

E. M. CIORAN: THE CONJURER OF BEAUTY. THE MURMUR OF THE BODY IN THE CONTRADICTION OF LANGUAGE

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Abstract || This essay deals with the aesthetic ideology, the style, the theory of knowledge, the conception of the subject and language of the Romanian writer E. M. Cioran. Leaving aside his widely publicised nihilism and scepticism, this essay focuses on the poetic nature of his aphorisms which is intended to create a place outside of the language contradicting the language itself. A place where concepts become something physical, like flesh-and-blood words where the poet poured everything he knows about the body intending to create a defamiliarization effect.

Keywords || poetic subject | linguistic utopia | sensory cognition.

0. Introducción*

Over one hundred years since the birth of E. M. Cioran, the Romanian writer continues to enjoy well-deserved international renown. His philosophical work is highly relevant today. His aphorisms continue to be the model for a way of thinking and a style characterised by paradox and fragmentarism. Nevertheless, few critics have paused to unravel the coherent aesthetic ideal of this dialectic man, while in contrast, a great many have delved into the depths of his work, finding there his nihilism, his angst and his scepticism¹. This may seem natural if we take into account that, with this Rumanian writer, the pit and the void come to the fore, while beauty remains in the background. Similarly, just as numerous as this latter group have been the analysts who have dealt with certain distinctive features of his style: his aphoristic writing and the endemic oxymoron². But, far fewer have undertaken a systematic approach to this. And it is precisely this that forms the focus of this essay, but not without first of all sketching out the most significant characteristics of his aesthetic ideology, of his theory of knowledge and of the lyrical subject, as well as some of the other fundamental ingredients of his style, barely hinted at until now.

These pages therefore emerge from the incursion of a question asked by the ever-impassioned reader of Cioran and, in this instance, the author of this modest essay. This preoccupation arises, furthermore, from shifting one's focus of attention from the content of his philosophy to the inner reasons which lead one to feel at once so unfortunately and so fortunately attracted by the heights of his despair and the bitterness of his syllogisms. The systematizing intention of this investigation is also born from having noted that there are some readers of Cioran for whom his writings are hurtful and oppressive, while for others such as myself they are uplifting and healing. In short, this essay originates from the need to explain why, on reading the work of this Romanian writer, where some see only pessimism and sickness, others also find beauty and hope; why, on listening to Cioran, where some hear only complaints and battle-cries, others hear the melodious cadence of a strange music, a blank music, whose sound appears to us so much like silence itself. Thus, this philosophical, literary and linguistic essay emerges just he had suggested: "La crítica es un contrasentido: no hay que leer para comprender a los demás, sino para comprenderse a sí mismo" (Cioran, 1998a: 39).

* On 7 October 2012, this essay was awarded the Premio de Ensayo E. M. Cioran (E. M. Cioran Essay Prize), organized by the Instituto Cultural Rumano de Madrid.

NOTES

1 | See, for example, titles such as Bollon (1997), Parfait (2001) or Sora (1988), among others.

2 | See, for example, Jarrety (1999).

1. An aesthetic ideal and a theory of knowledge: the body of writing and the writing of the body

In Cioran's writing, what one hears is, invariably, different from what one understands. To illustrate this, we need only look to this aphorism: "dust infatuated with ghosts – such is man: his absolute image, ideally lifelike, would be incarnated in a Don Quixote seen by Aeschylus" (Cioran, 1990: 84). Although from an intellectual perspective we could interpret these words as a tragic metaphor for the human condition, what interests us here is their poetic nature, that is to say, that powerful defamiliarization effect that makes the rational and the spiritual appear as something physical and causes the statement to take on a form different from its sound. This is precisely where the perplexity and the magic of Cioran's poetic prose lie:

Desearía que ángeles alegres contasen mi vida a la sombra de un sauce llorón. Y cada vez que no comprendieran algo, que las ramas inclinadas iluminasen su ignorancia con brisas de tristeza (1996: 125).

Los ángeles veranean en los calveros de los bosques. En ellos yo sembraría flores de las márgenes de los desiertos para echarme a reposar a la sombra del propio símbolo (1997: 45).

As in the first aphorism quoted, we could also extract a meaning from the two above, one that is, let's say, "ordinary or common", but what we want to highlight is how, in both, the writer not only takes a rhetorical step – metaphor, personification, etc. – but, moreover, a prosodic one. In both cases, the signifiers become audible, transforming them into a physical reality: movement and sound. Thus, his writing interweaves music with meaning. The musical character of this should not surprise us, particularly if we bear in mind that Cioran stands as one of the literary artists who has most insistently identified speculative ideas with "melodías muertas" (1996: 278), while at the same time relating his poetic prose to song:

Hubiera podido expresar todo lo que me atormenta si el oprobio de no ser músico me hubiera sido evitado (1998a: 91).

Existe un canto de la sangre, de la carne y de los nervios. [...] El estado lírico trasciende las formas y los sistemas: una fluidez, un flujo internos mezclan, en un mismo movimiento, como en una convergencia ideal, todos los elementos de la vida del espíritu para crear un ritmo intenso y perfecto. Comparado con el refinamiento de una cultura anquilosada que, prisionera de los límites y de las formas, disfraza todas las cosas, el lirismo es una expresión bárbara: su verdadero valor consiste, precisamente, en no ser más que sangre, sinceridad y llamas (1999: 16).

It is undoubtedly worth examining the significance and implications of this "poetic manifesto". Firstly, because through this, Cioran shows us wherein lies the absolute modernity of his style. And, secondly, because we see demonstrated here a concept which is often

overlooked by his critics. What, then, is the author saying about his poetic prose in this writing? The answer, quite simply, is that his is not a writing of thought, but “a writing of the body”: “a song of the blood, the flesh, and the nerves” (1992: 5). But before undertaking a detailed analysis of these lines, which encapsulate much more than might appear at first sight, we must first of all highlight the relevance of the body in his aesthetic ideology. Given the briefness of the present essay, to illustrate this we will refer to one of his *Ejercicios de admiración* (Cioran, 1995a), a work in which he reveals his fascination and wonder at the writers and artists who captivated him throughout his life. This “exercise in admiration” is dedicated to his friend, the Italian Guido Ceronetti, who, in addition to being a journalist, chronicler and translator, was the author of, among other works, a book significantly entitled *El silencio del cuerpo* (Ceronetti, 2006). The “exercise” to which we have referred is the letter in its entirety written by Cioran to the editor of the work, a missive that would later serve as the prologue for the book in its first French edition. In these pages, he talks of his interest in what he calls, paraphrasing his friend, “la tragedia de las funciones fisiológicas” (1995a: 181), to which he himself also refers in the book with the raw and suggestive expression: “El infierno del cuerpo” (1995a: 181). What emerges from the essay is the Cioranian preoccupation with its apparent silence, a muteness behind which is concealed an incombustible vertigo. Beneath the quiet and immobile pretence of the body, he, like his friend, discovers that everything there is turbulence and turmoil, that in the depths of the flesh nothing ever remains at rest. Like the Italian author, the Romanian demonstrates in this respect “un heroísmo de voyeur en materia de supuraciones, una curiosidad excitada por la suprema antipoesía de las menstruaciones” (1995a: 181). He himself appears as a man with his eyes turned completely inwards, like another “aficionado a las pestilencias y horrores, [...] a las excreciones del alma, [...] a su inagotable variedad de desórdenes” (1995a: 181). But if Cioran is interested in all of this, it is because he knows and feels that it is from these internal miasmas, from this unspeakable substrate of the body, like another organic material, his thoughts and words escape; it is precisely from here, from this “universo fétido de la voluptuosidad” (Cioran, 1995a: 181), that his consciousness and his writing, like another fluid, seep and pour out. It is for this reason also that in *On the Heights of Despair* (Cioran, 1992) he wrote:

Nunca comprenderé por qué el cuerpo ha podido ser considerado como una ilusión, [...]. Ello equivale, a todas luces, a no tener conciencia de la carne, de los nervios, de cada órgano, lo cual resulta incomprensible para mí [...]. Quienes permanecen apegados a la irracionalidad de la vida, dominados por su ritmo orgánico anterior a la aparición de la conciencia, no conocen ese estado en el que la realidad corporal se halla constantemente presente en ella (1999: 83).

But let's leave aside for the moment the carnal nature of his writing

and thought, which we will return to later, and turn our attention now to his aesthetic ideology.

When Cioran states that “The lyrical state is a state beyond forms and systems” (1992: 5), he does none other than align his argument with that of aesthetic modernity in which, in the domain of creation, “the need to distinguish oneself is indivisible from existence itself” (Paul Valéry, in Bernstein, 1998: 134). For him, this obsession with distinguishing oneself entails immersing oneself completely in language, to the point of reinventing it from the basis of a profound and tenacious critique of words. The Romanian writer possesses an acute awareness of the fact that his voice, like all modern poets, can only emerge beyond words of power, of the conventions of institutionalized languages. His “secret sapping” is precisely to silence them. The following aphorism provides an example of this: “palabra disecada ya no significa nada, ya no es nada. Como un cuerpo, que tras la autopsia es menos que un cadáver” (1998a: 41). Here, he not only declares his desire to instil new life into words, to envisage them, intrinsically, as bodies, but also aligns his work fully within the framework of contemporary literature. This Cioranian “sapping” requires not only the reinvention from the ground up of that universe that is language, but also the articulation of an opaque discourse which fights against the abstract meaning of concepts to impose the “presencia casi física de las palabras” (Todorov, 1974: 234–235). As he himself says, this mission cannot be achieved by sporadically adding rhetorical embellishments and literary forms; the artist dismisses these linguistic ornaments, describing them as “artificios y acrobacias inauditas” (1995a: 78). To accomplish it, the Romanian writer sets out with his texts to generate a sensation of ecstasy, of defamiliarization, a perception that is both intense and dazed at the same time. Thus, his struggle with language towards the goal of restoring substance to words becomes, in the first instance, a complete rejection of literary language “gone astray”: “El preciosismo es la escritura de la escritura: un estilo que se desdobra y se convierte en el objeto de su propia búsqueda. [...] No es posible imaginar una lengua más depurada que la suya, más maravillosamente exangüe” (1995a: 85). The fundamental offence the writer accuses this “preciosity” of is precisely its inability to contain any substrate or shadow of reality. In his view, this “writing about writing” turns language into an element that moves around in a vacuum, with recourse to nothing but itself, “en lugar de aferrarse al mundo para tomar de él su sustancia o sus pretextos” (1995a: 86). There is yet another reason why he impugns this “off-course language”:

El reproche que podría hacerse al preciosismo es que vuelve al escritor demasiado consciente, demasiado seguro de su superioridad sobre su instrumento: a fuerza de jugar con él y de manejarlo con virtuosismo,

priva al lenguaje de todo misterio [...]. El lenguaje debe resistir; si cede, si se pliega totalmente a los caprichos de un prestidigitador, se convierte en una serie de hallazgos y piruetas en los que triunfa constantemente sobre sí mismo (1995: 85).

Thus, confronted with this “rigour of form”, Cioran claims to aspire to a “rigor de la materia” (1995a: 85), through which language breaks out of its artifice to return to the flesh, from which it as well as thought are born. Such a process involves, in short, a revolt against “el frío e implacable desmantelamiento del delirio, contra esa denuncia del más elemental reflejo poético, de la razón de ser de la poesía” (1995a: 77). Poetry’s “reason for being” has nothing to do with the need to understand oneself or to be understood, thereby ruling over language and over oneself, but, in complete contrast, with the necessity to be, as he was, ineluctably elusive and unknowable to others and to oneself. For the Romanian thinker, the “I” which dominates language, and which turns it into an empty vehicle, can only be the I “de un individuo abstracto, alejado de las complacencias y torturas de la introspección” (1995a: 89); “un ‘yo’ de una lucidez desprovista de toda complicidad con la materia; un ‘yo’ estéril que rechaza los accidentes y las vicisitudes del único posible sujeto contingente: un ‘yo’ en las antípodas del ‘Yo’.” (1995a: 89). In contrast, it is this “I”, completely dislocated and utterly modern, which Cioran recognizes in himself through his aphorisms and through the disconcerting and strange dialogues between the characters of his friend Beckett:

Yo soy diferente de todas mis sensaciones. No logro comprender cómo. No logro ni siquiera comprender «quién» las experimenta. Y por cierto, ¿quién es ese «yo» del comienzo de mi proposición? (1998a: 16).

¿Qué sería yo si pudiera ser algo, qué diría yo si tuviese una voz que hablase así, pretendiendo ser yo? (Beckett, 1995: 100).

Thus, his intention to reinstate his body into language, as well as his resistance to giving himself over to it completely, runs through his aesthetic ideology in parallel with the impossibility of articulating a stable, unitary and complete subject. The problem of his identity is of such intensity that it could be stated that his is not a “consciousness of perplexity” but that “perplexity is his consciousness”. Hence, Cioran is not merely one who makes a theme of his conflicts, nor is it the case that underlying the numerous selves he contains there exists a stable and fixed self which exorcizes all his inner turmoil on being written down. Quite the opposite, the artist also declares silence in this regard. He acknowledges the impossibility of granting “his” subjectivity a place which is not that of disintegration and loss. Consequently, his own writing manifests itself as the space where his disarticulation becomes a reality, as the domain in which these processes of identity are found growing within him and not from where he grows. His fragmentary writing contemplates the existence of a vacant self and, as an “endeavour of self-knowledge”,

is inescapably destined never to reach its objective. In the same way, his contradictory language necessarily possesses the stamp of its disjointed subject, and of thought inextricably linked to his body. Little wonder then that he himself wrote:

El papel del pensador es [...] pasar los mismos temas por todos los miembros, haciendo que los pensamientos se mezclen con el cuerpo [...]. ¿No resulta revelador de lo indefinible de la vida, de sus insuficiencias que sólo los añicos de un espejo destrozado puedan darnos su imagen característica? (1996: 39).

Donde aparece la paradoja, muere el sistema y triunfa la vida. La paradoja no es una «solución», ya que no resuelve nada. Puede emplearse solamente como un adorno de lo irreparable [...]. En la paradoja la razón se anula por sí misma; ha abierto sus fronteras y ya no puede detener la invasión de los errores palpitantes, de los errores que laten. (1996: 19).

If something reverberates in his aphorisms, as it is proposed in this essay, it is none other than the corroded ventral hollow of his body and his “ego”.

1.1. The body of writing and the knowledge of the body

In Cioran’s writing there is a kind of “estereofonía de la carne profunda”, or “hipofísica de la palabra” (Barthes, 2004: 47); in other words, a proliferation of sounds originating from different parts, which bring with them a musical amplification of the body that sustains them, and which draw resonances that render the tongue silent. In addition, on reading Cioran one has the sensation of finding oneself confronted with a language “tapizado de piel” (Barthes, 2004: 47), and enveloped in the delirious and beatific agitations of his entrails; one feels as though one is confronted with a text within which can be heard “el granulado de su garganta, la oxidación de las consonantes, la voluptuosidad de las vocales” (Barthes, 2004: 47). It is very likely that his status as “adoptive son” of the French language also lies at the heart of the fact that, on reading his books, one invariably senses the presence of an underlying body: a mouth savouring the viscous or ethereal substance of the nouns; teeth gnawing at the delicate and corrosive subtleties of the adjectives; a tongue tasting the liquid oscillation of the verbs or sliding, impotent and eager, over their dense rigidity. Reading Cioran, it may seem as though, before committing words to the blank page, the writer has revelled and suffered as a result of their syllabic density, and that he has tried to extract them from the very marrow, even though this has proved impossible, as he has already told us. Perhaps this is why his writing is always read aloud inwardly. This reading aloud is not phonological but phonetic; “su objetivo no es la claridad de los mensajes, el teatro de las emociones, lo que busca (en una perspectiva de goce) son los incidentes pulsionales [...]: la articulación del cuerpo, de la lengua, no la del sentido, la del lenguaje” (Barthes, 2004: 47). It is a reading

intended to feel the sound of words up close, a reading that makes one “escuchar en su materialidad, en su sensualidad, la respiración, la aspereza, la pulpa de los labios, toda una presencia del rostro humano” (Barthes, 2004: 47). Thus, it manages to “desplazar el significado muy lejos y meter, por así decirlo, el cuerpo anónimo” (Barthes, 2004: 47) of the author into our ears. Perhaps it is for this reason that we hear the reverberations in his aphorisms of the “voice in [the] belly”³. It is probably the reason why his words appear “clothed in flesh and bone”⁴ and seem to possess a feeling which is at once rough and smooth. At the heart of all this beats the Cioranian theory of the *cognitio sensitiva* (sensory cognition): a sensorial conception of knowledge related to perception not only directed outwards, but also towards and from within. In short, a “knowledge of the body”. Within this, that which is real overtly rejects the idea of a purely intellectual comprehension. Emotions, intuitions, perceptions, feelings, the fundamental essence of human beings are, for Cioran, also forms of knowledge⁵. All of these combine such that thought becomes a close alliance of different levels, mutually interleaving and encompassing one another and from which, always from the basis of the universe of the body, the world is understood. But what we must now turn our attention to is the question of how he is able to express in the abstraction of his writing this theory of knowledge and thereby transmit to us “las ondas de un narcótico calmo, cuyos círculos vibratorios, yendo y viniendo, forman un límite infinito que no perturba la quietud del centro” (Mallarmé, 1970).

1.2. The sensorial and mimetic abstraction of the writing of the body: contradiction and utopia of language

It is his own organic sufferings which awaken in the Romanian thinker both the rupturing of consciousness and the disintegration of identity, such that his words and thoughts appear like the very excretions of the body: “La lucidez es una pausa de la sangre” (1996: 156). The Cioranian desire to return the materiality to both involves a struggle with language and an attempt to understand his heart and his core by engaging in a ruthless battle with it: “Enfrentado con el papel en blanco, ¡qué Waterloo en perspectiva!” (1998a: 175). This battle is won by tearing down the codifying tendencies that render it empty, lacking any connection with knowledge of the body:

Las palabras se han convertido en algo tan exterior a mí, que entrar en contacto con ellas me resulta una proeza. No tenemos ya nada que decirnos y si las utilizo aún es para denunciarlas, deplorando en secreto, al mismo tiempo, una ruptura siempre inminente. (1998a: 158).

His poetic prose is thus “the language of the transgressions of language”, a “utopia of language”,

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3 | “It means placing your voice in your belly, your thought in your belly, and speaking of the sublime with your voice in your belly” (Jacob, 1976). In Cioran’s writing, Jacob’s expression “your voice in your belly” finds its equivalent in “la voz de la sangre”. See Cioran (1996: 73).

4 | “And grammar, even arid grammar, is then endowed with the evocative power of sorcery; words are reborn, clothed in flesh and blood; the noun, in substantive majesty, the adjective, transparent garment which clothes and colors it like a glaze, and the verb, angel of motion, which imparts momentum to the phrase” (Baudelaire, 1996: 63–64). This reference and the previous one are in no way accidental; both poets were among the first to theorize about poetry in prose and poetic prose. The similarities between their ideas and those of Cioran are clear in this respect.

5 | Owing to the necessary brevity of this essay, there is not enough space to investigate the influence on Cioran’s conception of the *cognitio sensitiva* exercised by the thinking of certain contemporary philosophers who developed it in greater detail, for example, Merleau-Ponty and Bergson, the latter being the person to whom the Romanian writer dedicated his doctoral thesis.

una imaginación ávida de la felicidad de las palabras que se apresura hacia un lenguaje soñado cuyo frescor, en una especie de anticipación ideal, configuraría la perfección de un nuevo mundo adámico, donde el lenguaje ya no estaría alienado. (Barthes, 1989: 22).

The Romanian writer therefore opens up a revolutionary process within language intended to deprive it of its status as a reserved and decorative instrument. Nevertheless, writing itself throws back his transgressive and invented language as an alienated language. His linguistic “secret sapping” thrusts “the very image of what it wants to possess” (Barthes, 1967: 93) into that which he wants to destroy. But before revealing the different strategies used by Cioran to “contradict language”, it is first of all necessary to clarify what we mean by this expression. We are not referring to a “contradiction within language”, so ever-present in his writings on antithesis, paradox and oxymoron, but of a much more significant process which points to the very linguistic fundamentals of language. With this proviso, the first thing that one notices in his writing is the intense efforts he goes to in terms of abstraction. Thanks to this effort, abstract concepts, which were previously universal and generic, become rooted in space and time. While they may not become concrete and particular as a result, they at least are able to portray an existential space. But how does Cioran achieve this?

If we consider his writing in detail, we see that when he deals with certain abstract concepts in order to define them, almost always employing metaphors, similes, nominalizations or nominal predicates, he does none other than turn them into images and sensations of great intensity. Two aphorisms will help illustrate this for us: “Concebir el acto de pensar como un baño de veneno” (1998a: 114); “Haber levantado toda la noche Himalayas – y llamar a eso sueño” (1998a: 121). As we can see, Cioran manages to invert the nature of the abstract word – in this case, “thought” and “dream” – with respect to its rules of use in everyday speech. This process runs in harmony with his conception of a kind of rational thought that embeds its roots in the sensoriality and physicality of the body. Thus, his abstract concepts cease to be “thought” and are instead comprehended sensorially and carnally; they become intelligible through physical images situated in the space between the mental and the sensory: “Everywhere around ecstasy, I see only ruins” (1995b: 40); “Religion is a smile masking cosmic nonsense, one last waft of perfume drifting over nothingness” (1995b: 73). This interpenetration of the carnal and the spiritual is, for him, not exclusive to the human sphere but is part of the intrinsic nature of the whole of reality: “La niebla es la neuroastenia del aire” (1996: 201); “El alma de una catedral gime en el agotamiento vertical de la piedra” (1996: 175); “La enfermedad: estadio lírico de la materia. O tal vez más: materia lírica” (1996: 144). However, his concepts reveal yet another distinctive feature: their

condition of being “in transit”, halfway between the concrete and the abstract. This characteristic lies in their very fluidity and movement. Hence, in many of his aphorisms, the reader observes something passing through space. In so doing, it also establishes itself in time. This displacement is, according to the particular case, either vertical – rising or falling, as we saw in some of the aphorisms above – or horizontal: “En el límite de la noche. Nadie ya, sólo la irrupción de los minutos. Cada uno de ellos fingiendo acompañarnos y esfumándose luego – deserción tras deserción” (1998a: 177). Even when everything is at rest, there is in Cioran a movement that adopts the form of something which floats and remains suspended: “Las mujeres desengañadas que se retraen del mundo adoptan la inmovilidad de una luz solidificada” (1996: 188); “soy un desecho coronado flotando en los mares musicales de Dios, o un ángel aleteando en su corazón” (1996: 170). Therefore, the poetic abstractions he exploits – inserted as anaphora within clauses, syntactically attributive and with sententious tonality, threaded and thickened with metaphors, lexical defamiliarization, synaesthesia, etc. – result in places and scenes that give life to a concrete and particular existential setting: “In the depths of our consciousness, paradise moans” (1995b: 117). But, does this place really exist? The answer to this question draws our attention to another distinctive feature of Cioran’s prose. This characteristic lies in the writer’s mimetic use of poetic abstractions. Hence, at the root of these there is no reason why any external scene should resonate, even if on occasions this happens. In the majority of cases it is the spectacles from within that are imprinted in them. His aesthetic ideology of mimesis therefore “no implica imitar algo previamente conocido, sino llevar algo a su representación, de suerte que esté presente ahí, en su plenitud sensible” (Gadamer, 1991: 43). In these aphorisms: “The absolute is a presence soluble in blood” (1995b: 66); “Quisiera que me acariciaran unas manos por las que pudiera fluir el Tiempo” (1996: 175): the abstract concepts “absolute” and “Time” lose their conceptual semantic characteristics and become irreducibly limited to being “bodies”, no more than evidence of real contact. Moreover, in the case of the aphorism cited at the beginning of this essay, “dust infatuated with ghosts”, there is also space, a passing of time through such terms and a flow which evokes an act of becoming incarnate. In short, this Cioranian intention to appeal to a sensorial and mimetic abstraction, neutralizing any traces it may contain of transcendental or mental meaning, is perfectly suited to an aesthetic ideology which postulates the carnal and sensory nature of the *cognitio*, and for which he fights the material-spiritual dialectic: “Nada se explica, nada se prueba, todo se ve...” (1996: 191); “Mi misión es ver las cosas tal como son. Todo lo contrario de una misión...” (1998a: 85). These aphorisms relapse into his conception of knowledge as defamiliarization, as discomposed perception, as “sabor morado de la desdicha” (1996: 170). In these, the aesthetic of splendour and of ugliness interpenetrate; beauty and death exist

side by side, forever engaged in an unresolved conflict, but from which blossoms a blank and silent music, purifying everything; on reading them, a threshold is revealed leading into utopia, to a past beginning where words were not separate from the body, to a “non-world outside of time” which only exists in his melancholy. In this existential place, the identity of the writer is erased and its absence seems like an indifferent victory over the present and death. This existential place, safe from the turbulence of the self and of time, does not come from outside, but from within, and can only belong to us too while we read. Anyone who even aspires to pass over it, to feel its trembling contact, must know that faced with his poetic prose, one will have to seize it and stick to it.

2. Conclusion

As we have seen, the way in which Cioran builds up poetic abstractions in his writing confers a density and physical solidity to his words, while at the same time impregnating them with a music which seems like silence itself. The realities referred to by these poetic abstractions only exist in the voice that creates them, in that voice of a silent corporeality which causes soul and matter to nestle, faded and indistinct, within the contradiction of his language. The human being, this “dust infatuated with ghosts”, emerges from his writing as a space of dispossession and loss, like a mere particle suspended in the vastness of the beginning, drifting aimlessly. And the same is true of his aphorisms: his poetic abstractions exist outside of meaning; they are stated like isolated manifestations of a whole that is never embraced, like the white foam of a retreating infinity. Within them nothing ever reaches synthesis; everything remains suspended, floating like a residue whose purpose is in no way that of recovering from life, nor of healing its wounds, since as Cioran himself wrote: “Leer es dejar a otros padecer por nosotros. La forma más delicada de explotación” (1998a: 143). Hence, as in life, there are no concessions in his writing, with the exception of the only answer he left to us: “Llorar de admiración – única excusa de este universo, puesto que necesita una” (1998a: 108). It is this answer, clearly linked to the shadows and phosphorescence of reality and non-existence, that spiritual matter emanates and disperses; an answer clearly intended to “limitar la hegemonía de la clarividencia”; an answer that dares to maintain that “todo lo que parece existir existe a su manera” (1998a: 165); an answer which only “los espíritus secretos revelan siempre a su pesar en el fondo su naturaleza” (1995: 97); an answer so impregnated with poetry that it makes of Cioran a conjurer of beauty. If this answer causes one to feel lightheaded it is because the Romanian writer never intended to write an agreeable text, which “colma y da euforia”, but one of ecstasy: “el que pone en estado de pérdida y desacomoda; el que hace vacilar los fundamentos

históricos, culturales, psicológicos del lector, la congruencia [...] de sus valores y de sus recuerdos” (Barthes, 2004: 25). The ecstasy of Cioran’s text originates from the moment in which our body unites with that of the thinker, since it is not communicated “from intellect to intellect”, but “from body to body”. His words, his poetic abstractions, as stated by his friend María Zambrano, are not intended “al sacrificio de la comunicación”; his words are “palabras de comunión” (Zambrano, 1977: 28). Anyone who reads them understands them with the body, with the heart, “porque es lo único que de nuestro ser da sonido. Y sólo por él los privilegiados organismos que lo tienen se oyen a sí mismos” (Zambrano, 1977: 21).

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