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Nancy and Neruda: Poetry Thinking Love

Joshua M. Hall

Abstract

My intention in this paper is to respond to Jean-Luc Nancy's claim that poetry, along with philosophy, is essentially incapable of what Nancy describes as "thinking love." To do so, I will first try to come to an understanding of Nancy's thinking regarding love and then of poetry as presented in his essay "Shattered Love." Having thus prepared the way, I will then respond, via Pablo Neruda's poem "*Oda al Limón*," to Nancy's understanding of poetry *vis-à-vis* "Shattered Love." This response, in acting out Nancy's thinking regarding love, will suggest a greater plurality within poetry than Nancy acknowledged.

Key Words

love, Nancy, Neruda, poetry

My intention in this paper is to respond to Jean-Luc Nancy's claim that poetry, along with philosophy, is essentially incapable of what he calls "thinking love." To do so, I will first try to understand Nancy's thinking regarding love in his essay "Shattered Love."^[1] Second, I will examine Nancy's treatment of poetry in "Shattered Love" and in two essays devoted specifically to poetry. Having thus set the stage, I will then introduce Pablo Neruda's poem "*Oda al Limón*" as a response to Nancy's understanding of poetry *vis-à-vis* "Shattered Love." This response, in tracing and performing Nancy's thought regarding love, will suggest a greater plurality within poetry than Nancy acknowledged.

1. Love bursts

Nancy's alternative to the traditional discourses on love in the West can best be understood by retracing the historical, quasi-deconstructive thought through which it emerges. Nancy begins "Shattered Love" by noting "an extreme reticence" in Western philosophy at the thought of producing a discourse on love. This reticence perhaps arises, Nancy speculates, because one wonders, "has not everything been said on the subject of love?"^[2] It certainly does *not* arise, however, because "it would be indiscreet to deflower love." On the contrary, "Love deflowers and is itself deflowered by its very essence, and its unrestrained and brazen exploitation in all the genres of speech or of art is perhaps an integral part of this essence—a part at once secret and boisterous, miserable and sumptuous."^[3]

Nevertheless there may be more to this "extreme reticence," Nancy continues. Perhaps one hesitates to speak about love because to do so appropriately means to preserve its multiplicity and its infinite singularity in each occurrence of any sort of love, even in contradiction to those occurrences. "To think love would thus demand a boundless generosity...the generosity not to choose between loves, not to privilege, not to hierarchize, not to exclude." Why is this generosity

appropriate, according to Nancy? Because "Love in its singularity, when grasped absolutely, is itself perhaps nothing but the indefinite abundance of all possible loves, and an abandonment to their dissemination, indeed to the disorder of these explosions." Therefore, the first imperative for thinking love is, "The thinking of love should learn to yield to this abandon: to receive the prodigality, the collisions, and the contradictions of love, without submitting them to an order that they essentially defy."^[4] In other words, one should not try to unify love in the thinking of love.

Nancy further remarks that "[T]his generous reticence would be no different from the exercise of thought itself...Thinking does not produce the operations of a knowledge; it undergoes an experience, and lets the experience inscribe itself. Thought therefore essentially takes place in the reticence that lets the singular moments of this experience offer and arrange themselves. The thinking of love...invites us to thinking as such." For, he continues, "thinking, most properly speaking, is love."^[5]

Nancy then launches into a discussion of love conceptualized as a dialectical movement, as the essence of the dialectic itself, and as the absent "heart" of philosophy. The reason for this absence, he claimed, is that in thinking's attempts to grasp and control love, love always escapes.

What takes the place of the heart of love, Nancy claims, is the transcendental subject [Subject]. But while the subject lives "under the regime of contradiction," the heart "lives—that is to say, it beats—under the regime of exposition."^[6] Nancy noted earlier in this essay that "it is necessary that being have a heart, or still more rigorously, that being *be* a heart...one might say that being *beats*, that it essentially is in the beating, indeed, in the e-motion of its own heart: being-nothingness-becoming, as an infinite pulsation" (88, emphasis original). Transcendental subjectivity [Subjectivity] grasps this "being-nothingness-becoming" structure and misses the living tissue of the heart. It finds the "infinite" and loses the "pulsation" of the finite organ. But the exposition of this "regime of exposition" is "...the condition of that whose essence or destination consists in being presented:..."^[7]

At this moment in the essay, Nancy seemed close to an understanding of truth as disclosure. But note the rest of the sentence: "the condition of that whose essence or destination consists in being presented: given over, offered to the outside, to others, and even to the self." Here, the vibrations of a Derridean deconstruction can be heard. "Given over," "offered," "outside," and "others" all suggest an otherness to presence. What is given over is not immediately present to the self; the offering *qua* offering is never present (recalling Levinas' saying/said distinction). The outside is the counterpart to the inside of representation, and the other is that which is not mine—not mine even as an object to be reappropriated by the dialectic of transcendental subjectivity. These qualifications on the weight of the word 'presentation' will be significant in what follows.

"The heart," Nancy continues, "exposes the subject. It does not deny it, it does not surpass it, it is not sublated or sublimated in it; the heart exposes the subject to everything

that is not its dialectic and its mastery as a subject.”^[8] The order of description fitting for the heart and, therefore, for love is not one that could ever be made part of representation or Subjectivity. It is a *quasi-deconstructive* showing, a showing like that of an ordinary match, flaring in fullest brilliance only as it burns and falls apart.

In seeking a new approach for a discourse on love, Nancy calls for a repetition or a revisiting of an old development of thought in order to move through it in a new way. This new and different repetition will demand that “[W]e will have to stop thinking in terms of possibility and impossibility” (i.e., Kant). “We will have to maintain that love is always present and never recognized in anything that we name ‘love.’”^[9] “Another love presence or another love movement: that is what this repetition should let emerge.” This other presence or movement will involve the exposure to thought of all the extremities that love offers and inflicts, “thought exposed to missing love as well as to being touched by it, exposed to being betrayed, as well as taking into taking account of its miserable means of loving.”^[10]

Nancy then considers what he thinks is the paradigm case of non-love: self-love. He elucidates how the non-love aspect of self-love is found in its reappropriation of the self as object or property, another dialectical move that misses the incorrigible pulsing of love. In contrast to this picture, love brings an end to the opposition between gift and property without surmounting and without subsuming it: if I return to myself within love, I do not return to myself *from* love (the dialectic, on the contrary, feeds on the equivocation). *I* do not return from it, and consequently, something of *I* is definitely lost or dissociated in its act of loving....I come back to myself, or I come out of it, broken.^[11]

This is perhaps the most critical passage in the entire essay. It is, at the least, the turning point, the infinite fissure, and the breaking open and out of subjectivity and, thereby, of subjectivity’s dominance in the thought of love,. “[H]e, this subject, was touched, broken into, in his subjectivity, and he *is* from then on, for the time of love, opened by this slice, broken or fractured, even if only slightly.” Love fissures the subject, and thus the subject and, thereby, love demonstrates its irrepressibility from totalitarian thought. “As soon as there is love, the slightest act of love, the slightest spark, there is this ontological fissure that cuts across and that disconnects the elements of the subject-proper—the fibers of its heart.”^[12]

One should note, especially, the two sides of the dash in this quotation. On the left side, the temporally antecedent, is subjectivity, couched in its preferred terminology of clean abstraction and the “subject-proper.” On the right side, the temporally subsequent, is brute, corporeal, and finite reality, in all of its fluidity and in the spasm of its tendons. “The fibers of the heart” are the mortal tissue of a finite heart and of finite being itself.

Love, then, is this ontological fissure, the exposure to this break, and the always-already coming-from-the-outside-as-outside. “Love is the act of transcendence (of a transport, of a transgression, of a transparency.” Again, this time through parentheses, the transcendental is exposed in its finite reality.

Love transcends, but not mystically or in some eternal realm; it transcends as that which comes across to me and touches me in my finitude. Love is "this outside itself, the other, each time singular, a blade thrust in me, and that I do not rejoin, because it disjoins me."^[13] This coming of love "is only a departure for the other, its departure only the coming of the other. What is offered by transcendence, or as transcendence, is this arrival and this departure, this incessant coming-and-going."^[14] The transcendence, "better named the crossing of love," is simply exposure to otherness, to the other, and to love as other—a Levinasian alterity as opposed to Hegelian absolute knowledge. The contact with the otherness of love, or "the break," "is nothing more than a touch, but the touch is not less than a wound." It is thus that "Love unveils finitude... it is finitude's dazzling presentation."^[15]

Still, according to Nancy, one must vigorously resist the thought of love as any sort of absolute conceptual unity or transcendent essence. "From one burst to another, love does not resemble itself. It always makes itself recognized, but it is always unrecognizable, and moreover it is not in any one of its shatters, or it is always on the way to not being there." These statements are contradictory and mutually exclusive. And so is love. But neither these statements nor love are merely non-coherent or non-sense; they actively resist the movement of absolute coherence and the collapsing of differences into identity. Love, for Nancy, in its essence (and of course it has no essence except an inessential one) fights interminably and infinitely for its power of contradiction and plurality in excess of rational ordering. This does not mean that love is "polymorphous," and it does not take on a series of disguises."^[16] That is, love is not one signifier with multiple signifiers (polymorphous), nor is it an entity with a real, singular identity underneath other false, singular identities (a series of disguises). It does not withhold its identity behind its shatters (sparkles, outbursts):^[17] "[I]t is itself the eruption of their multiplicity, it is itself their multiplication in one single act of love, it is the trembling of emotion in a brothel, and the distress of a desire within a fraternity." Yet in each case, love is "the finite touch of the infinite crossing of the other."^[18]

Further, in this touch, and in this always, each-time-finite there, "Being is at stake there, it is in shatters, offering dazzling, multiplied, shrill and singular, hard and cut across: its being is there."^[19] The words frequently used to describe love in the essay are here used for being. This is because, just like thinking, being is love. This is not a matter of a simple mathematical identity. Rather, love is one of the ways of exposing how the world happens for us. So is thinking, on Nancy's use of the term, and so is being.

Near the end of "Shattered Love" Nancy develops a thinking of "joy" [*jouissance*] and "joying" as intimately connected with love. "To joy," he writes, "is the crossing of the other....Joy is the trembling of a deliverance beyond all freedom: it is to be cut across, undone, it is to be joyed as much as to joy....To joy is not to be satisfied—it is to be filled overflowed....The joy of joying does not come back to anyone, neither to me nor to you, for in each it opens the other."^[20] Here, what Nancy sought was a sort of infinitely-poised-at-the-limit-of-orgasm plateau and conclusion for his thinking regarding love. "[Joy]

is the verb of love," he wrote, and we can understand this thought of joy as setting into action the account of love he offered. It is a re-exposure to a re-infusion of life and motion into the discourse. It is the rising beating of the heart. It is a reception of the generosity of being described as love. "To joy, joy itself, is to receive the burst of a singular being: *its more than manifest presence, its seeming beyond all appearance.*"[21]

To conclude my brief explication of Nancy's thinking regarding love, I note the following quotation: "This constitution [the singularity of being revealed through the singular being, each time] is buried at the heart of being, but it emerges in outbursts of joy. One could say: being joys." And what is the relation of love to this constitution? I have already noted that for Nancy "joy" is "the verb of love." Thus, one could also say, "Being loves," that is, each singular being each time carries out the act of love, which is nothing other than this act of being itself, and the act of carrying out. For Nancy, "'Love' does not define it [this constitution], but names it, and obliges us to think it."[22]

2. Shattered poetry

Nancy first implicated poetry specifically near the end of the first major division in "Shattered Love" in the general claims he made about the thinking of love in the West as exemplified by philosophy.[23] "In philosophy (*and in mysticism, in poetics, etc.*) thinking would thus have said all that it could and all that it should have said about love—by missing it and by missing itself." [24] Here, Nancy admits, as seems obvious, that love has been spoken of in the West almost constantly. He also remarks that poetry has perhaps even said, "all that it *should* have said about love." [25] As I observed earlier, Nancy was not concerned here with thinking or talking about love, in which love is a subject-matter. Rather, his interest lay in reconceiving the very happening of thinking as such on the model of a revolutionized understanding of love. "This does not at all mean...that thinking about love has never occurred. On the contrary. But this does mean that love itself, in that it is missed by thinking, and by the love of thinking, gives itself again to thinking." [26]

As I discussed above, the primary target of this criticism of the West's thinking about love is subjectivity, the paradigm methodology of which is dialectic. And when Nancy wrote early in the essay of the dominant understanding of love as dialectic, poetry entered the scene again, although the claim there was somewhat more qualified. "The heart does not sublimate contradictions, since in a general sense, it does not live under the regime of contradiction—contrary to what poetry (or perhaps only its philosophical reading?) might allow us to believe." [27]

From these remarks alone, one might have the impression that poetry in itself, whatever that might mean for Nancy, might or might not have missed the type of thinking of love that he later advocates, and that only philosophically-skewed interpretations of poetry cause it to be subservient to philosophy's (the dialectic's) interpretation of love. Later on in the essay, however, poetry is once again implicated, not only in its interpretation by philosophy, but in its inmost being:

In one sense...love is the impossible, and it does not arrive, or it arrives only at the limit, while crossing. It is also for this reason that it is missed by philosophy *and no less by poetry*. They do not miss love simply because they say it and because they say that it is fulfilled, whether by a divine force or in the splendor of words.[28]

Nancy proceeds to specify why exactly philosophy and poetry "miss love" "It is true," he writes, "that in saying 'I love you,' I suspend all resources to gods as much as I put myself back in their power, and that I unseat the power of words as much as I affirm that power at its peak. *But philosophy and poetry still feed themselves on these contradictions.*"[29]

I will now supplement Nancy's treatment of poetry in "Shattered Love" by considering two other essays by Nancy where poetry was a central issue.[30] In the first of these two essays, "To Possess Truth in One Soul and One Body," Nancy carefully considers poetry and its relation to philosophy by examining Rimbaud's poem "Adieu," from *A Season in Hell*. More specifically, Nancy focuses on the final lines of the prose poem, "[E]t il me sera loisible de posséder la vérité dans une âme et un corps." ("It will be permissible for me to possess the truth in one soul and one body.")[31] Nancy interprets this pronouncement of Rimbaud's personal abandonment of poetry, in which he gave up writing poetry forever at age twenty, as a closing of poetry itself, similar to Derrida's pronouncement of the closing of Western metaphysics. While Nancy hints at the possibility of some sort of successor to poetry, comparable to the emergence of Heidegger's "Thinking" after metaphysics, the text gave no confidence that this successor would ever come—"beyond us, something else may still open up. But for the moment..."[32]

Perhaps even more striking than his pronouncement of the closure of poetry were his remarks in the second essay (entitled "We Need...") on the nature of poetry and the constraint that would be put on any succeeding phenomenon: "Poetry is unimaginable, for it alone does not use words as images.... *Poetry is defined by its refusal or abandonment of images*" (308, emphasis added). This would seem an incredible claim to many people involved in the world of poetry even if it were only an evaluative claim, that is, poetry should not use words as images, but Nancy's statement went further. According to his claim, the absence or refusal of images is definitive for anything deserving the name poetry. "When a literary piece extends credit to images, uses words as images, one can be certain, no matter how superb the work, that it is not poetry."[33]

These remarks are, to say the least, idiosyncratic, and perhaps leave us at a loss. It is important, however, to keep in mind his point that it is "*as philosophy* that poetry is abandoned, and it is abandoned *as poetry* as well." [34] Poetry, whatever it was, is for Nancy no more. And it has left us with no apparent heir. For my part, however, I write on behalf of those for whom poetry continues, including in the poetry of Neruda.[35]

3. *Amor Exasperado*

Having set the background, I now wish to consider several moments from Neruda's poem "*Oda la Limón*" as a response and challenge to Nancy's view on poetry in general and on poetry's capacity to engage in what he called thinking love.

"From those orange blossoms untied through moonlight," the poem begins. It begins with a preposition, with a "from" [*de*]. The word '*de*' in Spanish has a variety of specific meanings depending upon context, including "of; from; for; by; on; to; and with." Yet whatever its specific denotation, as a preposition it is both a representation and an enacting of movement and relation.^[36] When it comes to *de*, in other words, something with which one has yet to be acquainted is coming. On that note, one is reminded of Nancy's thought that "[love] is the principle or the movement of proximity and of the neighbor....[it] is an offering, which is to say that love is always proposed, addressed, suspended in its arrival, and not presented, imposed, already having reached its end."^[37]

The poem continues its beginning in the registers of both singularity and multiplicity, two terms also found frequently in "Shattered Love." The singularity and multiplicity in the poem concern flowers, specifically orange blossoms. They are not at rest but rather "untied" or "loosened" [*desatados*] through moonlight. The light of the moon is typically regarded as a tender light, a light that at its brightest reveals but does not penetrate or scorch (as does sunlight). One may detect here an echo of Nancy's idea that love touches us but does not penetrate; it is a matter of the contact between others, bodies, and their impenetrable surfaces. "[N]ever does the other 'penetrate' the singular being."^[38]

The poem continues, "[F]rom that scent of exasperating love." Another "from;" another coming; another promise of what will be present. Here love makes its nominal debut in the poem, a love that exasperates and/or is itself exasperated, because the Spanish *exasperado* can function as either a participle or as an adjective, depending upon the context, which is ambiguous in this location in the poem. This exasperated-exasperating love exasperates perhaps because of its ubiquity, its dynamism, and/or its endless coming.

Nancy offered us an additional implication of this exasperating abundance: "[I]f we are exhausted or exasperated by the proliferating and contradictory multiplicity of representations and thoughts of love...this same multiplicity still offers, however, another thought: love arrives in all the forms and in all the figures of love; it is projected in all its shatters [bursts, dazzles, explosions, etc]."^[39] On this note, consider Neruda's Sonnet LXXI:

De pena en pena cruza sus islas el amor
y establece raíces que luego riega el llanto,
y nadie puede, nadie puede evadir los pasos
del corazón que corre callado y carnicero.

Love crosses its islands from grief to grief,
it sets its roots, watered with tears,
and no one—no one—can evade the heart's
progress
as it runs, silent and carnivorous.^[40]

As literary critic Luis Monguió has remarked, all of Neruda's songs are "love songs: love of atoms, barbed wire, lemons, moons, cats, pianos, printing presses, man, life, and poetry."^[41] Surely, one would think, a poet capable of loving such wildly diverse things as these must be committed to a "plural" understanding of love. In this stanza from *Soneto LXXI* alone, love is a crossing from island to island, is that which sets down roots and lays foundations, and is also that which, *qua* the heart, runs quietly and hungrily.

Nevertheless, in the line of "*Oda al Limón*" under consideration ("from that scent of exasperating love"), love is not the direct or indirect object of the sentence. Instead, the object is the scent [*olor*] of love, from which the still unnamed something is coming. Moreover, as a scented something, this something connotes the earth, since abstract entities are generally understood as being odorless. Love is tied here, in other words, syntactically and ontologically, to the earth and thereby to finitude. It is this finitude, finally, Nancy wrote, of which love "is the dazzling presence."^[42]

The poem continues: "[F]rom that scent of exasperating love, sunk in the fragrance." What exactly is sunk or submerged [*hundido*] here in the fragrance? Could it be the "scent" or perhaps "love"? On reflection, it would have to be "love" since "scent" is a synonym for fragrance. With this synonym, the olfactory dimension of what the poem illuminates and of the poem's illumination as such is further emphasized. The smell is no longer merely a whiff or a chance drift of aroma. Rather, that which comes arrives completely submerged in a fragrance; the scent and the scented almost interpenetrate. The earthiness and the tangibility of the something whose arrival one awaits can no longer be doubted. Love, just like "the essence of being," is "something like a heart," mortal, tangled, messy and pulsing.^[43]

In the next line of the poem, it becomes suddenly clearer what the poem is trying to do. "From those orange blossoms untied through moonlight, from that scent of exasperating love, sunk in the fragrance, *yellow burst from the lemon.*" The thing being awaited is apparently not a thing at all, conventionally speaking, but rather a color, a quality, or what some would call an "accident of a substance," that is, a non-essential attribute of a thing's essence. The color yellow arrives from the source that is the lemon and in the form of a burst. Or perhaps it would be more appropriate to say that it is not the yellow but rather the lemon that comes bursting forth from orange blossoms and fragrances, although in the form of a thick and unrefined yellow.

What happens in the following, final lines of the poem's first stanza gives us a clue on this point: "and from their planetarium, the lemons descended to earth." In a poem that celebrates the lemon and concludes its first stanza with the arrival of lemon-kind on *terra firma*, one is tempted to think that what bursts forth is in fact the lemon itself. Perhaps this is too simplistic. Perhaps what comes in the poem, what is always-already coming, and what is never finished coming even after it has come a thousand times is the yellow *and* the lemon *and* the planetarium *and* the moonlight-sifted orange blossoms. In other words, perhaps the lemon, or the love of

the lemon, happens in all of these ways that are irreducibly lemon-like and irreducibly loving. "Love arrives then in the promise," Nancy wrote. "[It] arrives in all the forms and in all the figures of love; it is projected in all its shatters."^[44] Likewise, the lemon arrives as the promise of lemons descending from aroma and blossoms in all the sparkling moments inflamed by the speaker's love. Put differently, from the "Oda" to the end, and from the font to the margins, the lemons burst in love and as love.

Among many other celebrations of the lemon, the poem offers the following: "and the most profound liquor of nature: untransferable, alive, irreducible, born of the freshness of the lemon." Neruda valorizes the lemon as a sort of acid which came to us from a star, having congealed into the solid form of the lemon as we know it. The lemon came "from the hemispheres of the star" just as "we unlocked two halves of a miracle." This lemon seems to embody a sort of vitality, or a bursting of life that originates figuratively in the breaking of a star into two halves. That bursting is replicated when the lemon itself is opened into two halves. It is a pungent secret, but not mystical; rather, a kind of natural wonder.

For Nancy, similarly, wonder "is nothing other than that which happens or arrives at the limit. Wonder itself is a kind of sign without signification, and the sign—the index or signal—that signification is verging upon its limit, and that meaning is laid bare."^[45] For the speaker of the poem, the lemon is precisely such a "sign without signification." The entire poem produces a succession of images of the speaker's infatuated experiences with the lemon, in its tactile, sensual, economic, natural, quasi-transcendent, aesthetic, religious, gustatory, and social interactions. At the limit of signification and at the limit of language's ability to represent the world and convey meaning, all one has are these beautiful ridiculous moments and encounters (although one does have them all!). In other words, at the limit there are merely lemons but there is a natural magic stirring in these humble fruits in this poem.

I now turn to Neruda's last stanza for two final observations on the following lines: "So, when your hand grasps the hemisphere of the sliced lemon on your plate a universe of scent scattered/spilled/shredded/spread [*un universo de oro / derramaste*]." Imagining oneself holding one half of the original body of the lemon, one is reminded of the dissolution of unity itself, and the dissolution of even the universe, that is, the universe of scent. ^[46] Although I have just included the four most common translations of the adjective before "scent," *derramaste*, my preference would be a slightly different synonym for *derramaste*—"shattered."

I have chosen "shattered" for two reasons. First, it seems to accurately reflect the condition of a thing in the world that has undergone the four adjectives enumerated in the literal meaning of *derramaste*, a sort of holistic or collective result of being shredded apart, scattered around, spilled out, and spread across. Second, and more obviously, it allows the reader the chance to notice a potential connection to Nancy's "Shattered Love." Within this poem, the universe, which is a universe of scent—in other words, the being of what is, the singularity of each being each time—is shattered, leaving

shards, dazzles, sparkles, bursts, and bits like the multiplicity of loves that Nancy described.

Nancy might respond to my response via Neruda's poem by noting that Neruda was raised in Chile and thus, arguably has a certain, though not complete, distance from "the Occident" as Nancy understands it. In other words, any Nancean thought of love emerging from such Hispanic contexts would necessarily have derived from indigenous cultures and not from any European inheritance. In addition to the fact that so much of indigenous American culture was wiped out by the Europeans, however, Nancy's claims about poetry go beyond any Western tradition. They are clearly universal. "It is," he wrote, "the whole idea, and doubtless, every possible idea of poetry that is at stake."^[47] Neruda's work is certainly poetry.

Nancy might also suggest that I have manipulated the text of the poem to the extent that all trace of authorial intent is lost. I do not believe this is the case. If time and space permitted, I could present a defense for this position in reference to Neruda's life and body of work as a whole. However, in a certain sense this issue of authorial intent is ultimately irrelevant. On an understanding of truth as disclosure, what is shown in and through the text is all that really matters. And what tumbles golden to the ground here is that Neruda's poetry still thinks, and helps us too to think, love.

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Endnotes

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[1] Jean-Luc Nancy, "Shattered Love," in *The Inoperative Community*, ed. Peter Connor, trans. Peter Connor, Lisa Garbus, Michael Holland and Simona Sawhey (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1991).

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 82.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 83.

[4] *Op. cit.*

[5] *Ibid.*, pp. 83-84.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 89.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 90.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 93.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 94.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 96. Emphasis in original.

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 96.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 97.

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 98.

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 98,99.

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 102.

[17] See note 23.

[18] *Loc. cit.*

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 105.

[20] *Ibid.*, pp. 106-107.

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 107. Emphasis added. It is this final, italicized clause in which Nancy's language and thought seem to be stretched to their conceptual limits. What can possibly be meant by a presence that is more than manifest? If a phenomenon is, as the phenomenologists would have it, "that which shows itself as itself," then what would correspond to a showing beyond even the order of manifestation? Perhaps Nancy is gesturing here toward the "coming to presence" of "presence," privileging the occurrence over the activity of occurring as such.

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 108.

[23] The following note from the translator may be helpful here: "Note: The title of the French text is '*L'amour en éclats.*' The word '*éclat*' should be read in all its outbursts. The word can mean, and appears here as, shatter, piece, splinter, glimmer, flash, spark, burst, outburst, explosion, brilliance, dazzle, and splendor.—Trans." *Ibid.*, 163.

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 91. Emphasis added.

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 91. Emphasis in original.

[26] *Ibid.*, p. 91.

[27] *Ibid.*, p. 89.

[28] *Ibid.*, p. 100. Emphasis added.

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 100. Emphasis added.

[30] In a group of prefatory remarks to *The Birth to Presence*, where both essays can be found, Nancy said of "Poetry" that its "concern is the presentation of presence. 'Poetry' means, not a literary genre as such, but the limit of 'literature,' or

'writing,' where nothing is written but the coming of a presence, a coming that can never be written or presented in any way." (*The Birth to Presence* ix-x). One can recognize, both in the catch-word "writing" and in the description of the project, a Derridean flavor, and one should thus take care, when investigating Nancy on poetry, to make sure that he is referring to a literary genre or body of work in the way the word *poetry* is normally understood, and not instead to another name for a sort of arche-writing in Derrida's sense. See, for example, Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 6-26.

[31] Jean-Luc Nancy, "To Possess the Truth in One Soul and One Body," in *The Birth to Presence*, trans. Brian Holmes and others (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), p. 289.

[32] *Op. cit.*

[33] Jean-Luc Nancy, "We need...," in *The Birth to Presence*, trans. Brian Holmes and Others (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), p. 308.

[34] Jean-Luc Nancy, "To Possess the Truth in One Soul and One Body," in *The Birth to Presence*, trans. Brian Holmes and Others (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), p. 203, original emphasis.

[35] I am indebted for this insight to one of the two reviewers for this article.

[36] *Living Language Spanish Dictionary*, p. 38.

[37] Jean-Luc Nancy, "Shattered Love," *The Inoperative Community*, ed. Peter Connor, trans. Peter Connor, Lisa Garbus, Michael Holland and Simona Sawhey (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1991), p. 92;97.

[38] *Ibid.*, p. 98.

[39] *Ibid.*, p. 101.

[40] Pablo Neruda, *100 Love Sonnets*, p. 150-151.

[41] Luis Monguió, "Introduction" in *Selected Poems*, 29.

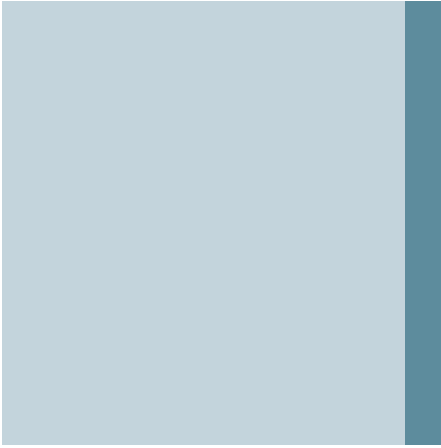
[42] Jean-Luc Nancy, "Shattered Love," *The Inoperative Community*, ed. Peter Connor, trans. Peter Connor, Lisa Garbus, Michael Holland and Simona Sawhey (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1991), p. 99.

[43] *Ibid.*, p. 88.

[44] *Ibid.*, p. 101.

[45] Jean-Luc Nancy, "On Wonder," in *The Gravity of Thought*, trans. François Raffoul & Gregory Recco (New York: Humanity, 1997), p. 67.

[46] Here, again, the olfactory sense demonstrates its centrality. The sense of smell has long been neglected by philosophy and is considered in contemporary psychology to be on the evolutionary level with taste, making it one of the most evolutionarily primitive of the traditional five senses. Among the interesting consequences of this evolutionary simplicity are that it is one of our most direct links to other



animals and thereby to “the natural world.” Perhaps because of its nearness to several sites of the brain linked to memory and emotion, especially the hippocampus, the sense of smell has an as yet insufficiently understood privileged linking to those two features of human experience. This understanding of the sense of smell further suggests a close bond between Neruda’s poetry and the world of (to use Nancy’s term) finitude.

[47] Jean-Luc Nancy, "To Possess the Truth in One Soul and One Body," in *The Birth to Presence*, trans. Brian Holmes and Others (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), p. 292.
