *Ajna*. There is also another Chakra that is inside the brain, called *Sahasrara*. Because it is in the brain, and not along the spinal column, it is not counted with the other six centres. Apart from these six, there are many other Chakras in the subtle physical body. Here in the knee we have a Chakra; even in the toes and fingertips we have Chakras. But these Chakras are minor, and are not usually mentioned. (*Kundalini: The Mother Power* 7)

[5]The Vedas are known as the four most ancient texts of India. The Rig-veda, the oldest of the four, dates to between 1500 and 900 BC, according to A. L. Basham, and is composed of hymns addressed to various gods. The Vedas were transmitted orally for nearly 3000 years and were not transcribed until the 1780s when Europeans persuaded a number of brahmans to make the texts public *(*A. L. Basham, *The Origins and Development of Classical Hinduism* 6-7).

[6]The Upanisads are anthologies of the teachings of various sages. Some of these teachers or seers (*rsis*) are historical figures and some are of the more remote past. Of the 108 Upanisads listed canonically, only thirteen are identified as genuine appendices to the Vedas and Brahmanas *(*A. L. Basham, *The Origins and Development of Classical Hinduism* 37).

typically lodges the quote unquote truth in rhetoric derived from the oft-cited saying: 'neti, neti,' or 'not this, not that'. The affirmation of truth is couched in a representation of negation that names the truth as *other than*. This 'this' and that 'that' are thus the representation in words of representability in language. However the vedas, for all that they pronounce no pronounceable truth, are quoted, coveted, even sacred scriptures. Sri Chinmoy does not for his purposes translate vedic texts but he has written essays of critical commentary on the vedic teachings which are collected in the work: *Commentaries On the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Bhadavad Gita*. Sri Chinmoy's reading of the vedas is, in general, unconventional. While he recognizes the tactic of the teaching of the untellable truth by way of negative rhetoric, he does not, himself, engage in that practice.[7] He rather takes rhetoric as the script for the play of devotion. An

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[7]H. Coward in his study *Derrida and Indian Philosophy*, assesses a number of differing positions within traditional Indian philosophy vis-à-vis language. For example, Bhartrhari's interpretation the 'real' subscribes to language as the manifestation of temporal becoming (Coward 60):

> In Bhartrhari's *Vakyapadiya* the Absolute is the S*abdatattva*, the Word-Principle, and therefore is not something apart from or beyond language." (Coward 56-57)

Coward regards Bhatrhari's version—Grammarian philosophy—alongside the viewpoint of Derrida and then contrasts other interpretations, such as that of Sankara, the most eminent of India's various Vedänta scholars. According to Sankara's Advaita Vedänta school, the 'real' or Brahman, is outside the text, over and above language:

> For Sankara, Brahman, the real, exists separate from language and action and reveals itself only when language, its actions and questionings are cancelled out as in the final direct perception prompted by meditation on Tat tvam asi ("That thou art")—so that Brahman alone remains. (Coward 85)

Without going into great length as to the subtleties of the many interpretations of the vedas, it is possible to say that Sri Chinmoy's position is not fully compatible with either that of Bhartrhari or that of Sankara. As for whether the 'real' resides in or out of language, Sri Chinmoy gives the benefit of the doubt to both:

example of what makes Sri Chinmoy an unconventional reader of traditional texts is his reference to the well known passage of the Brhadaranyakopanisad II.3.6. Sri Chinmoy translates: "Neti neti—'Not this, not this' or 'Not this, not that,'—is the message of the Upanishads" (*Commentaries on the Vedas* 56). The citation, which is typically translated 'not this, not that,' Sri Chinmoy correctly translates: 'not this, not this.' He does not dismiss the mistranslation but offers both—"not this, not this" and "not this, not that". The difference is subtle and yet crucial. When *neti neti* is translated 'not this, not that' a shift occurs, establishing a dialectical perspective, an opposition within the principle of negation. The more faithful translation which Sri Chinmoy introduces, 'not this, not this', makes the point of difference not in opposition but in repetition. The dialectic is, in other words, a repetition reinscribing the same and the only difference is a distance from itself in time. That, we might say, was the initial intention. But the two perspectives are themselves in a dialectical relation, with "not this, not that" constituting a synchronic or spatial (associative) order and

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> Let the one who wants to be satisfied with the unknowable aspect of God be satisfied, and let the one who wants to be satisfied with the knowable aspect of God also be satisfied. There is also a third party who says that God is both known and unknown, knowable and unknowable. He is the finite and the Infinite. The God-lovers who are of this belief take God's unknowable aspect as real, and God's knowable aspect also as real. (*Professor-Children* 116-117)

Rather than arguing this or that position within the vedic tradition (see footnote 5), Sri Chinmoy practices a devotional discipline that is better understood within the tradition of Indian devotional practice, known as bhakti. The great figures of the bhakti tradition include the 16th century devotional poet, Mira Bai, the legendary Krishna devotee, Sri Caitanya and, in the 19th century, Sri Ramakrishna. Bhakti establishes a personal devotional relationship between the self and Other based on one of several prototypes: disciple/teacher, child/parent, parent/child, friend/friend, and lover/beloved.

"not this, not this" constituting a diacronic or temporal (historic) order.[8] Sri Chinmoy does not actually credit one translation over the other, he places the two, juxtaposed, and privileges neither. He offers to the reader both translations—either/or—as if "not this, not this," might be as well, "not this, not that." On another occasion, Sri Chinmoy, commenting on the definition of God, addresses the this/that dichotomy:

> God embodies everything that is in His creation. He is at once this and that. But He is also beyond this and that. We cannot limit God by saying, "This is what God is." God is everything. At the same time, He is nothing. Our mind finds these concepts difficult to grasp. God can be beyond both this and that. He can be this and that combined. He can be neither this nor that. He must be felt and experienced; He cannot be defined. (*Professor-Children* 86)

The point being that language can only point to what it cannot point out, for its truth is self-referential. Anything that can be pointed to is not it, is *neti, neti.* Not only does language fail to transcend itself, it fails to withstand itself, for each pronouncement is *not it* and cancels the utterance it echoes. When the translation "not this, not that" is given, *that* cancels *this*, referring back to the prior placeholder. But so is the position of the prior placeholder indeterminable because the fixture of the designated speaker (read *reader*) is implicated in the uncontrollable shifting underway. It is not possible even tentatively to gauge the distance from *this* to *that* unless some originary revelatory status can be

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[8]The distinction between the synchronic and diachronic discursive modes, set forth by Saussure in *Course in General Linguistics*, is studiously reviewed by Derek Attridge in chapter four of *Peculiar Language.* Attridge questions the bulk of critical thinking on synchrony and diachrony, which he finds tends to oversimplify and misunderstand the subtlety of Saussure's intention (*Peculiar Language* 92-98).

granted to the subjective self, and it cannot—or it is granted indiscriminately to all concerned, thus abolishing the definitive subject.

The echo effect of "neti, neti" is nicely reminiscent of the Joycian "yes, yes" that similarly resonates and consumes in proliferation its proper context. It is what Derrida calls, in his discussion of the Joyceian "yes, yes", the gramophone effect.[9] The "yes, yes" displaces and postpones what it affirms and so becomes the signature of the non-event, even as it marks the possibility of affirmation. That *not yet, not yet* or *neti, neti* resounds and populates the text with iterations of itself. Sri Chinmoy spots the opening posed by the pronouncement "neti, neti" and employs the opportunity to not so much refute the negative rhetoric of vedic truth (non-truth), as recognize

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[9]See Derrida's discussion of the gramophone effect in "Ulysses Gramophone," *Acts of Literature*, edited by Derek Attridge. Derrida notes that, "We cannot separate the twin yeses, and yet they remain completely other" (*Acts of Literature* 305). And again:

> For here the relationship of a *yes* to the other and of one *yes* to the other *yes* must be such that the contamination of the two *yeses* remains inevitable. And not only as a threat: but also as an opportunity. With or without a word, taken as a minimal event, a *yes* demands *a priori* its own repetition, its own memorizing, demands that a *yes* to the *yes* inhabit the arrival of the first *yes*, which is never therefore simply originary. We cannot say *yes* without promising to confirm it and to remember it, to keep it safe, countersigned in another *yes*, without promise and memory, without the promise of memory. (*Acts of Literature* 304-305)

And again:

> The *yes* of memory, with its recapitulating control and reactive repetition, immediately doubles the light, dancing *yes* of affirmation, the open affirmation of the gift. Reciprocally, two responses or two responsibilities refer to each other without having any relationship between them. The two sign yet prevent the signature from gathering itself together. They can only call up another *yes*, another signature. And, on the other hand, one cannot decide between two *yeses* that *must* gather together like twins, to the point of simulacrum, the one being the gramophony of the other. (*Acts of Literature* 308)

and confound its implications. What that means to the "message of the Upanishads," he goes on to say:

> The seers of the hoary past offered this sublime knowledge: "Brahman cannot be limited by anything, Brahman cannot be housed by anything, Brahman cannot be defined by anything." This is the negative way of seeing Brahman. There is a positive way, and this positive way is this: "Brahman is eternal, Brahman is infinite, Brahman is immortal. Brahman is beyond and beyond." (*Commentaries on the Vedas* 56-57)

Sri Chinmoy takes the Brhadaranyakopanisad and turns it on its ear, making of "this sublime knowledge" another rhetorical device. He posits his "positive way" within the commentary on negativity as if to flip a coin, knowing full well that language will not gain or lose value because it is the same counterfeit coin.[10] Sri Chinmoy gladly admits that language will do no more than

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[10]Regarding the exchange of counterfeit money and its possible value in exchange, see *Given Time: 1.Counterfeit Money*, where Derrida comments on Baudelaire's text, "Counterfeit Money":

> He [Baudelaire's narrator] speculates on what can happen to capital in a capital during the age of money, more precisely, in the age of value as monetary sign:
>
> The circulation of the counterfeit money can engender, even for a "little speculator," the real interest of a true wealth. Counterfeit money can become true capital. Is not the truth of capital, then, inasmuch as it produces interest without labor, by *working all by itself* as we say, counterfeit money? Is there a real difference here between real and counterfeit money once there is capital? And credit? Everything depends on the act of faith and the credit we were talking about in the wake of Montaigne. (*Given Time* 124)

A further reference to the value of exchange and its relevance to 'real' value or 'truth' is Nietzsche's well known passage from *On Truth and Lie in the Extra-Moral Sense*:

> What, then, is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms—in short, a sum of human relations, which have been enhanced, transposed, and embellished poetically and rhetorically, and which after long use seem firm, canonical, and obligatory to people: truths are illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are; metaphors which are worn out and without

misrepresent, but negative rhetoric offers, he says, no advantage because it comes no closer to the truth—the Supreme—that, he maintains, "must be felt and experienced" but "cannot be defined." Nor does it pay, he says, to privilege negative rhetoric as being a better misrepresentation of a nonrepresentable knowing. Indeed meditation, that is the emptying of the mind, may be figured or disfigured as emptiness or fulness for it is not one (not this, not this) or the other (not this, not that)—not both. To think at all is to appropriate in some form formlessness and any priority given in the expression of formlessness is caught in another more or less subtle layer of language. So does the "negative way" fall prey to words in word play, pitting one word against another—in opposition and in repetition—creating the dialectic that duality imposes, for language is discursive and representation is what language does, discursively.

A reiteration of the rhetoric of negativity is more recently scripted, or superscripted, by Maurice Blanchot in *The Writing of the Disaster*. Blanchot does not just employ negative rhetoric as it is handed down, he reinvents a rhetoric that stumps the tradition of negative rhetoric at its root. His does this in the context of the "nondialectical drive":

> sensuous power; coins which have lost their pictures and now matter only as metal, no longer as coins. *(The Portable Nietzsche* 46-47)

The gist of the passage is that language has been ascribed value or meaning in exchange and that words or metaphors are taken, in and out of context, for the truth. Nietzsche refers to the 'sensuous power' of a prior state of metaphor, a more immediate, less derivative form of language. The prior state is more immediate not because it is closer to the truth but because it is accessible or readable as illusion.

> Passivity is a task—but in a different language: in the language of the nondialectical drive—just as negativity is a task in the language wherein the dialectic proposes to us the realization of all possibilities, provided we know how (by cooperating with time through power and mastery in the world) to let time take all its time. (Blanchot 27)

Blanchot would outdo the traditional task of negativity by coupling it with a non-task named passivity. Passivity is declared not by passivity itself but by passivity's author; it is the task of the translator to make passivity readable and writeable and Blanchot takes it upon himself, in a suspension of disbelief, to do so. Posted somewhere past the last outpost, passivity responds, so to speak, in the language of the nondialectical drive. That is, no response. No response not because the response is silence or because the response is silenced but because passivity is the task. Blanchot does nevertheless give to passivity the possibility to respond. In his own words:

> And yet, to the proximity of the most distant, to the pressure of the most weightless, to the contract of what does not reach us—it is in friendship that I can respond, a friendship unshared, without reciprocity, friendship for that which has passed leaving no trace. This is passivity's response to the un-presence of the unknown. (Blanchot 27)

Friendship is not to be understood by Blanchot as a relationship. There is no give and take. It is friendship's domain to be disenfranchized, something not akin to anything. Friendship comes, according to Blanchot, as a response—passivity's response. Blanchot does not name friendship in relation to negativity but in relation to passivity. The friend he names is the "un-presence of the unknown." There is indeed a certain uncanny resemblance in that relation to the dissemblance of relation according to the more familiar *via*

negative expounded by the anonymous author of *The Cloud of Unknowing.*[11] And so, in spite of Blanchot's rigorous intention to figure passivity in a non-dialectical rhetoric, the familiar *via negativa* does begin to creep in. Language will not allow it not to. Blanchot is nevertheless not discouraged, for his non-project is bent on another order of nothingness:

> Not to answer is the rule---or not to receive any answer. This does not suffice to stop questions. But when the answer is the absence of any answer, then the question in turn becomes the absence of any question (the mortified question). Words pass, return to a past which has never spoken, the past of all speech. It is thus that the disaster, although named, does not figure in language. (Blanchot 31)

The *disaster*, in other words, bears nothing but the name. The name is all. Not the all-inclusive *all* but the *all* that is only, that is less than one thought: *that's all, that's it*; that is singularity posited as a superlative—all or nothing. There is in *the disaster* the re-placing of a familiar faux pas, for by naming the unfigurable disaster *"the disaster"* Blanchot does achieve *something*. And he knows only too well the repercussions of that thing. He accepts the task—a re-invention of the non-representation of the unrepresentable—in response to the responsibility of the "infinite demand" (Blanchot 26); a demand he will not turn over to any other, least of to all the supreme assumer of responsibility—God—who would shoulder the world her/himself. The nonrelation that Blanchot constructs in *The Writing of the Disaster* does, after all, proceed from the self's incomprehensible and incommensurable relation to life in the face of

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[11]See chapter two of this dissertation for a discussion of negative rhetoric in the context of *The Cloud of Unknowing.*

death. The face of death is what is unrepresentable and the death mask behind the life mask disfigures the world of the other even as it effaces the identity of the self. To name the un-present, unknown, *the disaster,* is to invoke the disaster-aspect of the other, to make no friends and take no prisoners. But no matter how carefully we obey the rule "not to answer", no matter how thoroughly we rout out the assigning of attribute, there will remain the given name, the proper name: *the disaster*. The name, the invocation—*the disaster*—places the call, as Blanchot would have it, on the condition of its being absent. And Blanchot, in his mastery makes even absence preliminary to withdrawal:

> Perhaps we know the disaster by other, perhaps joyful names, reciting all words one by one, as if there could be for words an all. (Blanchot 6)

Citing the *perhaps* at this point should come as no surprise. It is the task of the *perhaps* to appear just now. Other names—joyful names—might after all invoke other aspects of the un-presence of the unknown; perhaps a friendlier friend, perhaps a foe. Such errant possibilities are thought out in the discussion of the *perhaps* that is written into the *Politics of Friendship*, by Derrida. The task at hand is no more than to introduce the text of the *perhaps*, for the occurrence of the *perhaps* is not locatable: "Now we know that *this* thought of the *perhaps—this one and not any other*—does not occur anywhere or anyhow" (*Politics of Friendship* 30). The occurrence is rather the posting of an opening posed as possibility at the impossible point of the *perhaps*. Like an invocation the *perhaps* calls out indiscriminately, placing the caller at risk, knowingly. Being at risk, the caller (O never say) can nevertheless not refuse:

"A perhaps will perhaps always forbid its closing, where it is in the very act of forming. No response, no responsibility, will ever abolish the *perhaps*" (*Politics of Friendship* 38). How well Derrida determines the task of the *perhaps* is seen in its failure to buckle under the weight of the infinite demand, that is the implicit responsibility to answer for the unnamed other. The answer invites what no response, no responsibility will ever abolish; or else—one might as well say unless—*no response* does ever, forever, abolish all else, all else but unspeakable silence; unbroken, inaccessible, unthinkable. That is the circling of the inaccessible kernel. Blanchot finds his way around it by declaring *the disaster* unfigurable. The declaration does not surface, or surfaces as an unseeming rupture that appears only in the ruin of thought—that is written. The gesture Blanchot makes—no-showing the scrivener in the passive act of not renouncing writing—is a sleight of hand, a gesture that is meanwhile withdrawn. The withdrawal openly admits the effort it makes: "How many efforts are required in order not to write—in order that, writing, I not write, in spite of everything" (Blanchot 11). If by now we get the point it is because it has been so many times withdrawn, so many times crossed out. The writing, the remains, appears in relation—call it non-relation—mediated across an uncrossable boundary between representation and the unrepresentable. Any name at all cannot but call forth an inexhaustible roll call—perhaps joyful names to join the play.

CONTEMPLATION

Contemplation is the name given by Sri Chinmoy to the third of three movements—concentration, meditation, contemplation—that compose the devotional play.

Concentration, the first movement, is a convergence, bringing the self into focus at a designated point of singularity. The movement of concentration is contracted, directed. The point can, according to Sri Chinmoy, be located wherever one pleases. He locates it from time to time in a dot on the wall or two inches above the head or at the point of a candle flame or flower petal or the tip of the thumb. He will recommend, rather than command, the "heart-centre" as the most likely location for the point of concentration, if only because he says concentration will wind up there in the configuration of a singularity, any singularity. The heart proper is the site of concentration, its property being to locate the punctum, to be pierced.

The second movement, meditation, expands, emptying into a stasis-like state of infinite increase. In the language of Levinas, it is identification with absolute otherness.[12] There can be no relation with absolute otherness for it is

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[12]Regarding the absolute Other, Levinas says:

> It is something else than all that, *other* absolutely and not with respect to some relative term. It is the Unrevealed, but not unrevealed because all knowledge would be too limited or too narrow to receive its light. It is unrevealed because it is *One*, and because making oneself known implies a duality which already clashes with the unity of the One. (*The Trace of the Other* 347)

The absolute Other not with respect to some relative term—is thus withdrawn from the devotional play. Its being cannot be traced in relation to any other. But being 'in withdrawal' is not to be entirely absent. Rather withdrawal provides a compelling reenforcement of absence that turns up—by way of removal—missing.

unapproachable, replete in nothingness. It is utter unutterable silence. Movement in the direction of the "absolute Other" is, as Levinas puts it: "departure without return" (*The Trace of the Other* 349), a departure that knows no arrival, a departure that will expend itself without end. It is a journey into what Sri Chinmoy calls "the ever-transcending Beyond." The journey is unlimited because its boundary in the beyond is unrepresentable. The command issued by the Beyond is, according to Sri Chinmoy, to "go on, go on" (*Songs of the Soul*). The economy of such a commanding demand is what Levinas describes as "a putting out of funds at a loss" (*The Trace of the Other* 350) and amounts to a state of "absolute goodness" where there is no recompense, no reciprocity and, likewise, no self-interest (*The Trace of the Other* 349). Not only does self-interest fail to motivate the "one-way" movement but the self fails to identify with its own limitation, projecting "beyond the horizon of my time". The self, as Levinas says, gives up its selfhood to "be for a time that would be without me" (*The Trace of the Other* 349). In the devotional language of Sri Chinmoy, a movement without return engages the self in "unconditional surrender."

Contemplation, the third act in this three-act play, situates the expenditure of the self in company with the others' (or Other's) reciprocal expenditure, that is unconditional surrender. The state is mutual and sustains itself in play. Contemplation performs something akin to recovery but it is recovery without conclusion, reverberating in being *with* the Other and opening the final act to further finales. Recovery thus recurs as relapse in the performance of recuperation, ad infinitum. Like the fort-da, out and back, the

composition of the contemplative movement travels back and forth between the self and its projected self-image and so becomes the very play, a fleeting meeting place between two separate and inseparable sites of selfhood. And if contemplation refuses to end the play it cannot, by the same token, be called upon to begin. It occurs rather at the moment of arrival and departure, inbetween.

Contemplation, figured between places, occurs not in being present but in suspension, an extended movement shifting between two selves' halves.[13] The self-in-half, wholly transfixed *in contemplation*, is cited at a distance from its double. And the favor is returned. Shifting between the self-seeker and the sought-after insures that both cannot be separated unless and until their inseparability is visible—read *readable*. That movement, which figures the site of the self in relation with the other, stages the acting out of the devotional play. What makes the play of tension between these two—lover and beloved—ripe for something other than a typical Hegelian dialectical resolution is the resistance to *any* resolution. The restlessness of the devotional relation rests in that irresolute, irresolvable *contretemps*. The difference and distance that hold

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[13]Reference is made here to a talk given by S. Weber on gesture, interruption and citability (NYU, spring 1998). The movement of gesture, Weber says, "is citable because it occurs in virtual separability with itself. Separation, being everywhere, joins in isolating." A further point made by Weber is that "citation exposes the present to the future, in suspension. The citation is joined and separated in the trembling of the borders that place it *between* places, rather than *in* them." Relationship is therefore made possible where there is interval or interruption, not as state but as stance. In the language of the contemplative play, citability is the self represented at a distance from itself. Citability produces what Weber describes as "delocalizing effects that globalize as they deracinate". (Note that citations of the talk are excerpted from a personal transcription—that is to say, I quote my notes.)

the lover and beloved in suspense, that define their separate existance, is maintained. Thus the rhetoric of thirdness,[14] on the lookout for a dialectical resolution comes instead to the site of an ongoing hide-and-seek game

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[14]Derrida comments on 'thirdness' and its relation to doubling in his text, *of Grammatology*:

> In this play of representation, the point of origin becomes ungraspable. There are things like reflecting pools, and images, an infinite reference from one to the other, but no longer a source, a spring. There is no longer a simple origin. For what is reflected is split *in itself* and not only as an addition to itself of its image. The reflection, the image, the double, splits what it doubles. The origin of the speculation becomes a difference. What can look at itself is not one; and the law of the addition of the origin to its representation, of the thing to its image, is that one plus one makes at least three. (*of Grammatology* 36)

Further reference to the structure of 'thirdness' and its locatability as the place of the 'absolute witness', is found in *Writing and Difference*:

> Is not that which is called God, that which imprints every human course and recourse with its secondarity, the passageway of deferred reciprocity between reading and writing? Or the absolute witness to the dialogue in which what one sets out to write has already been read, and what one sets out to say is already a response, the third party as the transparency of meaning? (*Writing and Difference* 11)

But no consideration of 'thirdness' can be without reference to Levinas and his absolute Other:

> The personal order to which a face obliges us is beyond being. *Beyond being is a third person*, which is not definable by the oneself, by ipseity. It is the possibility of this third direction of radical ***unrightness*** which escapes the bipolar play of immanence and transcendence proper to being, where immanence always wins against transcendence. Through a trace the irreversible past takes on the profile of a "He." The *beyond* from which a face comes is in the third person. The pronoun *He* expresses exactly its inexpressible irreversibility, already escaping every relation as well as every dissimulation, and in this sense absolutely unencompassable or absolute, a transcendence in an ab-solute past. The *illeity* of the third person is the condition for the irreversibility.
>
> This third person who in a face has already withdrawn from every relation and every dissimulation, who has passed, this illeity, is not a "less than being" by comparison with the world in which a face enters; it is the whole enormity, the inordinateness, the infinity of the absolutely other, which eludes treatment by ontology. The supreme presence of a face is inseparable from this supreme and irreversible absence which founds the eminence of visitation. (*The Trace of the Other* 356)

engaging the devotional couple in perpetual play. Rather than subsuming the two parties or subjectivities into a larger self, Sri Chinmoy's devotional players produce in thirdness a basis for dialogue. What appears, dialectically, as the distance between doubles becomes readable in the context of the contemplative move. The betweenness or beyond of the lover and beloved—each carrying in its contour its other being elsewhere—records in passing a recognition scene that recurs always after the fact and registers, in the Bejaminian sense, a *deepening*.

In the devotional play of Sri Chinmoy, a deepening occurs each time the lover and beloved encounter one another, and the lover and beloved encounter each other in the face of all else. Recognition may be postponed but it cannot be avoided. Ultimately or eventually the self is bound to recognize itself reflected and every recognition marks an increase, a return that reinscribes the reading and deepens the gaze, further enrapturing the state of contemplation. In a volume of 66 aphoristic poems on the devotional relationship between "the Master" and "a true disciple", the (or a) true disciple is figured in the master-disciple tradition that has long taught the practice of devotion and is re-invented by Sri Chinmoy. Number 64 in the series reads:

> A TRUE disciple's heart-cries
> And the Master's soul-smiles
> Deeply enjoy
> The hide-and-seek game. (*A True Disciple* #64)

To deeply enjoy the game is to find in the cry of the heart a welcoming smile. The cry cries for the smile and the smile smiles back. The cry is not dissatisfied but in want. The inaudible smile has what it wants and the meeting

between the cry and smile is repeated, by popular demand in constant play. Sri Chinmoy locates the cry by hyphenation in the heart but he does not place it in possession. It is not the genitive case. Rather the hyphen construction compounds parts of speech into one syntax. Word compounds as a rhetorical device are frequently employed by Sri Chinmoy, compacting up to five words or more. Compound nouns, typical in his native Bengali, function in English compositions as a way to rivet words together and turn adjectival attributes into proper names.[15] Language is thus perpetuated in name-calling and exchanged as invocational dialogue between two subjects.

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[15]Sri Chinmoy's use of compound nouns is discussed by V. Bennett in, *Simplicity and Power*. Referring to the poetry of G. M. Hopkins as a precedent for compound nouns in English, she then cites Edwin Gerow's text, *A Glossary of Indian Figures of Speech*. According to Bennett:

> It is possible that Sri Chinmoy's use of the compound noun has its origins in his attempt to find in English the natural analogue of the Sanskritic and Bengali forms of comparison. Gerow notes that translations from Sanskrit into English
>
> > tend to be flabby and prolix precisely where the original displays a tense compactness and is most striking in its beauty.
>
> In the case of Sri Chinmoy's own Bengali language, this compactness is inherent in the language. The formation of compounds is frequent and, in fact, the grammar of compounds cannot be distinguished from that of phrases. The words "*swapan sathi*," to take an example, may be translated in an interpretative way as "companion of my dream." Literally, however, the words read as "dream-companion," with the two words closely intersecting. In so far as a direct English equivalent may be found for the Bengali words, Sri Chinmoy most commonly elects to keep to the true form of his source language. (Bennett 39)

Bennett rightly observes that compound nouns are inherent to the structure of Sanskrit and Bengali but by crediting the "true form" of a "source language" she implies that Sri Chinmoy composes in Bengali and translates into English, which is not the case. In any case, she rightly identifies compound nouns as the English equivalent for the compound structure of Bengali.

With regard to syntax in translation and the need for "a literal rendering of the syntax", word for word, see Benjamin's text, *The Task of the Translator*:

> A real translation is transparent; it does not cover the original, does not block its light, but allows the pure language, as though reinforced by its own medium, to shine upon the original all the more fully. This may be achieved, above all, by a literal rendering of the syntax which proves words rather than sentences to be the primary element of

In order to picture the contemplative state, Sri Chinmoy describes a wordless game of "hide-and-seek":

> Now, try to imagine that your own existence and also that of your Beloved are on the top of a mountain in the Himalayas or at the bottom of the Pacific Ocean, whichever is easier for you. Once you feel this, then inwardly smile.
>
> After a few seconds please feel that you yourself are the Beloved Supreme and that the golden being is the divine lover. It is like a divine game of hide-and-seek. When you become the Supreme Beloved, the divine lover seeks you, and when you become the divine lover, you search for your Beloved Supreme. One moment you are the supreme lover and the next moment you are the Supreme Beloved. (*Meditation* 75)

Not unlike the aplomb with which Sri Chinmoy directs the reader to penetrate an inkblot on a real wall, he calls here for the reader to picture a scene a Himalyan mountain top or the floor of the Pacific Ocean, whichever is easier—and to *feel this*. That is, the self, having amorously appointed an imaginary tryst with the (cap "B") Beloved is not to think the appointment is merely imaginary. According to Sri Chinmoy, imagination is the beforehand of intuition and, in participation with the realization game, is no more or less real than any material wall. The task is to enter into the picture. Geographic names

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> the translator. For if the sentence is the wall before the language of the original, literalness is the arcade. (*Illuminations* 79)

The demand for literalness in translation is further modeled by Benjamin, as if: "Fragments of a vessel which are to be glued together must match one another in the smallest details, although they need not be like one another" (*Illuminations* 69). Compound nouns, literally a sticking together of words, would support the mosaic method of translation proposed by Benjamin.

contribute, in addition, a certain height and/or depth. The "top of a mountain in the Himalyas" places, like a picture postcard, the imaginary meeting in a mountain range held to be sacred, a contemplative temple-ground. And the Pacific Ocean properly names a sea of peace. But height and depth, at disparate points, involve differences in distance that wind up at the same address. Depth, which Sri Chinmoy locates inside or within the self, and height, which he locates outside or beyond the self, co-inside-outside.[16] And when Sri Chinmoy advises the reader to choose one imaginary meeting place or the other and then "inwardly smile", he turns one more time the flip side of the boundary between. To smile inwardly is to welcome the face of the beloved both *en face* and *interieur*, a greeting that, on arrival, recalls in the other its origin. The dynamic volley is, moreover, the exchange that maintains the livelihood of the devotional relationship in consummation, where the relation of the lover and Beloved is consummated at every turn. Singly the two are either/or; collectively the couple is both/and; and together they are neither, for what Sri Chinmoy calls "an exercise in contemplation" (*Meditation* 75) is the ferrying

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[16]Commenting on the relation between height and depth, Sri Chinmoy has this to say:

> The higher we can go, the deeper we can go. Again, the deeper we can go, the higher we can go. It works simultaneously. If we can meditate very powerfully, then we are bound to feel that we are going both very high and very deep. Height and depth go together, but they work in two different dimensions, so to speak. But if a person can go very high in his meditation, then he has the capacity to go very deep also. (*The Silent Teaching* 12-13)

back and forth between two disparate counterparts. Oneness is not, after all, a reconcilable state. It comes apart. That is what keeps it going.

If the writings of Sri Chinmoy may be said to generate a dynamic, to translate into an economy, then cry and smile are the terms of reference. But the power of the smile is mysterious and incalculable. Although the smile is most often cited in response to the cry, it plays in contemplation with the imperative, for one cannot do without the smile. It is not, however, the business of the smile to pay back, nor can the cry make any claim upon the smile. By no means can the cry assess or afford the smile, it is not earned, not purchased, not priceless. And the smile, in return, grants nothing but the pleasure it gives, which places the smile as close as can be to sheer or pure gift.

Whatever can be said for gift giving is subject to the formulation of the gift, as discussed by Derrida in the text, *Given Time: 1. Counterfeit Money*:

> What would a gift be in which I gave without wanting to give and without knowing that I am giving, without the explicit intention of giving, or even in spite of myself? This is the paradox in which we have been engaged from the beginning. There is no gift without the intention of giving. The gift can only have a meaning that is intentional—in the two senses of the word that refers to intention as well as to unintentionality. However, everything stemming from the intentional meaning also threatens the gift with self-keeping, with being kept in its very expenditure. Whence the enigmatic difficulty lodged in this donating eventiveness [*événementialité*]. There must be chance, encounter, the involuntary, even unconsciousness or disorder, and there must be intentional freedom, and these two conditions must—miraculously, graciously—agree with each other. (*Given Time* 123)

The gift cannot be given unintentionally and yet, the intention carries, embedded in it, expenditure and its requisite debt. Any gift that incurs indebtedness spoils the offering and places a price on the head of the giver. Thus the "two conditions" to be met are exclusive of each other and thus "the paradox." Given the "enigmatic difficulty" built into the gift giving we can revisit the site of the smile that Sri Chinmoy has calculated incalculably. If, indeed, the smile is unconditional, spontaneous, involuntary, then it meets the unintentional or unmotivated condition. If the smile is *in response* to the cry, then it meets the intentional or motivated condition. The question is whether the smile does not arrive at the crux or paradox of gift giving: the paradox, "in which we have been engaged from the beginning." Derrida refers back to the beginning paradox:

> These are the structural paradoxes, the stigmata of the impossibility with which we began: So as not to take over the other, the overtaking by surprise of the pure gift should have the generosity to give nothing that surprises and appears *as* gift, *nothing that presents itself as present, nothing that is*; it should therefore be surprising enough and so thoroughly made up of a surprise that it is not even a question of getting over it, thus of a surprise surprising enough to let itself be forgotten without delay. And at stake in this forgetting that carries beyond any present is the gift as remaining [*restance*] without memory, without permanence and consistency, without substance or subsistence; at stake is this rest that is, without being (it), beyond Being, *epekeina tes ousias*. The secret of that about which one cannot speak, but which one can no long silence." (*Given Time* 147)

Without substance, without speaking—involuntarily—the smile performs the secret. Whether the smile can be proposed as the site of the possibility of pure gift is yet an open question, allowing the smile to figure in the midst of the devotional play as the idiom of exchange. According to Sri Chinmoy: "Smile is the only purpose of your existence reality on earth" (*Everest Aspiration* 154). Purpose *is* the play of the smile. To put such store in the smile does not turn the smile into a commodity so much as weigh the burden of exchange against the value of the smile and overturn the burden: "Your smile and God's smile are keeping each other alive" (*Everest Aspiration* 176). If smile is the only purpose, it is life-giving and the gift—life itself—is granted in response to the cry as a sign of recognition. Smile and cry recognize each other with a belonging that longs for but does not possess. And so, in passing, the recognition scene longs to long for. The longing, according to Sri Chinmoy, is not in theory only:

> This inner cry is not theoretical, but practicality itself. It is the height of practicality. I am the eternal lover and you my mirror, so you have to know that when I look at you I see My own reflection. Remain my mirror, and My Love for you will be your love for Me. . . I do not see anything as something other than myself. I see only Myself. . . through you, My mirror. Therefore you do not have to prove your love for me. Just maintain your inner cry. . . That is proof itself, the cry, the cry, the soulful cry. (*Union and Oneness*)

By personalizing the contemplative state, Sri Chinmoy makes of the most radical concept—i.e., the cry practicality, itself. As the smile is the purpose,

the cry is the proof and together they become the play. Like Buber's 'I-Thou', the 'I' of Sri Chinmoy enters into a personalized relationship with the world but the identification of Sri Chinmoy's 'I' is not fixed or exclusive and so allows the shifting pronouns of signification to stage the reflection of what role playing is about.[17] Whoever assumes the post of subject/reader becomes the interlocutor. The command to "remain my mirror" is a statement, in effect, for the mirror is what remains, something in seeming possession of the self. The appropriation of the "I" is, at the same time, the projection of the 'you' which assumes the role of the subject-self, in reflection. The distance maintained between the self and the mirror is allegorical in so far as it creates the tension between the two that makes recognition possible. Oneness sees itself, in double. At that point appropriation meets projection and both become other. This inseparability Sri Chinmoy figures here or there, in one thing or another. The thing itself is, at any moment, eligible as a site of inseparability. Thingness is thus an act or aspect of perception, a way of seeing:

> But we have to take all aspects of God as one: He can be this, He can be that. In His absence, He is present. In His presence, He is absent. Inside the beauty of the flower, He is the fragrance. Inside the fragrance, He is the beauty of the flower. It

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[17] Buber's reading of the "I-Thou" (relation) and "I-It" (experience) is problematic in that it carries with it a certain onus that paradoxically dehumanizes those who are determined by Buber to be limited to the I-It perspective. This leads Buber to make such radical statements as:

> And in all the seriousness of truth, hear this: without *It* man cannot live. But he who lives with *It* alone is not a man. (*I and Thou* 34)

Buber sets up a judgment call that rejects the "communal life of modern man" which Buber finds increasingly "sunk in the world of It" (*I and Thou* 47). Buber invites his reader to join him in his exclusive club of "I-Thou" affiliates but the delineation promotes an unbecoming and unwarranted smugness.

> is like looking at the obverse and the reverse of a coin simultaneously. On one side is the portrait of the king, on the other side is something else. While looking at the face of the king, you have to immediately, directly, see the other side of the coin. That is the reality—they are absolutely inseparable, the way the fragrance and the flower are inseparable. (*Professor-Children* 108)

To see absence within presence and presence within absence is the "can be" that posits the 'this' and/or 'that' of all possibility—not 'this' or 'that' and not *not* 'this' or 'that' but a likelihood, a potential—and *something else*, something else seen from the other side. Something else is not presence or absence, not flower or fragrance, not separate in any sense. The something else that is perceived to be combined with the king's demeanor demonstrates the ability of inseparability to belong to both sides of the coin. That will not elude in language the temporality that language refers to but will pull up the stakes of reference, dislocating both the referential and non-referential position. The position of inseparability is not even the opposite of discernable difference, for in order to see simultaneously both the obverse and reverse heads or tails—the king and something else must be, as far as the coin is concerned, interchangeable. The coin determines their rate of exchange—in simultaneity. By calling attention to the stamp of the king's face on the coin, Sri Chinmoy alludes to the response given by Christ to the Pharisees, who question him on the rendering of things to Caesar and to God (Matthew 22:15-22). According to Sri Chinmoy's play on possession, the transparency of the face of the coin is seen through or shown through, putting all that is exchanged at the service of *something else*. But something else is not anything else. It is the very thing, the

king, the coin, the subject, oneself. And it is, on the other hand, simultaneously, the other side.

Otherness, in numerous if not countless ways, is cited by Sri Chinmoy in the context of a triple movement that composes the devotional play. Contemplation is the third movement, the third order of relation. In contemplation the self engages with the other in a state of oneness. There are characteristically three sites of identity; the self, the other and the inseperabilitiy of the two. One typical simple triplet states:

> Concentration is invincible.
> Meditation is unfathomable.
> Contemplation is inseparable. (*Concentration, Meditation Contemplation* 16-18)

Concentration is invincible because in one-pointedness it meets no other; meditation is unfathomable because in silence it knows no other and contemplation is inseparable because its otherness is self-involved. In another version the movement---concentration, meditation, contemplation—is narrated in the third person:

> When he concentrates,
> Everything matters.
> When he meditates,
> Nothing matters.
> When he contemplates,
> Only God matters. (*The Silent Teaching* 18)

An all or nothing relationship with matter is what the self finds in concentration and meditation. In concentration totality is located at every point and so everything matters. In meditation all fixture is emptied (opened) into an uncontainable void (vastness), and so nothing *is* what matters. But in

contemplation the self enters into a relationship with the beloved that is represented in all relations. The relationship is staged by the self appearing before the other in the body, but the bodily function that represents inseparability and mediates the communion of the contemplative play is not blood-letting, it is life-breath. Aspiration or breath is the access through which the self, seeker, child, lover plays the part of inseparability and embraces the other in contemplation. The breath, known in the tradition of yoga or union as the science of *pranayama*, is simplified by Sri Chinmoy into a mode of embrace. It is breath's interior that penetrates the body's pores and finds the body permeated in its atmosphere. Describing the technique of a breathing exercise, Sri Chinmoy explains:

> When you reach a more advanced stage, you can try to feel that your breath is coming in and going out through every part of your body—through your heart, through your eyes, through your nose and even through your pores. Right now you can breathe only through your nose or your mouth, but a time will come when you will be able to breathe through every part of your body. (*God-Satisfaction in Man-Perfection* 44)

The porousness of the body is not only penetrated but permeated with openings. Every pore becomes a porthole for inhalation and exhalation, a thrilling meeting of the outside inside and inside out.

ALL ABOUT DELIGHT

On one occasion Sri Chinmoy is asked to define delight:

> *Question*: What is delight?
> *Sri Chinmoy*: Delight is God, the ever-transforming Reality. If you ask me, "Who is God?" my answer will be Delight. If you

> ask me, "Why is God?" my answer will be Delight. If you ask me, "How is God?" my answer will be Delight. There can be no question on earth that cannot be answered by using the one supreme word, "Delight." For any question you ask, only one answer is correct, and that answer is Delight. (*The Significance of a Smile* 22)

In response to the straightforward question, "What is delight?", Sri Chinmoy recalls the question and, by making delight the answer, arrives in exchange at the starting point, literally delight. What is literal—word for word—is defined by identification with the definition. Once delight is situated in a position that is solely self-referential the naming device is dislodged, leaving delight at large.

Delight, otherwise known as *Ananda,* is frequently referred in eastern texts to the third placeholder in the three part reality play, *Sat-Chit-Ananda*. Sri Chinmoy renames what passes for reality in Sanskrit, in English:

> On the highest plane there is Existence-Consciousness-Bliss; we call it *Sat-Chit-Ananda*. *Sat* is Existence; *Chit* is Consciousness; *Ananda* is Delight. (*Samadhi and Siddhi*, p.69)

To put delight, instead of bliss, on par with *ananda* accomplishes a boundary exchange across dissimilar systems of signification—English replacing Sanskrit—and at the same time privileges delight among a host of other English synonyms, overlooked and subject to varying degrees of lesser relation. The candidate chosen as the one supreme word is, he says, delight. Why delight? It is not that delight plays an exclusive part, rather it plays a singular part. In singularity the one and only correct answer is given at any moment but its correctness will be reassigned from context to context, from point to point, from one seeker to another. Sri Chinmoy may well give

incompatible answers to the same question posed on occasion by different individuals, even as he identifies a host of other one and only answers. For example, he frequently casts peace in the lead role as the favored goal of the devotional play, stating: "God has many children,/ But the name of his fondest child is peace" (*Traveler's Companion*). Peace is figured as the child most fond, the name of a supremely affectionate offspring, to be doted over more than the others. Peace, according to Sri Chinmoy, "begins where expectation ends" (*Traveler's Companion*) but it also becomes what expectation yields: "What is the first and foremost thing we expect from meditation? Peace. Peace and nothing else" (*The Silent Teaching* 13). Peace, like delight, is something that nothing else will replace.

What is reiterated throughout Sri Chinmoy's oeuvre is not one and only correct answer, not one single exclusive word, but the repetition of the answer in all its aspects, called by any number of epithets, under various conditions. It is multiple singularity and not absolute singularity that makes the devotional play possible, for absolute singularity, if it could be conceived, would enter into no relation.[18] Words have meaning in relation, framing questions and answers along the way. And so if delight is to take the place of *ananda* the

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[18]Responding to questions during an interview in 1989, Derrida comments on singularity:

> For *on the other hand*, while there is always *singularization,* absolute singularity is never given as a fact, an object or existing thing [*étant*] in itself, it is announced in a paradoxical experience. An absolute, absolutely pure singularity, if there were one, would not even show up, or at least would not be available for reading. To become readable, it has to be *divided*, to *participate* and *belong*. (*Acts of Literature* 68)

preference must be partial, a partiality based to some extent on what makes sense. The definition, however, does not satisfy any necessary criteria because delight is defined in identification with itself. The choosing of delight in the place of *ananda* is by and large a naming game.

De-light, being *of* light or *after* light, names a concept in relation to the totality of light. In *White Mythology* Derrida quotes a short list of other such concepts—negative concepts including, "ab-solute, in-finite, in-tangible, non-Being" (*Margins of Philosophy* 211). The discussion engages in a reading of *The Garden of Epicurus,* by A. France, which lumps negative concepts together in so far as they "break the tie that binds them to the meaning of any particular being, that is, to the totality of what is" (*Margins of Philosophy* 212). The negation of a particular totality—say, materiality—establishes the negative concept—*immateriality*—as 'other'. In the case of delight the concept in question is the totality of light, the very same tie traced in *White Mythology,* where the denuding of a "progressive erosion" that produces (dead) metaphor lays bare sunlight at the core of an all-encompassing heliotrope: "Each time that there is a metaphor, there is doubtless a sun somewhere; but each time that there is sun, metaphor has begun" (*Margins of Philosophy* 251). The sun as the source of light is named the primary heliotrope of heliotropes because it is unique, singular: "There is only one sun in this system. The proper name, here, is the nonmetaphorical prime mover of metaphor, the father of all figures. Everything turns around it, everything turns toward it" (*Margins of Philosophy* 243). That momentary clarity, the visibility so to speak, is bound to fall beyond its proper reach for, "As soon as one admits that all the terms in an analogical

relation already are caught up, one by one, in a metaphorical relation, everything begins to function no longer as a sun, but as a star, the punctual source of truth or properness remaining invisible or nocturnal" (*Margins of Philosophy* 243-244). The singular sun, in relation, falls in the between-ness of darkness, unreadable, which makes visibility, not to mention multiplicity, possible. And so it is suitable, inscrutable, that delight should act as one answer, in constellation, to confound all questions.

In the guise of a negative concept, de-light delimits light by going beyond it, by extending the boundary into an always unbreachable darkness. Upon this outer limit the negative concept teeters and throws its weight outside what is visible, what is knowable, what *is*. Such implicit precariousness provides the thrust for A. France's metaphysical jest on the domain and dominion of metaphysicians:

> Such is the general practice, so far as I have observed, of the metaphysicians—more correctly, the *Metataphysicians*; for it is another remarkable fact to add to the rest that your science itself has a negative name, one taken from the order in which the treatises of Aristotle were arranged, and that strictly speaking, you give yourselves the title: Those who come after the *Physicians*. I understand of course that you regard these, the physical books, as piled atop of each other, so that to come after is really to take place above. All the same you admit this much, that you are outside of natural phenomena". (*Margins of Philosophy* 212)

The *metata* that places physicians "outside of natural phenomena" relies on a familiar breach that sets negative concepts apart. Ironically, the intentional breaching of boundary is worn down and gradually forgotten, until eventually the construct of the negative concept is privileged in the place of the thing it

sought to put away or transcend. Even so, the estrangement of the negative concept will not be entirely erased, nor will its limit cease to turn and overturn the tension upon which it is built. By cancelling the root site in the case of de-light, the light source—the naming of what is afterward comes outside (daylight's) natural phenomenon.

But such an undoing is not either the last word on delight. Indeed, the retracing of delight in 16th century texts reveals a real maverick, a fake-out, for the word is backtracked not to the root of light but to *delite*, that is the pleasurable *delitier* or *delectare*—appearing to allure. What signals the cross-over from *delit* to delight is credited to a 16th century misspelling[19] copied many times over. The transcription of delight is not after all the "progressive erosion" that metaphor might imply; it is a "displacement with breaks," the mutation of a metonomy that extracts the metaphoric root "from its own native soil". And so the transcribing of the mispelling of *delite* makes all reference to light superfluous, or surplus. That situates delight in the joint of metaphor's unresolvable duplicity and intricacy, confounding metaphor and meaning, language and thought, rhetoric/poetics and philosophy.

If delight will thus rightly occupy the place of *ananda*, it will yet recall what is translated or transported by Sri Chinmoy, in name only. And because

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[19] RE: delight:

> —L. *Delectare* to allure, attract, delight, charm, please, freq. Of *delicere* to entice away, allure: cf. DELICIOUS. The current erroneous spelling after *light*, etc. arose in the 16th c., and prevailed about 1575: the Bible of 1611 occasionally retained *delite*. (OED)

readability is called out of silence, provisionally, we might call it something else:

> But delight is something else. When you have delight, you will feel tremendous ecstasy in your whole being, from the soles of your feet to the crown of your head. From above, Delight-Nectar descends through the crown centre and drips into the Third Eye. You drink this Delight-Nectar and feel a sense of Immortality. As soon as one little drop of this Delight comes into the sahasrara chakra, the whole body gets a divine thrill. Not even one cell, one molecule, will be denied this intense ecstasy... Delight has tremendous power, but it descends very slowly...Delight always descends very, very cautiously, and very steadily and unerringly. (*The Significance of a Smile* 20-21)

The whole body or gross physical[20] is said to be the site delight permeates, dripping into and seeping through the body property so thoroughly not even one cell, not one molecule, will be denied this intense ecstasy. But the sensory register that records ecstasy operates in a void from which the ecstatic self, in transport, is emptied or put out. Ecstasy, lorded over by the body, cannot and will not be felt as long as the self observes in the body any impermeable boundary or cell wall because self-possession geared for self-preservation is

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[20]Sri Chinmoy distinguishes between gross, subtle and transcendental meditation:

> One of our Upanishads mentions that there are three kinds of meditation: gross meditation, subtle meditation and transcendental meditation. Your particular experience will be only gross meditation. The second stage I mention is subtle meditation. The third one is transcendental meditation, where you become totally one with your meditation and at the same time go beyond your meditation. All the time you feel that you are beyond, beyond. But again it does not mean that in gross meditation you cannot enter into your deepest meditation. No, you can. But only one part your heart will enjoy the deepest meditation; the physical, the vital and the mind will not enjoy the deepest meditation. That is why it is called gross. (*Man-Perfection in God-Satisfaction* 250)

the obstruction against which delight will not advance. The self welcomes delight's advances only by giving itself over and the overture of the body proper or property, broached slowly and steadily, exacts no small cost. The cost of welcome is, to be sure, unconditional surrender. That, on Sri Chinmoy's terms, is a mutual offering and relies on the recognition and realization of oneness. Oneness, once perceived, rids the self of its encumbering protocol, the substance and constitution against which all self-imposition is granted. So does oneness lay the groundwork for delight. The invitation that attracts the sensation Sri Chinmoy calls delight is, in effect, a dispossession or re-positioning. Whether oneness is perceived in perspective as surrender to the Supreme Other or to one's Supreme Self is, according to Sri Chinmoy, the same difference. The difference is a matter of contemplative distance perceived, in exchange, solely as a means to deepen the devotional site. When the exchange is unconditional or selfless the "other" will come to represent an unrepresentable absolute other, the one Sri Chinmoy calls the Supreme.

The Supreme is Sri Chinmoy's beloved and, he says, everybody's beloved. If, on one hand, we mask the face of the absolute Other with subject-selves and enter into relations with those intermediaries—player-queens and kings—on the other hand the players picture the play of their desire in the face of the absolute Other. The name "Supreme" serves the *metata*physical purpose of naming the totality of what is 'beyond'. Whereas negative concepts are typically derived by cancelling or superseding a root presence or substance and are to that extent discernable—i.e., *invaluable* names a worthiness that exceeds

all value, and *disaster* names an event that is ill-fated or put out of relation with the stars—in the case of the Supreme the root substance is missing. Rather, the concept "Supreme" is derived from the prefix *supra*—the superlative of *superus*—on the pretext of a prepositional or adverbial site beyond what is not there. The beyond is not stated and cannot be so much as situated. It occupies no fixed position. Movement beyond the missing something, or *something else*, is outside itself—ecstatic. To invite the "Supreme" is thus to call upon delight. Delight is all that can be recalled in response, the RSVP—the answer. But that invitation cannot be issued by just anybody:

> Great spiritual Masters from time immemorial have brought down the *Sat* and *Chit* aspects. But *Ananda* is much more difficult to bring down. Some could not bring it at all. Some brought it, but it lasted for only a few seconds or a few minutes and then went back up again. Peace is accessible; we can bring down Peace. Light and Power can easily be brought down. But the Delight which immortalises our inner and outer consciousness has not yet been established on earth. It comes and then goes away because it sees so much imperfection in the earth-atmosphere that it cannot remain. (*Samadhi and Siddhi* 69-70)

The barricade to delight, as Sri Chinmoy sees it, is imperfection in the earth-atmosphere. But what he calls imperfection on one hand he calls, on the other hand, perfection:

> Perfection is like that. When you have something, that is your perfection. Then you see the deficiency of what you have achieved, and you go farther beyond. *(Perfection-World* 4)

Perfection is on-the-job, at work or at play, in the process of perfecting itself. And that provisional state, in preparation of delight, is not to be judged by any fixed standard because all that is fixed at any given moment is in flux.

To call a present moment of perfection "imperfect" is to engage in a momentary act of becoming. What Sri Chinmoy actually claims, in the present, is a *measure* of perfection and in the context of Sri Chinmoy's devotional play no measure can be addressed without its incommensurable part. That relationship between measure or dimension and its opposite, without measure, is caught up in a doubletake, doubling back between an infinitesimal point and the finitude in which it is found. Even as dimension in finitude is founded on a bifurcation—*dimensio* or *di(dis)* + *metiri*—that divides and keeps itself at some alloted distance apart, so does *di* or *dis* double what is itself twofold, both the opposite and the absence of. That *distance—distantia* or *distare*; *di* + *stare*, to stand apart— in opposition and in absence, is calculated as measure or meter and perceived as the repetition of a fixed pattern where meter is: "rhythm characterized by regular recurrence of a systematic arrangement of basic patterns in larger figures." (Webster) One such calculated figure perceived and frequently cited by Sri Chinmoy is the measure of an infinitesimal drop in relation to the ocean:

> Inside Eternity is the moment; again, inside the moment is Eternity. It is like the ocean. Inside the ocean are countless tiny drops. Again, each tiny drop holds the essence of the vast ocean. We take a drop and immediately we have the consciousness of the vast ocean, because the drop embodies the vast ocean. And so each moment cannot be separated from

> Eternity and Infinity. Meditation is the only way to feel the oneness of the finite with the Infinite. (*The Silent Teaching* 14)

The distance between one drop and the boundless finitude of the ocean is both measured and measureless, inside the drop. The distance between the drop and the ocean is *nothing but* perception. And if perception produces the play of difference then the producer of the play is the perceiver of the drop. The split or doubling occurs, according to Sri Chinmoy, *in* perception, even or especially in self-perception. Self-perception, it turns out, is what perception is about and the task of meditation is to *see through* the split:

> There should be no split in your consciousness. When you are properly meditating, your consciousness will become a single entity. If you feel that you are enjoying a running commentary, then you have to know that either your mind or your vital or your physical is not totally one with your meditation. Your heart is meditating most devotedly, but the mind may not be there. (*Man-Perfection in God-Satisfaction* 249)

To be "properly meditating" is to perceive no split, to enjoy no running commentary. Even so, the single entity or singularity is, as observed, not visible unless or until it splits. Thus the elimination or delimitation of boundary is imperceptible. That is the very point of confusion, the location of the ecstatic movement outside of limitation where boundary is effectively cancelled. The confusion over boundary and where, between emptiness and fullness, it falls is the very crux of the matter, the crux of materiality. Sri Chinmoy situates that problem within the traditional scheme of Indian philosophy:

> Inside nothingness, everything can be found. This is our Indian philosophy. From nothingness came fulness. In the spiritual life emptiness is fulness. (*Professor-Children* 111-112)

Emptiness that is fulness is, in Indian lore, the source of creation. In the same book, responding to professors' questions on spirituality, Sri Chinmoy explains:

> Our Indian philosophy uses the term 'shunya'—emptiness. This emptiness is none other than fulness, which we call 'hiranya garbha'—the golden egg or womb. It is from the golden egg that creation came into existence. (*Professor-Children* 86)

The co-equation of emptiness and fulness is cited as the source of existence. But creation, in the same tradition, is perceived as illusion or *maya*. Sri Chinmoy's most radical move is to retrieve maya from its traditionally depreciated illusory state by privileging or treasuring in creation, as he is want to do, the play of temporality. To find, in temporality, real appearences is to cultivate, nourish and cherish the fleeting moment that defines the devotional play. The move to retrieve in the midst of an illusory state something meaningful or purposeful is possible only in relation with the beloved and that relation—love, devotion and surrender *is* maya. On the subject of the purpose of maya, a question is posed to Sri Chinmoy by a professor of theology[21]:

> In terms of teaching, I have often faced problems explaining the Hindu doctrine of maya, especially in its understanding of life as "illusory." I have similar problems when I speak of the world as lila (God's Play) and try to emphasise the "purposelessness" of God's created world as a consequence of its being God's Divine Play. How can I best teach these concepts to our students in the United States? (*Professor-Children* 17)

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[21]The professor is identified in the text by proper name: Professor K. R. Sundarajan, at the Department of Theology, St. Bonaventure University. (*Professor-Children* 13)

The peculiarity of an Indian professor in the West questioning an Indian guru on how to teach students in English the classical Hindu doctrine, aside; Sri Chinmoy responds on no uncertain terms. The purposelessness of creation, as this professor puts it, is perceived as a consequence of being outside the delightful, devotional play. Inside the play—which Sri Chinmoy finds in the face of all else—purpose *is* the play. That willingness to take part in the play, to engage in love's banter, undermines the presumptions of "purposelessness", whether from the traditional Hindu perspective or from any other privileged position that seeks to establish itself apart from the subjective self. Sri Chinmoy, in response to this particular professor, does not actually reject the tenets of traditional Vedic thinking but he exposes within it a certain chauvinism:

> The Hindu doctrine uses the term 'maya', which means 'illusion'. It has been the Hindu belief, right from the very birth of the Hindu philosophy, that the world is an illusion. The Hindu spiritual figures, the Hindu philosophers and some of the Hindu thinkers get tremendous pleasure in telling the world that it is nothing but an illusion. Their philosophy is: why pay so much attention, or even any attention, to something that is unreal?" (*Professor-Children* 18)

The vedic tradition has, as Sri Chinmoy says, depreciated the so-called real world all along. The reality play, dismissed by traditional Hindu thinkers as empty illusion because it is *nothing but* the play, is celebrated by Sri Chinmoy for the same reason. To pay attention to the play—to *nothing but* the play is, according to Sri Chinmoy, the very stuff, the fulness, of the devotional life. If vedic tradition has devalued reality's showcase by calling it illusory then Sri

Chinmoy will call it other names. One other name he calls it is "temporary". That clinches for the lay reader exactly what temporality in the context of Sri Chinmoy's devotional discipline really means:

> *Maya* has another meaning. It means 'fleeting, impermanent, temporary'. The things that we see or we do or we are in the physical world do not last permanently. Therefore, some people describe the physical world as unreal. But the outer reality does not require immortality. Although the highest reality is infinite, eternal and immortal, reality can also be short-lived, just as Infinity can be infinitely tiny as well as infinitely vast. Reality can be short-lived and reality can be long-term. Again, reality can be immortal. A flower that lasts only for a day is not unreal. A human being who lives for 80 years is not unreal. They are temporary; therefore, you might describe them as illusory. They are real, but limited impermanent. (*Professor-Children* 18)

In order to so abundantly affirm the temporal real, Sri Chinmoy assumes a detachment, a willingness to let go. Detachment allows him to accept the impermanence and appearance of reality on its own terms. Those terms are temporal, for in temporality the play takes place. Sri Chinmoy's fondness for temporality recalls Derrida's presentation—or representation—in *Of Grammatology*, of the impossible possibility of the real:

> It is precisely the play of presence and absence, the opening of this play that no metaphysical or ontological concept can comprehend. Therefore this property [propre] of man is not a property of man: it is the very dislocation of the proper in general, the impossibility—and therefore the desire—of proximity; the impossibility and therefore the desire of pure presence. (*Of Grammatology* 244)

Dislocation is the place of temporality. Only in separation, only at a distance, does difference make room for reference and representation. And representation provokes desire by giving not the thing but the articulation of

the thing. The desire for the thing, itself, cannot be fulfilled in temporality because, in making room for articulation, temporality forestalls "pure presence". Not only language but language *as articulation*, as representation, is built on a dislocated presence that feeds on an impossible desire for "the real". If the grip of reality, as we know it, is grasping at nothing but articulation, then it is by paying attention to articulation that we enter into temporal relation—however short-lived—and so become readers. But Sri Chinmoy pays more than attention to the temporal play, he pays devotion, and in devotion difference is not only perceived, it is desirable. In devotion the self relishes temporality because temporality provides the playground for the manifestation of devotional exchange. And the longing of devotion turns desire to delight.

MY CHILD, MY LORD

Choosing the child as most valuable player in relation to the absolute other is more than a rhetorical ploy, it is the recognition of the child as crier. Responding to a question on devotional discipline, Sri Chinmoy advises the seeker to become like "a mere baby":

> To create receptivity when you do not have it, try to make yourself feel that you are only three years old—a mere baby. (*Meditation* 111)

The cry of a mere baby is not only irrepressible, it is irresistible. The child cast as crier will cry and cry until the cry is heard. And the cry, as Sri Chinmoy describes it, includes demand, longing, mourning, lamentation, and aspiration, which is the very drawing of breath. The cry or what he calls "earth's cry" is

none other than earth's predicament. Not only are the creatures of the earth bound to cry but the earth, itself, utters the cry unceasingly. The cry is not the result of misgivings, not caused by deed, word or circumstance, not any kind of response. The cry is a quickening, a trembling. It is sound.

Together, the crier and the hearer of the cry embody the devotional exchange. The beloved must be sought because the beloved is absent, and absence is guaranteed by the necessary distance between the two that is the condition of any and all relation. But absence only motivates and increases the intensity of the cry. Whether the cry pierces the ear of the other or gnaws at the heart of the other or perturbs the other's ire or trembles in the presence of an image of the other, in whatever guise the beloved is perceived or conceived, the relationship is doubly bound with either side seeking its unknowable part:

> Now you will say that you do not know where your soul is. Then cry like a child; cry only for light, for light." *(Perfection-World* 51-52)

All that is desired is delegated to the cry because the cry puts desire into play. The cry cries to be heard, to be found out. What is to be found out, in this case, is the location of the soul, "your soul". It is a recognition scene. *Now*, Sri Chinmoy says, at *this* moment, *you will say that you do not know*. Sri Chinmoy does not console the seeker by suggesting a possible whereabouts for the soul but rather he directs the seeker to cry inconsolably "only for light", that is revelation *par excellence*, the metaphor of all knowledge. The sound of the cry that announces the self to itself meets with disclosure to open, to make known, to expose to view—and thus reveals the visible. That cry which pierces

the proper target is, according to Sri Chinmoy, produced not in the throat but in the heart:

> Aspiration is a cry within our heart. As a child cries, so also in the heart you will feel a cry. A child is within you, shedding tears. He is weeping because he wants to transcend himself. This is the mounting cry, the climbing cry inside our heart. When we are aware of this cry, we call it *aspiration*. (*Cry Within, Yours is the Goal* 1)

The sound of the cry is a feeling, an increase, a movement that mounts inside the heart. Transcendence, as Sri Chinmoy refers to the movement of the self in search of the other, crosses over by way of the cry from heart to heart, a trans+scandere or scansion that emits the cry, that *transcends* the body boundary of the self and goes abroad, seeking a hearing.

The cry in its many manifestations can be heard as "song", the kind of sound that Sri Chinmoy dubs "inner music":

> It is not only the higher and lower worlds that have a music of their own; each individual has his own music, each movement has its own music, each action has its own music. Each time we breathe in and breathe out, there is music. When we don't pay attention to the inner depth of the action, we don't hear the music. If we do pay adequate attention to each action, then inside the very depth of that action we are bound to hear music. Unless we hear music inside each action, the action is lifeless. (*God the Supreme Musician* 25)

The sound that resounds in action is the tension of the relation of the longing of things for each other. The sound becomes audible when we "pay adequate attention", that is, when we listen. Listening engages the self in relation with any other, which is the prescription for devotion. Only when the self pays attention—or devotion is the embodiment of the beloved in temporality

adequately sought for all action, all movement, is then *nothing but* an act of devotion, a seeking after the other. A sound accompanies that movement because movement, no matter how still, is a disturbance, a quiver or earth tremor—a cry.

When Benjamin writes that: "It is a metaphysical truth that all nature would begin to lament if it were endowed with language" (*Refl*ections 329), he invokes the *sound* of the cry, the cry Sri Chinmoy calls "earth's cry." The cry in advance or in the aftermath of its articulation is an unspoken lamentation, which Benjamin hears in nature. It is a speechless cry, a speechlessness:

> It is a metaphysical truth that all nature would begin to lament if it were endowed with language. (Though to "endow with language" is more than to "make able to speak.") This proposition has a double meaning. It means, first: she would lament language itself. Speechlessness: that is the great sorrow of nature (and for the sake of her redemption the life and language of *man*—not only, as is supposed, of the poet—are in nature). This proposition means, secondly: she would lament. Lament, however, is the most undifferentiated, impotent expression of language; it contains scarcely more than the sensuous breath; and even where there is only a rustling of plants, in it there is always a lament. Because she is mute, nature mourns. Yet the inversion of this proposition leads even further into the essence of nature; the sadness of nature makes her mute. In all mourning there is the deepest inclination to speechlessness, which is infinitely more than inability or disinclination to communicate. That which mourns feels itself thoroughly known by the unknowable. (*Reflections* 329)

The possibility of speech—of naming—is a cause for mourning because naming represents at a distance what is withdrawn. That which is named is not present, is not knowable, or is knowable in name only. Benjamin marks a double meaning of muteness; the inability to say that is the failure of language

to communicate; and the desire not to say, not to be articulated and misinterpreted, not to be wronged by naming. What Benjamin calls lamentation, the most undifferentiated, impotent expression of language, scarcely more than the sensuous breath, *is* the breath, the earthbound breath—the cry. To articulate or anticipate the cry in language initiates the mediating presence that language manifests, inevitably misread, mistaken. And the inability of the articulation to communicate is the tragedy of human relationships, according to Benjamin:

> There is, in the relation of human languages to that of things, something that can be approximately described as "over-naming": over-naming as the deepest linguistic reason for all melancholy and (from the point of view of the thing) of all deliberate muteness. Over-naming as the linguistic being of melancholy points to another curious relation of language: the overprecision that obtains in the tragic relationship between the languages of human speakers. (*Reflections* 330)

What determines the over-determined language of melancholy, according to Benjamin, is precisely the overprecision that naming calls for, by definition. But if relationship entangled in languages is bound for misreading and tragedy, in the play of devotional dialogue the anxiety and even the tragedy of communication is cause for greater intensity. The articulation of the cry sharpens what it cannot say. Over and over again language mediates what the cry longs for, that is to be known. And as language falls forever short of its intention, the longing of the speaker is prolonged and deepened indefinately.

Language, Benjamin says, is "in every case not only communication of the communicable but also, at the same time, a symbol of the

noncommunicable" (*Reflections* 331). In the midst of that iterability, in the mock and echo of meaning, Sri Chinmoy locates the dialogue of the devotional play. Devotional dialogue admits that language fails to mediate more than the nomenclature of the noncommunicable but doesn't stop there, it admits the failure *in order* to mediate, in order to make language an intermediary. Language resorts to over-naming as a resource and so nurtures the tragic relationship it mediates. Language means only what it cries for. The cry is thus an incessant longing for the presence that language promises but cannot deliver.

The promise of language is, according to Sri Chinmoy, made to be reversable. The promise shuttles between child and Lord, in exchange. The self-taught child, who cries with abandon, is at once the locus of the Lord. Their *lila* or child's play is a hide-and-seek game that performs the unresolvable dialectic between the two. It is a dialectic not only of language, not even in language, it is the dialectic of the cry and smile. The back-and-forth between goes on and on. There is no closure, no last word, there is only the enjoyment of the joint venture. The sacrifice their very existence presumes, the offering of one's self to the other, *is* the performance, the act of love, devotion and surrender.

In a text entitled *My Lord's Secrets Revealed*, Sri Chinmoy transcribes a child's running commentary of questions in dialogue with the child's Lord. At one point the child asks:

> My Lord, my philosophy is love, devotion and surrender. What is Your Philosophy?

> My Philosophy, My child, is unconditional Love, unconditional Devotion and unconditional Surrender. (*My Lord's Secret's Revealed* 95)

Addressing the Lord first, with philosophy intact, the child poses the question. The q&a is so constructed—My Lord, my philosophy/My Philosophy, My child—that it encloses both philosophies inside the boundary of the love relationship. Whereas the child addresses the Lord and then proposes a philosophy, the Lord's response situates the child embedded within the sentence structure: subject-child-predicate. The child, in grammatical apposition, carries the implication that the Lord's philosophy *is* the child; and so that single doubled entity is modified by a common predicate. Philosophy, either way, is summed up as the protestation of love, devotion and surrender—or its unconditional counterpart. Sri Chinmoy makes of conditionality all the difference but it is a joint difference, for child and Lord are joined by conditions imposed upon the unconditionality of the absolute other. To place no conditions on the other is to put philosophy outside the possibility of relation, into the court of the absolute. That leaves the Lord at the mercy of the child, for unconditionality needs the conditional in order to enter into relation, into manifestation. Once love, devotion and surrender are subject to or subjected to the "if-then" clause, the devotional relationship takes place. Conditionality is, for all practical purposes, the constraint of the temporal order. So the child's philosophy rests its case, bound to be vulnerable to the conditions of temporality that support it. Meanwhile, the Lord's philosophy, unconditional and unsupported, is bound by the child's conditional love,

devotion and surrender. Thus, Sri Chinmoy does not dismiss conditional love but binds it to the impossible possibility of unconditional love, and vice versa. That is the method of his manifestation, the means by which limitation becomes the material of transcendence. If that juncture is rejected on the grounds that the unconditional can have no relation with the conditional, then in devotion alterity finds its meeting place. The act of devotion—call it writing—inscribes the site of the meeting. No matter if the site records *nothing but* the devotional play.

In yet another venue of the primal recognition scene, the identification of child and Lord is compounded and represented by Sri Chinmoy as one subject named, "God the Child-Player":

> As a little child gets satisfaction, abundant satisfaction, when he plays with his friends, even so, God the Child-Player likes to play with His child-friend creations. God is one, but He wants to enjoy Himself in countless ways and in countless forms. (*Professor-Children* 19)

The yoking together of the said God with the so-called "Child-Player" places the creations and the creator smack in the theater of the devotional play. The yoke likewise binds the cast of child-friends to the Child-Player and makes of the child-friend creations credible playmates, liable to trade secrets among themselves. The child, linked on either side to the "-Player" and the "-friend creations", is the friend of the friend, both player and play-mate. There is no satisfaction apart from the enjoyment of the play and that satisfaction is "abundant."

If we return at this juncture to re-examine the child's point of view, given in an autobiographical account by Blanchot in *The Writing of the Disaster,* we find the child figured against the backdrop of the absolute other, impersonated in the context of Blanchot's text as *the disaster*:

> (A primal scene?) You who live later, close to a heart that beats no more, suppose, suppose this: the child—is he seven years old or eight perhaps?—standing by the window, drawing the curtain and, through the pane, looking. What he sees: the garden, the wintry trees, the wall of a house. Though he sees, no doubt in a child's way, his play space, he grows weary and slowly looks up toward the ordinary sky, with clouds, grey light—pallid daylight without depth.
>
> What happens then: the sky, the same sky, suddenly open, absolutely black and absolutely empty, revealing (as though the pane had broken) such an absence that all has since always and forevermore been lost therein - so lost that therein is affirmed and dissolved the vertiginous knowledge that nothing is what there is, and first of all nothing beyond. The unexpected aspect of this scene (its interminable feature) is the feeling of happiness that straightaway submerges the child, the ravaging joy to which he can bear witness only by tears, an endless flood of tears. He is thought to suffer a childish sorrow; attempts are made to console him. He says nothing. He will live henceforth in the secret. He will weep no more. (*Writing of the Disaster* 72)

The primal recognition scene as Blanchot sees it is a kind of interruption or interception of the child's "play space" with "the ordinary sky". To attempt to read the scene of the child's play, as Blanchot writes it, is to place the self in relation to the sky—the same sky—in "a child's way" and to imagine that relation figured in confrontation with the absolute. It is not the absolute, we know, according to Blanchot. That would want a more radical nothingness than

any ordinary sky. And yet it is something: a representation of "absolutely black and absolutely empty, revealing". What gives the scene away is the ravaging joy that submerges the child in happiness, borne out in tears. The child says nothing. Blanchot says. The nonsaying must be told in order that the secret may be kept. The child, thought to suffer a childish sorrow, will bear the untellable secret and weep no more. That is—*perhaps* a primal scene, the primal cry. What appears to cause the cry is an absence, a sudden opening, as though the pane had broken between the child and the sky. The child's ecstasy in recognition of the absolutely empty revealing is on the verge of figuring the non-figural arrival of the disaster. The reader might wonder whether the the consummation of this child's play into ravaging joy at the recognition of an absolute other can be kept secret; whether the child will "say nothing", will weep no more. The reader might wonder whether this child's exposure to an absolutely empty revealing might not breed a craving, a longing to meet once more the nothingness of sky. Once the break-in the broken pane---occurs, will the child retreat or will the child be compelled in silence to write; to write *The Writing of the Disaster*? Does Blanchot not undertake, in response to the realization of non-figuration, his written works, a non-project that goes on retelling the keeping of the secret interminably:

> At that point, where it is given us on the rare occasion—albeit fictively and by the most dangerous stratagem—to convey ourselves, we are by no means freed from the dialectic, but it becomes pure Discourse: that which speaks, utters itself and says nothing, the Book which destroys by constructing itself, the work of the "No" in its multiple forms behind which reading, and writing, prepare for the advent of a "Yes" both

> unique and ever reiterated in the circularity where there is no longer any first and last affirmation. (*Writing of the Disaster* 72)

The writing of "the Book" amounts, in so many words, to a crossing out in multiple and inexhaustible forms what would otherwise be uttered by the unutterable. Writing thus proliferates. And the past tense of the "temporary representation" that already faces us is the end without end of written discourse. What Blanchot refers, by way of the dialectical process, to "pure Discourse"—that utters itself and says nothing—is what Sri Chinmoy turns into devotional dialogue, between lovers. The production of that dialogue is inexhaustible. When, in *My Lord's Secrets Revealed*, the child grows weary of the conversation and proposes a time-out, the Lord proves relentless:

> "My Lord, I am sure You are now tired. You are now tired of my ceaseless questions. You are now tired of our marathon talk. You are tired of my endless stupidity."
>
> "My child, I get Joy only when you talk to Me. My Joy is Rest, ever nourishing and ever-fulfilling."
>
> "My Lord, I am a clever fellow. I was just being modest and polite. It is I who am actually tired."
>
> "I see. Then, My child, sleep. Sleep inside My Life's Depth, inside My Soul's Breath, inside My Vision's Glow, inside My Reality's Flow. Sleep, My child, sleep." (*My Lord's Secrets Revealed* 99)

The talk that tires the child only invigorates the Lord and so the conversation goes on, as long as the child can continue. But the sleep that intervenes in the silence that follows this last exchange produces no closure, it is only another interlude in the interminable play. The oevre of Sri Chinmoy is thus not a

production from beginning to end, it is the momentum and manifestation of an artwork that *in its multiple forms* constantly reiterates the devotional exchange.

In the preamble to the conversation that takes place in *My Lord's Secrets Revealed*, we read, "I knew Him there by seeing Him repeatedly./ He knows me here by giving me constantly." (*My Lord's Secrets Revealed* 3) The *here* and *there* is in constant repetition. The knowledge gained by seeing and by giving does not reach any final act because what is temporal—the child's seeing—is repeated and what is intemporal—the Lord's giving—is constant. The yoking of those "two absolutely heterogeneous orders" constitutes the text of the telling of *My Lord's Secrets Revealed.* Just before calling a time out in order to take rest, the child asks "a most unpardonable question": "'My Lord, did you ever take anybody as Your Lord, just for a day, or even a fleeting second?'" And the Lord, once again and once and for all, swears the oath of oneness, in contemplation:

> "Did I? Just for a day? Even for a fleeting second? My Lord is constant, permanent, eternal. The surrendered love of My dearest lovers is My constant, permanent, eternal Lord. I have always been a perfect Slave of My lovers' surrrendered love. Verily, you are also one of My Lords, My child." (*My Lord's Secrets Revealed* 98)

The oath of oneness is multiple, it is as many as necessity demands, determined by the lover's surrendered love. The Lord is the slave of love unlimited. At that point the child asks for a break, a caesura, a sleep. But the Lord does not sleep for this discourse, the Lord maintains, is not over. It will perpetuate in the conversational outcry that says itself over and over, comprising the message-making echoing back and forth. Blanchot proposes a

model to accommodate "the task of saying everything by saying itself endlessly":

> It is as if the reversal which Marx proposed with regard to Hegel—"to pass from language to life" had in turn been reversed, and life, having been finished off (that is to say, fully realized), were restoring to a language without referent (which thereby becomes the science of itself and the model of all science) the task of saying everything by saying itself endlessly. (*Writing of the Disaster* 73)

Language looks back at itself, *en abyme,* and that iteration and reiteration, that says it all, "saying itself endlessly", is everybody's task. The resounding of the saying the calling, the cry—is the invocation that stages the recognition between the seeker and sought after, much as the subtle other of the devotional self proposed by Sri Chinmoy sees itself on both sides of the point that bores through the proverbial wall. And if Sri Chinmoy registers the forever movement of the seeker in degrees of "realization", Blanchot rightly recognizes that the approach of life "fully realized" recalls the mystic state:

> we should perhaps, while keeping well outside of mysticism, hear what we hear not: the undemanding, the disastrous demand of the neutral the effraction of the infinitely passive where undesirable desire and the push of deathless dying meet, parting. (*Writing of the Disaster* 74)

What Blanchot proposes we should perhaps hear—while keeping well outside of mysticism—is the sound of the cry. That is not to doubt the task of the non-project of passivity unknowingly, but to recognize that the task—pure Discourse—is otherwise determined. What we seek openly—the same sky may not be so categorically excluded from the site of our realization, mystic or not.

What is at stake is not, after all, the mystic state. What is at stake is the cry. The cry occurs in the comings and goings of the temporal-real, in the moment of time, *in passing*. In poem #17 in the collection entitled, *My Lord's Lotus-Feet versus My Devotion-Heart,* the child, in conversation once again with the Lord, asks:

> My Lord,
> I cry for You every day,
> Every hour, every minute,
> Every second.
> Do You, my Lord, ever cry
> For me? (*My Lord's Lotus-Feet* 31)

The Lord replies:

> My child,
> If I also do the same,
> Then who will be able
> To console whom?
> Now, I am serious, My child—
> I do cry for you sleeplessly. (*My Lord's Lotus-Feet* 32)

One cries "every second" or repeatedly, the other ever cries constantly or "sleeplessly". And crying the Lord says, in all seriousness, *for you,* provides the consolation that at the same time it seeks. The cry itself draws breath. The cry is aspiration. That is *the same cry* that Blanchot attributes to an indifference:

> All the way, that is, to the end of history: the world completely known and totally transformed, in the unity of the knowledge which knows itself (and this is to say that the world has forever *become*, or that it is *dead* like man, who was its temporary representation, like the Subject whose sage identity is no longer anything but indifference to life, life's immobile vacancy). (*Writing of the Disaster* 73)

The Subject's temporary sage identity, Blanchot says, is indifferent, dead already. And that is the last word on temporality in the face of "pure Discourse". We get the overall picture, that is a loss of temporal difference in the face of totality, referred to life's immobile vacancy. To *fully realize* life—what Sri Chinmoy calls *realization*—Blanchot suggests, is accompanied by indifference, the indifference of the non-dialectical.

It is not indifference that Sri Chinmoy associates with realization, but detachment. Detachment has no stake in results and waits without expectation, but neither does it belong to indifference. Rather the presumptions of self interest are surrendered. Detachment, summed up by Sri Chinmoy in the following aphorism, describes an all or nothing state:

> You can act as if nothing in the world belongs to you,
> Or you can act as if everything in the world belongs to you.
> (*Traveler's Companion*)

If nothing belongs, it is detachment. If everything belongs, it is detachment. In both cases the self attaches no possessive interest to its investment and takes no stock in the outcome. 'This' and 'that' may be disowned or 'this' and 'that' may be owned and either choice will effectively eliminate ownership, for both choices are absolute and unconditional. Sri Chinmoy's personal devotional discipline allows either choice and in so doing recognizes in every temporary being, in everything, the embodiment of *something else*, that is the Beloved:

> Let us take the ocean as God. If you separate one drop from the ocean, can you still feel that that one drop is God? You will say that a little drop is so helpless, how can it be God? But God can play the role of helplessness inside a drop of water. (*Professor-Children* 108)

Not only one drop, but every single drop is to be taken as God, the ocean. Then every action bears responsibility for all. And this demand is no joke. By cherishing every beloved drop the self is asked to bear witness in such abundance as to make all discrimination inessential and all boundary impractical. The self that possesses every drop *as* the ocean, will belong to every drop *in* the ocean, and to the ocean, itself.

In that abundance, Sri Chinmoy practices his devotional discipline. And so the recalling of the devotional method cannot but recall in *contretemps* the temporal-real, not to dismiss a drop of reality as representation or illusion but to grant temporary being another short-lived or conditional presence—and to treasure it. Rather than identify the mortal body as a site of mourning or figure of loss; Sri Chinmoy makes mortality (***maya***) a place, a most precious place, of tiny infinity. In the collection of poetry entitled, *My Flute*, Sri Chinmoy captures the life-story of the devotional self:

> In secrecy supreme I see You.
> You live in my eyes, in my sleep,
> In my dreams, in my sweet wakefulness.
> In the stupendous mirth of life,
> In the abysmal lap of death,
> You I behold.
> Your Love-Play is my world. (*My Flute* #74)

In life, in death, awake, asleep, there is only the beholding of the beloved binding the self. The beloved is beheld "in secrecy supreme", taking on the illusions that compose the "Love-Play" that *is* the lover's world. To see any other thing or imagining is to be mistaken for things and images are aspects of

the beloved *in its multiple forms*. Through the eyes of devotion the self-reflexive subject sees and calls the material world, in one form or another, by one name or another. Materiality manifests the secret Love-Play, Sri Chinmoy says, in order to entertain the lover's gaze in the embodiment of the beloved, to love and be loved, for all time.