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Ontology of Voice: Georg Trakl, Louis-Philippe Corbeil, and the Ethics of Poetic Silence

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ABSTRACT

What happens when voice speaks from the edge of being, when poetic language touches the silence it can no longer master? This article takes up that question by exploring the ontology of poetic voice in conditions of fragmentation, fatigue, and marginality. Through a comparative analysis of Louis-Philippe Corbeil's *Journal de bord du Gamin des Ténèbres* and Georg Trakl's shadow-haunted poems, the study investigates how voice persists, not as fullness, but as a resonance shaped by absence. Drawing on philosophical works by Nancy, Blanchot, and Meschonnic, the article proposes that voice in these poetic worlds is not merely expressive, but ontological: it becomes the last form of presence when meaning collapses. Both Corbeil and Trakl offer lyric voices that drift toward silence, yet resist disappearance by forging a poetics of withdrawal and ethical tension. Methodologically, the study combines hermeneutic close reading with a transhistorical dialogue between modern and contemporary texts from marginal traditions. The results reveal a shared aesthetic of dissidence, one that finds in the dislocated voice a fragile, enduring gesture of being. This approach contributes to broader debates in

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poetics, phenomenology, and literary ontology by reimagining poetic voice not as mastery of language, but as survival through fracture.

Keywords: *Georg Trakl; Louis-Philippe Corbeil; poetic silence; withdrawal; fragmentation; voice; alterity.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Poetry does not always seek clarity. It does not always guide, illuminate, or explain. Sometimes, it descends. It walks through silence rather than toward revelation. Some voices choose to linger in the dark, in what trembles, fades, or disappears. These voices do not cry out. They remain. They murmur at the edge of language. They resist brightness, refuse consolation, and build themselves within the interval where language hesitates.

This article traces such voices across two poetic landscapes shaped by metaphysical solitude and collapse. Louis-Philippe Corbeil, a Franco-Canadian poet of singular intensity, offers no solace in his *Journal de bord du Gamin des Ténèbres* (1986). The collection sketches a cartography of interior ruin, where words crumble under the weight of absence. Each poem resembles a collapsed cathedral: lyrical, fractured, haunted. Corbeil does not write to reclaim meaning but to accompany what slips away. His work, largely unknown beyond Canadian Francophone circles, sustains a form of poetic resistance that rejects rhetorical optimism and metaphysical promises (Léveillé, 2024, p. 180; Gauthier, 1990).

Across time and language, Georg Trakl carved a similar path. Writing in early twentieth-century Austria amid war and psychological collapse, he left behind a body of work marked by spiritual vertigo and musical fragmentation. His verses hum with a tension between lyric intensity and metaphysical void. As Jean-Luc Nancy reminds us in *La communauté désœuvrée* [*The Inoperative Community*], “meaning does not arise as a closed totality but as an infinite opening to sharing” (1990, p. 25). Building on this, I argue that Trakl’s poetry does not seek transcendence but leans into shadow and cadence, into breath strained by the weight of the unspeakable.

Despite the historical and geographic distance between them, Corbeil and Trakl converge through a shared ontology of night. Their voices strip language to rhythm, vibration, and breath. Rather than explaining despair, they dwell within

it. They write from the ruins of meaning, where words do not resolve but endure. This article explores the consequences of such writing. What happens when poetry chooses not to repair, but to remain? How does it invent a language capable of holding what no longer holds together?

Their poetics resonates with other figures shaped by spiritual fracture and ontological opacity: Attila József and János Pilinszky, whose Hungarian minimalism sustains a similar tension, and contemporary poets like Hélène Dorion (1995), Rita Mestokosho (2014), and Gisèle Villeneuve (2021), who write from Indigenous, Québécois, or diasporic margins. These voices do not belong to the same lineage, nor the same geography. What unites them lies elsewhere, in their shared refusal to redeem, to clarify, to resolve.

This article proposes a poetics of endurance: a form of witness that does not explain but remains close to collapse, a writing that listens because nothing else remains. Through close readings grounded in philosophical and aesthetic theory, I argue that Trakl and Corbeil cultivate a lyricism of opacity and resistance. In a world saturated with visibility and affirmation, their fidelity to fragility enacts a different ethics, one rooted in silence, in resonance, and in the dignity of not fleeing the night. The study adopts a comparative, phenomenological, and hermeneutic approach attentive to the textures of poetic language under ontological strain. Its focus is not biographical parallels but structural and philosophical convergences: what their poetic gestures resist, suspend, and sustain. What unfolds is less a theory of resemblance than an exercise in proximity, where fragments echo across historical, linguistic, and metaphysical distances.

From this orientation follow the research objectives. The article examines how poetic voice endures when language collapses, tracing gestures of fragmentation, silence, and withdrawal in two bodies of work that refuse transcendence. It demonstrates that the dialogue between Georg Trakl and Louis-Philippe Corbeil is grounded in shared stylistic and ontological tensions: both write from margins (whether the

cultural periphery of Francophone Canada or the spiritual crisis of early twentieth-century Austria) where language becomes porous and unstable. Finally, the study situates this poetics of silence within contemporary debates on voice, rhythm, and ontology, suggesting that Corbeil and Trakl exemplify how poetry transforms fragility into an ethical mode of endurance.

Four analytic gestures orient the inquiry. First, the recurrence of night, not simply as motif but as temporal pressure and ontological atmosphere. In both *œuvres*, darkness is not what hides but what holds: an element where identity dissolves, where being persists without resolution. As Christophe Pradeau and Tiphaine Samoyaul (2005) note, even this seemingly simple word resists definitive translation, becoming a site where opacity and difference are most intensely felt. Richard Millington (2020) likewise shows in *The Gentle Apocalypse* that Trakl's poetry often stages collapse through strangely mild images of disintegration, a vision at once intimate and apocalyptic. Second, the syntax and rhythm of these poems manifest a disintegration of narrative progression. The verse stumbles, pauses, breaks, not through carelessness, but through fidelity to what cannot be advanced, only endured. Third, the withdrawal of the divine emerges not as absence of faith but as the presence of an unspeakable void. These texts do not invoke God; they reverberate with what exceeds invocation. Finally, a silent musicality inhabits the poems: breath, echo, cadence, where sense gives way to sensation, and poetic thought becomes auditory before it becomes discursive.

2. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

To listen closely to these poems, several theoretical constellations prove vital. Paul Ricœur's *Time and narrative* offers a hermeneutics of temporal unfolding, where meaning is not delivered but deferred. Narrative time, as Ricœur shows, is a deferral of meaning; in Corbeil, this deferral takes the form of fragmented cadences that refuse closure. Reading thus becomes a form of ethical delay. Maurice Blanchot's *L'espace littéraire* [*The Space of Literature*] conceives literature as the site where language risks failure. Extending this claim to Corbeil and Trakl, I suggest their verse holds together rhythm and opacity, invocation and withdrawal. Henri Meschonnic (1973) insists on rhythm not as ornament but as thought, an embodied, ethical mode of saying.

Jean-Yves Masson's *expérience poétique* sharpens this intuition, showing that absence in poetry is not a lack but one of its most powerful forces.

These frameworks converge around a shared insistence: poetry does not explain the world; it remains with it. Such remaining is never neutral. From Susan Sontag's reflections on witnessing to Veena Das's notion of "descent into the ordinary," poetic language emerges less as an instrument for understanding suffering than as a medium for dwelling within it. Sontag reminds us that witnessing means staying with the wound, and my reading suggests that in Trakl this witnessing becomes rhythm itself. The poem does not stand above what it names; it enters it, exposing itself to its silence. Recent work by Matthew J. Devine (2022) further shows how Levinasian ethics resonates with Winnicott's idea of breakdown as a space where vulnerability and responsibility intertwine, a perspective that illuminates the fragile endurance enacted in these poems. This orientation does not lead toward closure but toward fidelity, not to coherence, but to fragmentation. Trakl and Corbeil do not propose redemption; they accompany what breaks. Their verse binds rhythm and opacity, invocation and withdrawal. The aim is not to construct a unified theory of nocturnal poetics but to inhabit, attentively and ethically, the fragile space where fragments resonate.

The choice of texts responds to both thematic and stylistic criteria. Corbeil's *Journal de bord du Gamin des Ténèbres* (1986) explores rupture and opacity within Francophone Canada, where silence and fragmentation structure the poetic voice. Kenneth Meadwell (2012) has shown how Francophone Canadian literature continually negotiates alterity through narrative voices that inscribe otherness at the very core of identity formation. Trakl's late poems, composed in the shadow of war and psychic collapse, likewise disarticulate syntax and rhythm to foreground the persistence of voice at the limits of expression. Although separated by history and geography, both corpora share an intensity of fracture that renders comparison not only possible but illuminating.

The analysis proceeds through a hermeneutic practice of close reading. Here, close reading is not understood narrowly as explication de texte, but as attention to rhythm, syntax, and semantic hesitation, the ways in which poetic language

falters, fragments, and withdraws. Particular attention is given to pauses, enjambments, repetitions, and caesuras, where meaning does not advance but is suspended, producing resonances that exceed content. This allows the study to attend to the auditory and temporal dimensions of the poem as constitutive of its ethical stance.

At the same time, the comparative frame requires an acknowledgment of its limits. To bring together an early twentieth-century Austrian poet and a late twentieth-century Franco-Canadian poet is to confront asymmetries of context, language, and reception. The comparison does not claim historical equivalence or cultural continuity, but rather seeks structural proximity: the ways in which two distinct poetic voices, each marked by marginality, confront the collapse of meaning through similar formal gestures. As Christophe Pradeau and Tiphaine Samoyault (2005) argue in *Où est la littérature mondiale?*, world literature requires us to think beyond national frames and to attend to encounters across distances and margins; a reminder that resonates with Nisrine Malli's (2015) emphasis on dialogism, where alterity enters the text itself and destabilizes any monologic claim to truth. The methodology thus embraces the interpretive nature of its claims while remaining faithful to the particular textures of each œuvre.

3. NIGHT AS COLLAPSE: TOWARD A POETICS OF THE INCHOATE

In both Trakl and Corbeil, night is more than absence of light. It is a dramaturgy of being in retreat, a sedimented presence that encroaches on form and self. Rather than functioning as metaphor or setting, night saturates the poem's structure, becoming its very condition of possibility. The poems do not stage night; they are staged by it. This ontological entanglement is neither abstract nor romantic. It is granular, at times viscous. Trakl's "Verfall" does not depict decay, it decays, syntax softening into silence. Likewise, Corbeil's line — "La clarté des mots a trahi les songes; / c'est dans le noir que s'écrivent les gestes" [*The clarity of words betrayed dreams; / it is in the dark that gestures are written*] (Corbeil, 1986, p. 57) — enacts a dismantling of temporal certainty, where verbs fail to secure action and punctuation hesitates. The poem dislocates itself.

Night here is not allegorical; it is lived, or rather, endured. Maurice Blanchot reminds us that "the

night is not simply what is dark, it is that which dissolves all form" (Blanchot, 1980, p. 116). The poetic night in both authors is formative in its formlessness. It does not allow transcendence, nor does it comfort. Its opacity is ethical. To remain in this night is not to wait for light, but to become attuned to what refuses clarity. As Bachelard wrote in his meditation on the *rêverie*: "Dans le noir, tout prend racine dans l'imaginaire de la perte" (Bachelard, 1960, p. 77). This loss is not tragic; it is foundational. It opens the poem to its unmaking.

Trakl's vocabulary is steeped in nocturnal matter—blood, shadow, silence—but it is the rhythm that embodies night most viscerally. The caesura becomes a wound. In poems like *Grodek*, the closing lines collapse into breath rather than resolution: "Und leise tönen im Rohr die dunkeln Flöten des Herbstes" [*And softly sound in the reeds the dark flutes of autumn*] (Trakl, 1987, p. 167). There is no syntactic climax. The night is not resolved but sustained, precisely in the refusal to articulate. Similarly, Corbeil's "*C'est le noyé du songe*" is a *poème sans phare*. The voice does not guide; it wavers. The lines drift from each other, resisting enclosure—as if the night had disbanded syntax into isolated breath.

These poetic gestures do not seek aestheticism in despair. Rather, they situate language at the edge of what Veena Das calls "the descent into the ordinary" (Das, 2007, p. 7). For Das, violence imprints itself not in grand narrative, but in the unremarkable, the unfinished gesture. Trakl and Corbeil share this ethic of disintegration. Their verses do not explode: they fray. And this fraying is not weakness. It is fidelity to what cannot be organized into coherence.

In the tradition of Hölderlin, Trakl lets form yield to intonation, sound pattern, and breath, producing what Meschonnic termed a "subject rythmique" (Meschonnic, 1995, p. 112): a pulse that is neither psychological nor metrical, but ontological. Corbeil, writing a century later in another tongue and terrain, shares this impulse. His syntax becomes a topology of resistance, where each enjambment is a refusal to complete, a syntax in exile.

The night does not symbolize. It vibrates. It is not only where the poem occurs, but how. The collapse of referential clarity, the liquefaction of narrative thread, the reluctance to conclude, these are not signs of weakness, but signs of attentiveness to the unsayable. Susan Sontag

warns against the seduction of explanation, especially in the face of suffering: “To photograph is to frame, and to frame is to exclude” (Sontag, 2003, p. 46). The poem, like the photograph, risks simplifying the real. But Corbeil and Trakl push in the other direction. They unframe. They let the poem exceed its own limits, seep beyond what can be held.

And so night, in their hands, becomes method. A poetics of the inchoate, of the moment-before-sense. What emerges is not a metaphysics, but a listening. The poem listens to its own failure to signify. In this collapse, something remains: a breath, a break, a murmur. The poem does not illuminate night; it becomes its echo.

4. SYNTAX AT THE LIMIT: DISARTICULATION AS ETHICAL GESTURE

The poetic languages of Trakl and Corbeil do not merely express fracture; they are fractured. Their syntax stumbles, recedes, hesitates, not to create aesthetic difficulty, but to mark a space of ethical suspension. This suspension is not a rhetorical pose. It is a recognition of violence, of opacity, of the limits of speech. The poem becomes a space where language does not unfold linearly, but dwells in its own halts, its murmurs, its wounds. The disarticulation of syntax is not a gesture of obscurity; it is the very condition under which the poem can remain faithful to what resists naming.

In Trakl's later poems, the line becomes a threshold rather than a path. Verbs retreat, nouns are untethered from referents, prepositions multiply without clear objects. This destabilization is not chaotic, but mournful. Take the lines from *Sebastian im Traum*:

*Leise sank von dunklen Schritten der
Schnee, / Im Schatten des Baums / Heben
die rosigen Lider Liebende*

[Softly the snow sank from dark steps, / In the shadow of the tree / Lovers lift their rosy eyelids] (Trakl, 1969, p. 92).

There is no anchoring subject. The motion of *sank* and *heben* [lift] hovers between human gesture and natural scene, dissolving the boundary between perception and world. What remains is not narrative, but resonance—snow, steps, tree, eyelids—linked by rhythm rather than logic. Language becomes residue. And this

residue, as Blanchot (1982) argues, is not silence but “the murmur that never ceases” (p. 52).

Language becomes residue. And this residue, as Blanchot (1980) argues, is not silence but “the murmur that never ceases” (p. 52). It is what persists after meaning collapses, the trace of a voice that chooses not to dominate.

Corbeil, too, constructs a syntax of withdrawal:

*Le silence des dieux ne nous apprend
rien, sinon l'habitude du deuil*

[*The silence of the gods teaches us nothing, / except the habit of mourning*] (Corbeil, 1986, p. 20).

Here, syntax refuses expansion; it condenses thought into fracture. The nominal rhythm and the abrupt caesura enact not minimalism for effect, but a poetics of unsaying. The line does not deliver meaning; it exposes resonance. It is, as Jean-Yves Masson (2017) describes, *une poétique du retrait*, a writing that refuses to assert presence and instead accompanies absence. For Masson, poetry does not veil reality but exposes it “in its blinding intensity,” confronting the real where language falters. Such poetics do not demand interpretive agility from the reader, but rather a form of ethical humility, a willingness to remain with the fracture where words both say and unsay.

Henri Meschonnic's theory of rhythm further illuminates this stylistic ethic. For Meschonnic, rhythm is not a matter of prosody but of subjectivity: “a mode of signifying the relation between voice and silence, presence and absence” (Meschonnic, 1995, p. 207). In Trakl and Corbeil, the disarticulation of syntax becomes a way of preserving this relation. Their poems do not simply communicate, they expose the process of communication as fragile, contingent, permeable. The stammer is not a flaw but a fidelity.

This fragility is not performative. It is ontological. The poem refuses to mask the fact that language, when tasked with naming suffering or holding loss, trembles. It trembles not out of fear, but out of respect. As Luc Boltanski (1999) observes in *Distant Suffering*, ethical response does not come from certainty, but from “the suspension of judgement, from an ability to remain with the unresolvable” (p. 38). This suspension is mirrored in syntax, in the refusal to

conclude, in the reluctance to smooth over. Both Trakl and Corbeil refuse the linearity that would claim mastery. Their lines break rather than resolve.

The poetic disarticulation, then, becomes a moral stance. It does not decorate grief; it inhabits it. The poem withdraws from the claim to know, to interpret, to summarize. Instead, it listens imperfectly, vulnerably. It opens itself to the risk of not saying enough, or of saying too much. It offers no paraphrase, only presence. And this presence is fragile, interrupted, haunted.

Foucault (1997), in his reflections on the *parrhesia*, or truth-telling, reminds us that ethical speech is risky speech. “The courage of truth,” he writes, “consists in not being governed by fear of disapproval, but by fidelity to what must be said, even if it cannot be said clearly” (p. 207). The poems of Trakl and Corbeil take this courage seriously. Their syntax falters not because they lack control, but because they relinquish control. They let the poem inhabit what Blanchot calls “l’espace du mourir”, not the space of death, but the space where language and death touch (Blanchot, 1980, p. 117).

The result is a poetics of exposure. Not of spectacle, but of openness. In these poems, to write is not to enclose, but to become porous. The syntax becomes wound, seam, breach. The line is no longer a unit of meaning, but a site of vulnerability. And in this vulnerability, something like ethics appears, not preached, not affirmed, but enacted, line by fractured line.

5. MUSICALITY AS EXISTENTIAL GESTURE

To approach the poetry of Corbeil and Trakl is to lean toward a language where sound becomes nearly inaudible, where poetic expression relinquishes the urgency to declare in favor of a murmuring fidelity. In both oeuvres, what appears is not merely the absence of voice, but a deliberate attenuation of the audible, a syntax of breath and erasure that resists communicative transparency. Silence, in these poems, is not a failure of language but its deepest modality.

This phenomenon cannot be reduced to a stylistic preference. It suggests a poetics of retention, of rhythmic exposure without overstatement. Trakl’s *Grodek* opens not with lamentation, but with an eerie quiet: “Am Abend tönen die herbstlichen Wälder / Von tödlichen Waffen” [*In the evening the autumnal forests*

resound / With deadly weapons] (Trakl, 1969, p. 56). The violence is not shouted; it echoes from within the very landscape. As Blanchot writes, “Le poème commence lorsqu’il fait silence en nous” [*The poem begins when it makes silence within us*] (Blanchot, 1955, p. 77). The poetic begins not with voice, but with a listening withdrawn from the world’s noise.

Corbeil’s verse moves similarly. In *Fresques mobiles*, time falters not through ellipsis but by a sustained hesitancy: “C’est un minuit banal de lune de décombres / Les arches les abris les angles tour à tour / Se peuplent se dépeuplent d’un peuple d’amour” [*It is an ordinary midnight of a moon of ruins / The arches the shelters the angles in turn / Populate and depopulate with a people of love*] (Corbeil, 1986, p. 20). The repeated *peu* and the refrain *tour à tour* function as both semantic and sonic waves, shaping breath and meaning without telling a story. Here, the body of the text breathes in before exhaling. Meaning emerges not in full presence, but at the threshold where language considers its own unmaking. The enjambments are less syntactic than respiratory; they chart an inner rhythm that evades the eye and moves through the diaphragm.

Henri Meschonnic (1995) speaks of rhythm not as meter or accentuation but as subjectivation: “Le rythme est une organisation du mouvement de la parole, et donc du sujet dans et par son dire” [*Rhythm is an organization of the movement of speech, and thus of the subject in and through its saying*] (p. 207). Applied here, this means that the brokenness of verse in Trakl and Corbeil does not signify confusion but an ethical positioning of the speaking subject. The line falters because it seeks not to dominate meaning, but to stay with what resists signification.

Susan Sontag (2003) reminds us that silence in the face of suffering may constitute not indifference but respect. When poetic language refrains from dramatizing pain, it does not render it invisible; it holds space for its untranslatability. In Corbeil, silence is the medium through which the poem communes with the world, not by showing, but by bearing: “mort! tu vomiras de tes entrailles mon poème / afin qu’il chante pour le noyé du songe” [*death! you will vomit from your entrails my poem / so that it may sing for the drowned of the dream*] (Corbeil, 1986, p. 26). This reticence is not cowardice, but restraint: a recognition that poetry fails when it presumes to speak wholly for what exceeds it.

Veena Das (2007), in *Life and Words*, articulates this gesture as a “descent into the ordinary,” where testimony is not issued from a pulpit, but from within the textures of everyday life. Trakl’s images of disintegrating soldiers and bleeding nature are not allegorical; they are part of a shared world where the poet becomes witness by refusing to transcend. The poem does not lift pain into sublimity. It remains beside it.

Breath is the vehicle of this poetics. In both bodies of work, we find a rhythmic management of exhalation and pause that foregrounds not what is said, but how it is breathed. Bachelard (1960) noted this in *La poétique de la rêverie*: “Le silence est un souffle... Il faut l’écouter comme une pensée lente” [*Silence is a breath... One must listen to it as a slow thought*] (p. 89). The poetry of Corbeil and Trakl is not slow in tempo but in thought. It invites a deceleration not of movement, but of attention.

This deceleration makes room for an intimacy between reader and text that is affective rather than interpretative. As Quaghebeur (2015) suggests, in francophone poetry under conditions of crisis or displacement, silence becomes “une modalité de la survie textuelle” [*a modality of textual survival*] (p. 124). Corbeil, writing from a Manitoban context often relegated to the periphery, builds silence as resistance: to spectacle, to national narratives, to coherence itself. His refusal to explain mirrors Trakl’s refusal to moralize. Both retreat from the clarity of the manifest into the murmur of the fragment.

And yet, this murmur is not defeat. It is the form through which the poem endures. Trakl’s “Verlassenheit” [desolation/abandonment] is not a cry but a whisper through walls; Corbeil’s “Les marbres pèsent sur l’âme — anciens remords” [The marbles weigh upon the soul — ancient remorse] (1986, p. 66) does not close meaning but leaves it suspended in density. The reader is not asked to decipher, but to dwell. Here, the ethical force of the poem is not in its message, but in its mode: it does not teach, it remains. Its silence becomes a space of shared suspension.

This musicality without melody, this breath without song, resituates the role of poetry. It is not to provide catharsis, nor to elevate suffering into art, but to hold open a space where the inarticulable may still resonate. Maurice Blanchot captured this paradox with clarity: “Le silence du poème n’est pas l’absence de voix, mais l’éclat d’une parole rendue impossible” [*The silence of*

the poem is not the absence of voice, but the brilliance of a speech rendered impossible] (1955, p. 101). Corbeil and Trakl do not make language impossible. They make it honest. This honesty is not achieved through transparency, but through exposure. Their poems expose themselves to unknowing, to mishearing, to incompleteness. They allow themselves to breathe within and beyond the limits of what can be said. In doing so, they enact a fidelity not to truth, but to presence: a presence that withdraws, echoes, and dissipates, but does not disappear.

6. DISCUSSION

Reading Corbeil and Trakl side by side does not suggest a symmetrical poetic kinship or an intertextual lineage. Rather, it invites an attunement to parallel intensities, textual atmospheres that resist synthesis, styles that unravel coherence instead of seeking it. These poets do not share historical trajectories, but their works resonate within a shared topology of loss, where meaning is not constructed or resolved but suspended, deferred, and fragmented. Their writing does not seek to heal the rupture of language but to dwell in it with radical attentiveness.

This form of resonance implies a broader reflection on poetic filiation, not as inheritance, but as haunting. Their poems do not respond to each other historically but vibrate together in a displaced simultaneity. Their voices trace what Édouard Glissant has called an opaque relation, a mode of being-with that does not seek transparency but stays with the dissonance, the distance, and the unsaid (Glissant, 1990). Trakl writes from a wounded imperial Vienna; Corbeil writes from the marginal linguistic and cultural space of Francophone Canada’s West. Yet both confront the abyss not as spectacular collapse but as ontological ground.

In Trakl’s verse, poetic fall takes on a liturgical, obsessive, and circular form. In Corbeil, language hardens into mineral sequences, where words hang in partial presence, half-said and fully endured. What binds them is not despair but a poetics of disjunction, a radical uncoupling of speech from resolution. As Jean-Claude Pinson has observed, poetry becomes a place where “the subject is no longer master of his language, but delivered to its undecidability” (Pinson, 1995, p. 132). Neither poet seeks to master language. Instead, they accompany its failure. This accompaniment becomes a form of poetic

endurance. Giorgio Agamben (2000) reminds us that “the poet is the one who has lost his place in the logos and who speaks from within that loss” (p. 80). Trakl and Corbeil do not flee language but reposition its gravity. The lyrical subject is not erased but rendered porous, destabilised, partial; the poem does not so much express the self as track its fading. Thus Corbeil can write: “L’église berce en songe encore une ancienne ivresse / La chair vacante attend d’impossibles tendresses” [*The church cradles in dream an ancient intoxication once more / Vacant flesh awaits impossible tenderness*] (Corbeil, 1986, p. 65). The poet does not impose a voice; he listens to what arises in its absence.

This deep listening does not lead to knowledge or revelation. It exposes a form of ethical vulnerability. Jean-Luc Nancy (1990) proposes that sense is always partial, always shared through fragmentation. Poetic language, in this sense, does not seek transcendence but enacts presence, an intimate, fractured presence. In both Trakl and Corbeil, attention is the only fidelity available. This is not fidelity to origin, coherence, or divine truth, but fidelity to trembling, to incompleteness. The poem becomes the form of that trembling.

Such trembling does not dissolve into aestheticism. It carries an ethical weight. Maurice Blanchot insists that “the poet’s task is not to make suffering intelligible, but to endure it in language” (Blanchot, 1955, p. 120). The voice that persists through Corbeil and Trakl is not elevated, it is exposed. The divine, when it appears, is not invoked but withdrawn, hollowed out. It marks a presence that exceeds naming. Their theology is not dogmatic but apophatic. In this space of removal, rhythm becomes the sole continuity.

Henri Meschonnic (1982) offers a compelling lens here: rhythm is not decorative but epistemological. It is the site where meaning happens as body, as relation, as listening. Both poets dwell in this rhythm, not to assert anything, but to remain with what resists assertion. Their poetics does not aim for unity but for intensity, an intensity that emerges through rupture, ellipsis, repetition, and silence. This intensity is not the climax of form but its ethical depth. Poetry, then, becomes less a discourse than a duration. Paul Ricœur’s (1984) notion of narrative time as a deferral of meaning is particularly useful here. Neither Trakl nor Corbeil offers closure. Their fragments resist finality. They hold time in

suspension. Reading them is to enter a space where chronology collapses, where presence is never full, and where absence becomes fertile. This is not nihilism. It is an ethics of remaining, with language, with silence, with the other. Their poetic gestures do not construct redemption. They refuse it. Instead, they accompany what breaks. Their verses hold rhythm and opacity together, invocation and withdrawal. As Susan Sontag (2003) argues, witnessing does not mean interpreting or explaining, it means staying with the wound without resolving it. The poem, for both Corbeil and Trakl, becomes that form of witnessing. Not spectacle, not monument, but the quiet endurance of fracture.

Ultimately, the convergence of these voices opens a different understanding of what poetry can do. It does not resolve contradiction; it inhabits it. It does not deliver truth; it disorients certainty. It does not transcend the world; it dwells within its broken textures. The shared refusal of narrative closure, the mutual commitment to silence, and the fidelity to rhythm over representation mark a poetics that is at once singular and resonant. The ethics of such writing lies not in its content but in its form. The disarticulation of syntax, the pause between words, the unresolved gesture, these are not aesthetic strategies but ontological ones. They point to a way of being in language that does not impose order but allows for fragmentation, for unsayability, for presence without control. In this, Trakl and Corbeil do not offer a theory of the world. They offer a way of remaining with its dislocation.

They remain, and they invite us to remain.

7. CONCLUSION

To linger with the voices of Corbeil and Trakl is to accept the invitation of poems that do not resolve, but insist. Their respective *œuvres* do not mirror one another, nor do they articulate a shared program. What they offer, instead, is a convergence of ruptures, a trembling architecture where rhythm and silence replace narrative or ideology. Their fidelity lies not in doctrine or form, but in the act of sustaining attention where meaning collapses. In this, both poets articulate what might be called a poetics of nocturnal disjunction.

The night that inhabits their texts is neither romantic nor purely metaphoric. It is ontological, a condition in which language no

longer secures identity, and where the subject is destabilised by the very speech it attempts. This night is not the end of meaning, but its suspension. It marks a time where thinking begins differently, not as clarity, but as endurance. From this vantage, the fragment becomes not a failure of coherence, but a mode of fidelity. To write, in their poetic worlds, is to accompany what shatters.

These poets share a refusal: the refusal of closure, of transcendence, of totality. Their writing enacts a resistance to the false consolations of form. As Blanchot (1955) reminds us, the writer must go to the place where language risks its disappearance, where sense is approached only through interruption. This is not an aesthetic choice: it is an existential gesture. In this risk, the poem becomes an ethical space, where speaking does not dominate but listens, does not explain but exposes.

Corbeil and Trakl teach us how to dwell in that space. Not through emulation, but through reception. Their works challenge the reader to remain, not with resolution or certainty, but with a listening that risks being undone. What emerges is a poetic thought that does not aim to represent the world, but to inhabit its fractures, to breathe through its silences. As Foucault (1994) writes of the fragment, "it is not a piece of a whole that was lost, but the very form of what resists the whole" (p. 373). These poems do not mourn the absence of unity. They propose another kind of integrity: one made of intervals, gaps, and echoes.

Such a reading has implications beyond Corbeil and Trakl. It gestures toward a way of thinking poetry itself: not as the search for form, but as the practice of disjunction. In an age increasingly drawn to immediacy, spectacle, and closure, these poets remind us of the value of opacity, of duration, of the unsayable. They remind us that poetry is not the adornment of thought, but its recalibration. That poetic language is not a detour, but a depth.

To remain faithful to such writing is to refuse paraphrase. It is to stay close to what resists capture. The poet does not instruct the reader, but disorients them, not to confuse, but to awaken. In this sense, Corbeil and Trakl belong to a lineage of poetic thought that trusts the fragment, not as a broken whole, but as a site of potential. Their gestures are not backward-looking; they open forward, toward new ways of writing, of thinking, of attending.

The comparative exercise undertaken here is not meant to collapse difference but to sharpen it. The point is not to unify, but to allow for a resonance that preserves distance. These are not poets of reconciliation, but of careful proximity. Their texts demand a reader who listens not for meaning, but for pulse, for what Blanchot called "the murmur beyond voice" (Blanchot, 1955, p. 198). It is in this murmur that the poem continues, long after the verse has ended. In the end, to read Corbeil and Trakl together is not to compare them as poets of night, but to follow their gestures as acts of nocturnal ethics. In the void between their words, a rhythm is sustained, a fidelity is practiced, and a form of thought is lived. This is what remains. And it is enough.

DISCLAIMER (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)

The author hereby declares that no generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (e.g., ChatGPT) were used in the writing, analysis, or preparation of this manuscript. All interpretations, arguments, and formulations are the sole responsibility of the author.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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