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Counter-figures

An Essay on Antimetaphoric Resistance:
Paul Celan's Poetry and Poetics at the Limits of Figurality

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Abstract

As the title suggests, the present *essay on antimetaphoric resistance* investigates what is here being called *counter-figures*. This term has in this context a certain variety of applications. Any other-than-image or other-than-figure, anything that cannot be exhausted by figuration (and that is, more or less, anything at all) can be considered ‘counter-figurative’ with regard to the formation of images and figures, ideas and schemas, “any graven image, or any likeness of any thing”. This is why singularity and radical alterity are key issues here, and why an ethical dimension is implied by, or intertwined with, the aesthetic.

In terms borrowed from Paul Celan’s *Meridian* speech, poetry may “allow the most idiosyncratic quality of the Other, its time, to participate in the dialogue” (trans. Jerry Glenn). This connection between singularity, alterity and temporality is one of the reasons why Celan so strongly objects to the application of the traditional concept of metaphor into poetry: focus on metaphor can be a way to disregard the “most idiosyncratic quality” of the poetic “figure [*Gestalt*]” and to disallow the mentioned “participation”. As Celan says, “carrying over [*übertragen*]” by metaphor may imply an unwillingness to “bear with [*mittragen*]” and to “endure [*ertragen*]” the poem’s irreducible otherness, namely an unwillingness to *give time*.

The thesis is divided into two main parts. The first consists of five distinct *prolegomena* which all address the afore-mentioned variety of applications of the term ‘counter-figures’, and especially the rejection or critique of either metaphor (by Aristotle, for instance) or the concept of metaphor (defined by Aristotle, and sometimes deemed “anti-poetic” by both theorists and poets). The purpose of these prolegomena is to show that there are various ways to defy the traditional means of interpreting literature and language in general, and various ways by which literature and “the things themselves” defy those Post-Aristotelian means of understanding language and literature. Even if we restrict ourselves to the traditional rhetorico-poetical terms, we may see how, for instance, metonymy can be a counter-figure for metaphor, allegory for symbol, and irony for any single trope or for any piece of discourse at all. The *limits of figurality* may indeed be located at these points of intersection between different types of tropes or figures.

The second part, following on from the open-ended prolegomena, concentrates on Paul Celan’s poetry and poetics. According to Celan, true poetry is “essentially anti-metaphoric”. I argue that inasmuch as we are willing to pay attention to the “will” of the poetic images themselves, the tropes and metaphors in a poem, to be “carried *ad absurdum*”, as Celan invites us to do, we may find alternative ways of reading poetry and approaching its “secret of the encounter”, precisely when the traditional rhetorical instruments, and especially the notion of metaphor, become inapplicable or suspicious — and even where they still seem to impose themselves.

Acknowledgments

“No one knows who is thanking whom for what.”¹ Jacques Derrida’s characteristic interjection, in the middle of the ordinary expressions of recognition exchanged at the end of a roundtable discussion (“On the Gift”, indeed) manifests anything but an unwillingness to give thanks. As far as I can see, the abrupt remark acknowledges the devastating aporias that threaten to overwhelm thanks-giving, while gratitude may always be drawn, remain or become drawn, to the world of bargains. At the same time, saying “thank you” implies an exposure to the limits of knowledge and calculability, not to mention the limits of memory, while thanking (*Danken*) is also a way of thinking (*Denken*) and remembrance (*Andenken*). By countersigning Derrida’s phrase, I would like to acknowledge *more* than I acknowledge, in respect of a gratitude beyond gratification and acknowledgment beyond knowledge. And I wish to do that as consciously as possible, recognizing also that these preparatory remarks may still be just a poor excuse for forgetting to give thanks to all those I should give thanks to.

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¹ Jacques Derrida, “On the Gift: A Discussion between Jacques Derrida and Jean-Luc Marion”, moderated by Richard Kearney, in John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon, eds., *God, the Gift, and Postmodernism* (Bloomington: Indiana U.P., 1999), pp. 54-78, here p. 77.

I could not think of a more exciting way of spending more than four years reading the *Metaphysics* than doing it in the spirited company of the Aristotle Circle of Helsinki. The Lacan Circle of Helsinki has provided a hospitable environment for an occasional “hang-around member” whose knowledge of Lacan is negligible, and also the Law and Evil Research Project and the Group of Research on European Thought must be mentioned collectively as important nuclei of academic comradeship in Helsinki. The annual conferences of the *International Association for Philosophy and Literature* have been important occasions of international exchange for me during the last few years, and the conference on the *Travelling Concepts: Meaning, Frame, Metaphor* at the Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis (ASCA, 2001) deserves special mention as an inspiring event.

I am much obliged to the staff at the Institute of Art Research and the Department of Comparative Literature for the support on practical matters. John Gage revised the language of my text with meticulous attention, and Annikki Harris at the Language Centre was very helpful too. If any linguistic problems remain, they will be on my responsibility. One of my geographically distant friends, dr. Sandro Zanetti, is not only one of the most remarkable experts on Paul Celan, but has also patiently answered my questions concerning some specific details of his native language, German, as it “takes shape [*Gestalt*]” in Celan’s poetry. I gratefully acknowledge the Finnish Cultural Foundation, Väinö Koho Fund, Ella and Georg Ehrnrooth Foundation, The University of Helsinki, and the Academy of Finland (project 110217) for financial support.

For my father Kauko, my mother-and-father-in-law Maria-Liisa and Pekka, all my dear children, Aino, Saini, Vilho, Vaula, and Aarne, and my wife, my beloved Heli-Maria, I find no words more accurate than Hölderlin’s: “*nun aber nennt er sein Liebstes, / Nun, nun müssen dafür Worte, wie Blumen, entstehn.*”

Vohlo (Uusikaupunki), September 29th, 2007

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EPIGRAPH (*Counter-figures* – extracts from the *OED*)

counter- [...] *prefix*: [...] against, in return. [...] **I. 1.a. verbs**, [...] expressing the doing of a thing or performance of an action in the opposite direction or sense, with a contrary effect, or in opposition, retort, or response to the action expressed by the simple verb; sometimes with the notion of rivalling or outdoing, checking or frustrating that action; sometimes merely in reciprocation. [...] **II. ns.** (and *adjs.*) / **2.** With sense ‘(actor or action) against or in opposition’; [...] **3. a.** Done, directed, or acting against, in opposition to, as a rejoinder or reply to another thing of the same kind already made or in existence; [...] **4.** Acting in reversal of a former action; [...] **5.** Done or acting in reciprocation of or return for another thing of the same kind; reciprocal; [...] **8. a.** Forming the opposite member or constituent of anything that has naturally two opposite parts, [...] **9.** Having the contrary tendency, nature, action, or position; running counter (to something else); opposing, opposite, contrary; [...]

figure, n. [...] **I.** Form, shape. / **1. a.** The form of anything as determined by the outline; external form; shape generally; [...] **7.** Conspicuous appearance. [...] **1699** BENTLEY *Phal.* 361 Any Metaphor at all makes but a very bad Figure. [...] **1766** GOLDSM. *Vic. W.* x, When Moses has trimmed them a little, they will cut a very tolerable figure. [...] **II.** Represented form; image, likeness. / **9. a.** The image, likeness, or representation of something material or immaterial. [...] † **b.** An imaginary form, a phantasm. *Obs.* [...] **1598** SHAKES. *Merry W.* IV. ii. 231 To scrape the figures out of your husbands braines. [...] **10. esp.** An artificial representation of the human form. [...] **12.** An emblem, type. [...] **IV.** A written character. [...] **V.** In various uses, representing the technical applications of Gr. *σχῆμα* / **21. Rhet. a.** Any of the various ‘forms’ of expression, deviating from the normal arrangement or use of words, which are adopted in order to give beauty, variety, or force to a composition; e.g. Aposiopesis, Hyperbole, Metaphor, etc. Also, **figure of speech**. [...] **b.** In a more restricted sense (with mixture of senses 9 and 12): A metaphor or metaphorical mode of expression; an image, similitude. [...] **22. a. Grammar.** Any of the permitted deviations from the normal forms of words (e.g. Aphæresis, Syncope, Elision), or from the ordinary rules of construction (e.g. Ellipsis). † Formerly also *figure of speech*.

counter-figure / *Obs. rare* / [COUNTER- 8: it answers to Gr. *ἀντίτυπος* image, ANTITYPE 1.] / A figure or type corresponding to something else. / **1561** J. DAUS tr. *Bullinger on Apoc.* (1573) 77b, These thynges ... be not to be taken corporally, but spiritually as counterfigures of other things. [...]

antitype [...] **1.** That which is shadowed forth or represented by the ‘type’ or symbol. [...] **2.** One of the opposite or contrary kind. / **1926** G. K. CHESTERTON *Incredul. Father Brown* v. 146 An antitype; a sort of extreme exception that proves the ... rule. [...]

antitypous [...] *Obs. rare*. / [f. *ἀντίτυπος* Gr. force-resisting (f. *ἀντι* in opposition + *-τυπος* striking: see ANTITYPE) + -OUS.] / Resisting force; material, substantial, solid. / **1678** CUDWORTH *Intell. Syst.* 815 The Tenuity of their [Angels’] Bodies ... as not..being so solid and Antitypous as those which we are now Imprisoned in. *Ibid.* 829 It is an Essential Property thereof [*Extensum*] to be Antitypous or Impenetrable.

antitypy / *rare*. / [...] **1605** BACON *Adv. Learn.* (1640) 156 Motions of Antitypie, commonly called Motion opposing Penetration of Dimensions. **1846** SIR W. HAMILTON *Dissert. in Reid’s Wks.* 847 Antitypy, a word in Greek applied not only to this absolute and essential resistance of matter, *quâ* matter, but also, etc.

type, n. [ad. F. *type* (16th c. in Littré) or L. *typus*, a. Gr. *τύπος* impression, figure, type, f. the root of *τύπτειν* to beat, strike.] / **1. a.** That by which something is symbolized or figured; anything having a symbolical signification; a symbol, emblem; *spec. in Theol.* a person, object, or event of Old Testament history, prefiguring some person or thing revealed in the new dispensation; correl. to *antitype*. **in (the) type**, in symbolic representation.²

² Entries in *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. 1989. *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, 16 Jan. 2007, <http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50051667>, 50084581, 50051855, 50009925, 50009927, 50009928, 50261021. Henceforth cited as *OED*, followed by the number of the entry in the electronic edition.

Part I

PROBLEMS WITH METAPHOR?

Prolegomena for reading otherwise

EPIGRAPHS

— But *everything* is self-deception!
— Then even your sentence must be.
(A coffee-break conversation at a conference on metaphor.)

* * *

»Warum wehrt ihr euch? Würdet ihr den Gleichnissen folgen, dann wäret ihr selbst Gleichnisse geworden und damit schon der täglichen Mühe frei.«
Ein anderer sagte: »Ich wette, daß auch das ein Gleichnis ist.«
Der erste sagte: »Du hast gewonnen.«
Der zweite sagte: »Aber leider nur im Gleichnis.«
Der erste sagte: »Nein, in Wirklichkeit; im Gleichnis hast du verloren.«
(Franz Kafka.)³

* * *

Alles fließt: auch dieser Gedanke, und bringt er nicht alles wieder zum Stehen?
(Paul Celan.)⁴

³ Franz Kafka, "Von den Gleichnissen", in *Gesammelte Werke. Taschenbuchausgabe in acht Bänden*, 8 vols., ed. Max Brod, vol. *Beschreibungen eines Kampfes: Novellen, Skizzen, Aphorismen aus dem Nachlaß* (Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer, 1998), p. 72. En. trans. [unspecified translator]: "Why such reluctance? If you only followed the parables you yourselves would become parables and with that rid of all your daily cares. / Another said: I bet that is also a parable. / The first said: you have won. / The second said: But unfortunately only in parable. / The first said: No, in reality: in parable you have lost." In *Parables and Paradoxes* [bilingual, various translators] (Schocken: New York, 1971); cit. J. Hillis Miller, *Tropes, Parables, Performatives: Essays on Twentieth Century Literature* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990), pp. 145-146.

⁴ *Gesammelte Werke in sieben Bänden*, 7 vols., ed. Beda Allemann et al. (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 2000), vol. 3, p. 165, henceforth cited as *GW*, followed by the number of the volume and page number (in this case: *GW* 3:165). Trans. Peter Fenves: "'Everything flows': even this thought, and does it not bring everything again to a standstill?" In Werner Hamacher, "The Second of Inversion: Movements of a Figure Through Celan's Poetry", in Hamacher, *Premises: Essays on Philosophy and Literature from Kant to Celan*, trans. Fenves (Cambridge, MA: Harvard U.P., 1996), p. 344. — Besides the mentioned *Gesammelte Werke*, I will be citing a few other editions of Paul Celan's works, too. Two recent critical editions in several volumes also contain draft versions: the so-called *Tübinger Celan-Ausgabe* (*Werke: Tübinger Ausgabe*, 9 vols, ed. Jürgen Wertheimer et al. [Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1999ff]) is henceforth cited as *TCA* (followed by the name of the volume and either page number or, in the case of the *Meridian* volume, the number of the section in the final version of the speech [Endf.] or manuscript [Ms.] or typescript [Ts.] fragment; the abbreviation D.O.M. refers to the radio essay "Die Dichtung Ossip Mandelstamms" in that volume), and the so-called *Bonner Celan-Ausgabe* (*Werke: Historisch-kritische Ausgabe*, ed. Beda Allemann et al. [Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1990ff]), is henceforth cited as *BCA* (followed by the volume and page numbers). I will also cite the excellent one-volume edition with a commentary by Barbara Wiedemann: *Die Gedichte: Kommentierte Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Barbara Wiedemann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005), henceforth cited as *DGKG*. English translations are most often either by Michal Hamburger (*Poems of Paul Celan* [New York: Persea Books, 2002]) or by John Felstiner (*Selected Poems and Prose of Paul Celan* [New York: Norton, 2001]); the name of the translator will be given in each case.

* * *

La poésie est de toutes les eaux claires celle qui s'attarde le moins aux reflets de ses ponts.

Poésie, la vie future à l'intérieur de l'homme requalifié.

(René Char)⁵

PROLEGOMENON I

Counter-figures, in plural. At least before any further determinations are given, this is a multivalent, ambivalent term. Multivalent: it has several values. Ambivalent: it has contrasting or contradictory values. The prefix 'counter-' itself means "(1) reciprocation, opposition, frustration, rivalry, (2) opposite position or direction, (3) correspondence, match, (of things having naturally two opposite parts), (4) duplicate, substitute." Inasmuch as we shall be dealing with *antimetaphoric resistance* and *figuralité*, the term 'figure' must be taken here primarily in the sense of "figure of speech", namely a "recognized form of abnormal expression giving variety, force, etc., e.g. aposiopesis, hyperbole, metaphor, (- of speech only) piece of exaggeration".⁶ However, such figures as hyperbole and aposiopesis can be counter-figures to metaphor. Aposiopesis, "A rhetorical artifice, in which the speaker comes to a sudden halt, as if unable or unwilling to proceed",⁷ may also – *as if* – cease to be a mere rhetorical artifice, it can be used against rhetorical artifice, against eloquence or euphuism, against the 'as if' that belongs to rhetorical artifice. It can be used as a rhetorical artifice against rhetorical artifice – a rhetorical artifice against itself, *as it were*. *As if*. Every anti-rhetorical gesture can be construed in terms of rhetoric, as it seems. As a wilful privation, determined negation, and thus an artifice in its own right. (If that is not a "hermeneutic of suspicion", then what is?)⁸ What can you say – ? How can you reply, if even your unwillingness to reply can be considered an artificial device? For many a theorist these days, any objection to metaphor or rheto-

⁵ "À la santé du serpent (XXVI)", in *Œuvres complètes*, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard, cop. 1983, repr. 2001), p. 267. German trans. Paul Celan: "Dichtung: unter allen klaren Gewässern ist sie's, deren Verweilen am kürzesten währt, wenn sie der Spiegelung der Brücken begegnet. Dichtung: künftiges Leben im Innern des wieder zum Menschsein befähigten Menschen." (GW 4:434-435.)

⁶ *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, ed. H. W. Fowler and F. G. Fowler, 4th ed. rev. by E. McIntosh (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), entries "counter-", "figure" (henceforth cited as COD).

⁷ OED, entry "aposiopesis"; the following examples are given, among others: "1618 *Hist. P. Warbeck* in *Harl. Misc.* (1793) 63 His communication was still seasoned with savoury parenthesis and breakings off, or, if you will, aposiopesises. 1727 *POPE Art Sinking* 95 The Aposiopesis, an excellent figure for the ignorant, as 'what shall I say?' when one has nothing to say, or 'I can no more,' when one really can no more." (OED, 50010452; 19 Jan. 2007.) We may observe that for Lacan, signification always has an element of 'aposiopesis' in it: "Car le signifiant de sa nature anticipe toujours sur le sens en déployant en quelque sorte au-devant de lui sa dimension. Comme il se voit au niveau de la phrase quand elle s'interrompt avant le terme significatif: Jamais je ne ..., Toujours est-il..., Peut-être encore..." ("L'instance de la lettre dans l'insconscient ou la raison depuis Freud", in *Écrits I* [Paris: Seuil, cop. 1966, repr. 1999], pp. 490-526, here p. 499.)

⁸ In his polemical (mis)reading of Derrida's "La mythologie blanche", Paul Ricœur assumes that Derrida combines the Heideggerian deconstruction with what he calls "weapons of the hermeneutic of suspicion", namely Marxian ideological critique, Nietzschean genealogy and Freudian psychoanalysis (*La métaphore vive* [Paris: Seuil, cop. 1975], p. 363); however, this is indeed a rather gross misconstrual of Derrida's text. Derrida himself responds to Ricœur in the text (originally presented in a 1978 conference on metaphor, where Ricœur also participated) "Le retrait de la métaphore" (in *Psyché — inventions de l'autre* [Paris: Galilée, 1987], pp. 63-93).

ric in general would be nothing but an artificial device against that which is most natural, most normal and not at all “abnormal”: the rule of metaphor, a natural talent from which there is “no escaping”.⁹ Why – and how on earth can one – decline the gift of metaphor?

Figures are of course not only figures of speech. Any “Image, likeness” in general as the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* puts it, any “External form, shape”, any “emblem, type, simile”, any “permitted deviation from rules of construction, e.g. ellipse”, even any “particular form of syllogism according to position of middle term”, and so on and so forth, can be called a “figure” (COD). And we shall not restrict, by an arbitrary decision, the scope of the plural term ‘counter-figures’ too quickly either, not even to these various options of ‘counter-’ and ‘figure’, although the first of these prolegomena will consider the first counter-figure, namely the Second Commandment.

The entry for ‘counterfigure’ in the *Oxford English Dictionary* gives some of the acceptations for this rare and obsolete term and its correspondences to other terms: it is defined first of all simply as “[a] figure or type corresponding to something else”, but is also considered as a synonym to “antitype”, which is itself an ambiguous term: “That which is shadowed forth or represented by the ‘type’ or symbol”, but also: “One of the opposite or contrary kind.” What is “antitypous” resists force and penetration.

Even though the *OED* considers the term rare and obsolete, there is nothing that prevents its novel use for various purposes. Judith Butler uses the term ‘counterfigure’ in a manner akin to ours, one of ours, one that is not yet recognized by dictionaries but more or less immediately intuitive: “It seemed to me that Antigone might work as a counterfigure to the trend championed by recent feminists to seek the backing and authority of the state to implement feminist policy aims.”¹⁰

In order to examine counter-figurative gestures that are formally common to both literature and philosophy, or art and philosophy, we shall first turn to some of the most classical pieces of literature in our tradition. In this first prolegomenon, it is a question of the Second Commandment – the most sublime text of the Jewish law book, as Kant has said.¹¹ Heterogeneous as they are, no doubt, with respect to their ‘material’ (the *Genesis* and the *Iliad*, Shakespeare and Dickinson, etc., not to mention the philosophical and theoretical ‘sources’ discussed: Aristotle, Heidegger, and Derrida with regard to the ambivalences and paradoxes related to the notion of metaphor; Paul de Man, Jonathan Culler, and Murray Krieger who speak of the “essentially anti-poetic” features of this notion and of “literature’s resistance to metaphor”), these prolegomena still do have a common final aim, namely to approach the ‘Meridian’: the *Meridian* “crossing through the tropes [*Tropen durchkreuzendes*]”, and the will of the tropes and metaphors, in the poem, to be “carried *ad absurdum*”, which is also named in the same speech bearing the title “Der Meridian”. Celan spoke of this ‘crossing-through’ also in other words, in another language: “*La Poésie déjoue l’image.*”¹² *Déjouer*, *durchkreuzen*: both of these verbs are translated, according to dictionaries, as one English verb: “to frustrate.” So it is a question of ‘frustrating’ the tropes, the images, the figures, of ‘countering’ them (if we may take advantage of a certain possibility of metonymic displace-

⁹ James Deese, “Mind and Metaphor: A Commentary”, in *New Literary History (NLH)*, Vol. VI No. 1, Autumn 1974, pp. 211-217, here p. 217. This is of course only one example of the mainstream view of all modern metaphor theories: no escape from the realm of metaphor.

¹⁰ Judith Butler, *Antigone’s Claim: Kinship Between Life and Death* (New York: Columbia U.P., 2000), p. 1.

¹¹ Cf. Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (1790), ed. K. Vorländer (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1990), = *KdU*, B 125 (the established standard abbreviations and pagination for Kant’s three Critiques are used here: *KrV*, *KpV*, *KdU*, A for the first edition in each case, B for the 2nd. ed.).

¹² Cf. Celan, »*Mikrolithen sind, Steinchen*«: *Die Prosa aus dem Nachlaß*, ed. Barbara Wiedemann & Bertrand Badiou (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 2005), No. 230.2 (the note cited here dates from 1968); henceforth cited as *Mikrolithen*; see also *TCA/Meridian*, Endf. 50d.

ment between the prefix ‘counter-’ as ‘frustration’ and the verb ‘to counter’): to counteract their effect, the effect we suppose that poetic language has when we interpret it in terms of trope, metaphor, *Sinn-bild*, in terms of rhetorical figures and such effects as “redescription of reality” – redescription instead of “giving check to reality”. But “*déjouer*” does not happen without “*jouer*”, and “*Durchkreuzen*” still lets the crossed-over appear, as in a palimpsest; a counter-figure, for instance “giving check to reality” (or “to time”) instead of just “redescribing reality”, but without any pretensions of crossing over to some higher reality or to transcend time, is obviously still a figure of sorts, an antitype, an “exception that proves the rule” – the “rule of metaphor”, if you will. As we shall see, there is a “counter-metaphorical thrust” at work in the literary “metaphors” themselves, and indeed, the tropes and metaphors in the poem have themselves their “will” to be “carried *ad absurdum*”. *Reductio ad absurdum* – or the anti-metaphoric resistance – belongs to the intentional structure of the poetic figure itself.¹³ But now we shall begin with the first counter-figure, the Second Commandment.

THE FIRST COUNTER-FIGURE...

... is the Second Commandment

The first counter-figure is the Second Commandment: “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing...” The only obviously figurative element in this sentence is the image of a “graven image”. But since the Second Commandment speaks of “any graven image, *or* any likeness”, a *graven* image is only an example: a paradigm for all the images, while the conjunction “or” introduces the extension of this paradigm to *any* likeness at all. This prohibition would forbid producing any image portraying that which is, or should be, without image, namely any other-*than*-image.¹⁴ But this prohibition, this counter-figure must be motivated by another that silently precedes it: if the commandment is

¹³ On *Durchkreuzen*, cf. Martin Heidegger, “Zur Seinsfrage”, in *Wegmarken* (Frankfurt a.M.: Klostermann, 1991), pp. 385-426, here p. 411 *et passim* (also in *Gesamtausgabe*, Bd. 9; Heidegger’s *Gesamtausgabe* volumes are henceforth cited according to the following example: GA 9:385-426). On redescribing metaphor as a “redescription of reality”, cf. Paul Ricœur, *La métaphore vive* (*op. cit.*), whose English translation is entitled *The Rule of Metaphor*, trans. Robert Czerny (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977). On “giving check to time” or “to reality”, cf. Celan, *Mikrolithen*, Nos. 165.2, 166.1 (“in jedem Gedicht wird der Wirklichkeit ein für allemal Schach geboten” etc.; cf. also below). On the “carrying *ad absurdum*” of tropes and metaphors, cf. Celan, *TCA/Meridian*, Endf. 39a, and below. Most of these and other issues mentioned here shall be of course discussed in more detail later in the present treatise.

¹⁴ This is indeed one of the lexical acceptations of “antitype”: “That which a type or symbol represents” (*COD*). An allegory consists of “type” and “antitype”, or “text” and “pretext” (cf. e.g. Gerhard Kurz, *Metapher, Allegorie, Symbol* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988], pp. 41-45). On the other hand, Schelling’s notion of *Gegenbild* has been translated as *antitype* (by Miklos Vetö) and “counter-image”, as well as *contrafigura*. “Antitype” is also what *resists* force and penetration, perhaps *also* the force of representation or figuration in general; that is, at least if we allow ourselves to reduce the word to its abstract possibilities of signification, which are by no means the same as the set of established lexical acceptations, as I hope will become clear. — On Schelling’s notion of *Gegenbild*, Marie-Christine Chailiot-Gillet writes in her review of Miklos Vetö’s work on Schelling: “[T]he notion of the *Gegenbild*, an antitype or counter-image, finds its place in designating a secondary or derived reality that ‘reflects’ a further primordial reality at a lower level and in a specifically modified way. The relationship between ground and antitype is complex: particular things are the anti-types of the whole insofar as the latter is their ground, but they can also desire, in their particularity, to tear themselves away and affirm their difference from the Absolute. But this is only possible because particular things multiply, as it were, the ground’s relation to itself,

not purely arbitrary, there must be something already in the other-than-image that resists or perhaps even forbids figuration and restrains the free play of imagination, a counter-figurative resistance motivating the outspoken commandment.

In this context, as it seems, the words are words of God. Namely, the origin and motivator of the commandment is the wholly other *without* image, as the words preceding these reveal to us: “And God spake all these words, saying, / I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. / Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” Idolatry is the worship of other gods, and iconolatry, the worship of images, is a form of idolatry. But does the prohibition of image-making perhaps still concern *any* other, any-other-than-image? And that is: any ‘other’ that *either can be or cannot be* portrayed by an image, portrayed by *its* image *or* by the image of another.

... any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: ...

The prohibition concerns stars and trees, humans and animals, fish and rock. Any thing, any creature, any being imaginable, any god.

But the Second Commandment itself contains a clause that seems to divide the prohibition of idolatry into two antagonistic moments and introduces another counter-figure which threatens to undermine the first one, the figure against figuration. As if the voice uttering this first counter-figure, “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness...”, suddenly became suspicious of its own judgement and opted for a second, somewhat less austere alternative, forbidding not the making of images and likenesses in itself, but their worship:

Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them...

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing... Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them... But how could one do that, how could one bow oneself down to images and likenesses and serve them, and how could one *not* do that, if one had already obeyed that which was decreed in the first moment of the Second Commandment and not made any image or likeness in the first place?

Here are the First and the Second Commandments in their entirety as they are pronounced at the beginning of the twentieth book of Exodus, first in the canonical King James version:

- (1) And God spake all these words, saying,
- (2) I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of

the ground being itself antitype, being at once archetype and antitype. The ground is therefore paradoxical by definition, possessing potentialities at once productive and hostile to the life which the ground itself generates.” Challiot-Gillet, “[Review of] *Le fondement selon Schelling*, by Miklos Vetö. Paris: L’Harmattan, 2002”, *European Journal of Philosophy* 14:1 (2006), pp. 121-126, here p. 124.

the house of bondage.

(3) Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

(4) Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth:

(5) Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;

(6) And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments. [Ex. 20:1-6. King James Bible.]

And here is a “hebraicizing” modern translation, by Everett Fox, of the Second Commandment in its entirety, according to the mainstream Judaic tradition in which the First Commandment of most Christian doctrines is actually included as part of the ‘second word’ of the Decalogue (while the first of these ten ‘words’, namely “I the LORD am your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage”, is indeed formally a ‘declaration’ rather than a positive or negative ‘commandment’):

(3) “You are not to have
any other gods
before my presence.

(4) You are not to make yourself a carved-image
or any figure

that is in the heavens above, that is on the earth beneath, that is in the waters
beneath the Earth;

(5) you are not to bow down to them,
you are not to serve them,
for I, YHWH your God,
am a jealous God,
calling-to-account the iniquity of the fathers upon the sons, to the third and fourth
(generation)

of those that hate me,

(6) but showing loyalty to the thousandth
of those that love me,
of those that keep my commandments.”¹⁵

¹⁵ Trans. Everett Fox, *The Five Books of Moses. The Schocken Bible 1* (New York: Schocken Books, 1995); cit. Carl S. Ehrlich, “‘Make yourself no graven image’: The Second Commandment and Judaism”, in L. Ehrlich et al., eds., *Textures and Meaning: Thirty Years of Judaic Studies at the University of Massachusetts Amherst*, Department of Judaic and Near Eastern Studies, University of Massachusetts Amherst, cop. 2004 [<http://www.umass.edu/judaic/anniversaryvolume>], pp. 254-271, here pp. 257-258. Here the Second Commandment is considered as according to the mainstream Judaic tradition, in which the First Commandment (or the first “word” of the Decalogue) consists of the “introduction” saying “I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage”, and the Second Commandment begins by the words “Thou shalt have no other gods before me”, continuing by the more detailed prohibition of idolatry (Ex. 20:2-5; cf. Deut. 5:6-9). Cf. Ehrlich: “As far as I am informed, the verse ‘You shall have no other gods besides Me’ (Exod 20:3) is not part of the Second Commandment in any of the Christian traditions. [...] Nonetheless, a different division of the commandments has become normative in Judaism. According to this understanding, the divine declaration ‘I the LORD am your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage’ (Exod 20:2) stands alone as the First Commandment. ‘You shall have no other gods besides Me’ (Exod 20:3) serves as the introduction to the Second Commandment, which continues with the prohibition of idolatry in vv. 4-6. [...] The prohibition of worshiping foreign gods is read

On the whole, the Second Commandment is of course to be read as a prohibition of idolatry: thus perhaps not strictly directed against *all* image-making but rather against making images of God or bowing oneself down to any idol as if before *a* god, as if before ‘one of the gods’ as if there were many, against making oneself “any figure / that is in the heavens above, that is on the earth beneath, that is in the waters beneath the Earth” and bowing oneself down to such figures, or serving them as if one would serve one’s master. Figuration may be inevitable, or at least extremely hard to avoid (and as old as man himself, made in God’s image), but one is not to adore one’s own creation, neither the figures one creates nor one’s own power of creating them, as if one would create one’s own master and then serve him. For “your God”, the one speaking in the first person singular to the second person singular, is a “jealous God”. Jealous of his *creation* in both senses of this word: creation as *creating* on the one hand and the *created* on the other. You are not to posit anything or anyone before his presence, as if you could, before the presence that always already preceded you and every(thing) present.

But still, is it not as if this jealous God already opted for a more merciful decree after hovering for a brief moment between the most strict prohibition and its direst consequences imaginable, the prohibition of making images and likenesses, *all* images and likenesses, which would, by consequence, even amount to some sort of denial of His own work? (That is, the making of not only “any likeness *of* any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth”, but of “any figure / that *is* in the heavens above, that *is* on the earth beneath, that *is* in the waters beneath the Earth”, namely crea-

as part and parcel of the prohibition of idolatry.” (Ehrlich, p. 257.) Cf. also Kenneth Reinhard and Julia Reinhard Lupton, “The Subject of Religion: Lacan and the Ten Commandments”, in *Diacritics* (summer 2003) 33.2: 71-97, here pp. 74-75. Cf. Chouraqui: “Il ne sera pas pour toi d’autres Elohîms contre mes faces. / Tu ne feras pour toi sculpture ni toute image / de ce qui est dans les ciels, en haut, / sur la terre, en bas, dans les eaux, sous la terre. / Tu ne te prosterner pas devant elles, tu ne les serviras pas, / oui, moi-même, IHVH-Adonai, ton Elohîms, / l’Él ardent...” (André Chouraqui, *La Bible* [Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 2003]). The most striking distinctive feature of Fox’s translation is, as we can see, that the formulation “You are not to make yourself [...] any figure / that is in the heavens above [etc.]” lacks something that is present in the other translations, namely the “of”-structure in the syntax of “any likeness *of* any thing that is in heaven above”, corresponding to the structure “... *toute image* / de ce qui est dans *les ciels* ...” in Chouraqui’s translation. In all, Ehrlich offers a brilliant reading of the Second Commandment, including an anecdote that could perhaps summarize much of the Judaic tradition concerning this Commandment as a prohibition of idolatry: “The story is told about Rav, the founder of the illustrious Talmud academy in Sura in Babylonia, that he was once a guest in a synagogue in which there was a beautifully decorated mosaic floor. Rav participated actively in the synagogue service and even read out of the Torah. Yet, when the congregation bowed down in worship, Rav remained standing. His erect attitude was attributable to the figural representations on the mosaic floor. The fact that such pictures were to be found in a synagogue did not disturb him. After all, they did not keep him from praying there. Were he, however, to bow down in prayer, it could appear as if he were bowing down to the figures depicted on the floor, instead of before the invisible God. It was in order to avoid even the possible semblance of idolatry that Rav chose to remain standing.” (*Op. cit.*, p. 263.) This “erect attitude” is a counter-figurative act of manifestation, an evasive gesture in order to avoid even the possible *semblance* of idolatry. Such a gesture is histrionic in its own right, of course; a figure against figures, a *counter-figure*; indeed, a silent ‘artistic’ performance of sorts. It is not iconoclasm but rather indicates tolerance, distinguishing between the presence of figures, which is no problem for this rabbi, and what is to be performed in their presence, and in spite of, not necessarily the figures, but the pretensions that some might, knowingly or not, ascribe to these figures, that is: in spite of the allegedly iconic function of these images, which might be a misunderstanding as to their role as figures.

tion *as a figure* of God's creation, the created beings as an after-image of the original act of creating them, viewed by the man who is made in God's image, as if in order to see this splendid after-image, the world, Creation, through his eyes, these mirrors of flesh.) A moment of hesitation between this strictest prohibition and the more moderate prohibition that concerns *bowing oneself down to the images* and *serving them*? Is it not as if God decided, after a too rash first decision and a moment of indecision, or doubt, following this first moment, to opt for a more 'humane' and less unconditional commandment, as if He said: Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing... (but in case thou dost, and since thou hast already made them unto thee and canst not but make them, in spite of thyself)... thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them...? Figuration and imagination, as a passive or active production of 'mental images' and in a broad sense, all 'ideation' included (we might presume that if an 'interior' act of coveting, for example, is already a transgression of the Divine Law, whether the deed of adultery or theft is committed or not, also the interior image-making is already a sin), are inevitable — this is a *condition humaine par excellence*, and it could also be seen as a mimetic perversion of the 'original' divine power of creation — but idolizing these creations, not only the obscure cult of worshipping "carved images" and visible, tangible figures as fetishes or idols, but figures and images in general, as if they were the *things themselves* and not their *images*, and *our* power (in the sense of active or passive capability) to create them, as if we could put ourselves in charge of creating the things themselves in their transcendence, put ourselves *beyond* their transcendence, should not be part of that, part of the human condition. While figuration seems inevitable, iconolatry and idolatry are not. Or at least should not be.

So let us pretend that we could not right away come across this paradox, or this moment of indecision or even contradiction, and that we could not immediately reduce it into a consistent commandment against idolatry, forbidding the making of images of God or gods, as if there were several, and/or worshipping idols and/or idolizing anything else than this one God of Israel. Let us pretend that we were to take the sentence "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth" as literally as we can, by itself, and not to consider it only as an elliptical passage in the text, referring to what precedes it and follows it in the sequence of phrases of which the text called the Second Commandment consists. Let us pretend that this prohibition is at least apt to extend itself beyond sculpture and painting. Let us pretend that God himself paused for a moment after speaking these words and realized, as if through a brief silent consultation with himself, that there were already indefinitely many images and figures in the heavens above, on the earth beneath, in the waters beneath the earth and also in the secret recesses beneath man's own surface, in his mind or heart; and these images in the mind of the very privileged creature, whom God made in His own image, were also an image of His Creation, in both senses of this word. Man has already made so

many images and has a strong tendency to make them — what would be the consequences of forbidding him to do so? Is this tendency not in the very nature of man? Is this power of creating images not something essential to the creature made in His very image, in the image of the One who is without image, and yet, has created all these images, all these figures? And should man be blind to His work and not be filled with wonder and awe at seeing it? “When Rabbi Gamliel was asked why God only gave laws against idolatry, rather than excising it from the world, he answered that people worship the sun, the moon, the stars, the planets, signs of the zodiac, mountains, hills, and even other people. Should God therefore destroy them all?”¹⁶ The presence of these ‘figures’ is the presence of Creation, and perhaps even reproducing their presence, representing them in the form of images, is not condemnable in itself. But while this reproduction is innocent in itself and while figuration is inevitable, idolatry and iconolatry can be and should be avoided.

A scene like this one — an interior scene accessible to our imagination — in which we may see God manifesting such psychological or moral characteristics that are usually considered human or humane, is not unique in the Bible. Jacques Derrida writes: “More than once God himself seems to repent and show regret or remorse.”¹⁷ In *Donner la mort*, an instance of this semblance of regret or remorse is the citation of God’s words after the Flood in the eighth book of Genesis — we cite the *King James Bible*: “[A]nd the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man’s sake; for the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done. / While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.”¹⁸ This is actually the very reversal of a previous repentance, in Genesis 6:5-8: “And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. / And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. / And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them. / But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.”¹⁹

¹⁶ Ehrlich, “Make yourself no graven image”, p. 265.

¹⁷ “Plus d’une fois Dieu lui-même semble se repentir, et marquer du regret, ou du remords.” (*Donner la mort* [Paris: Galilée, 1999], p. 187.)

¹⁸ Genesis 8:21-22; *King James Bible*. In this and the next quote from Genesis, the noun “imagination” must be understood in the very specific, archaistic Biblical sense: “†2. [...] a. Scheming or devising; a device, contrivance, plan, scheme, plot; a fanciful project. *Obs.* exc. as a biblical archaism. / [...] 1535 COVERDALE *Lam.* iii. 60 Thou hast herde their despytefull wordes (O Lorde) yee and all their ymaginacions agaynst me. [...] 1709 SWIFT *Advancem. Relig.* Wks. 1755 II. I. 117 These airy imaginations of introducing new laws for the amendment of mankind. 1760-72 H. BROOKE *Fool of Quality* (1809) III. 47 Any imagination..tending to change the nature or form of any one of the three estates.” (*OED*, 50112174.)

¹⁹ Derrida cites Dhormes’s translation: “Iahvé *se repentit* [...] « [...] car je *me repens* de les avoir faits. »” Cit. in *Donner la mort*, p. 198, Derrida’s emphasis. Henceforth the emphases (italics) are as in the original quoted text if not otherwise indicated.

God has no image, at least no other image than man — or Adam, originally both man and woman, before Eve was created out of his rib — the man whom He created in His image; but imagining Yahweh to take any particular human-like shape is already to commit idolatry. He has a name, though. Indeed, right after the First and the Second Commandment follows the Third, saying, “Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.” (Ex. 20:7.) To take the singular name in vain, to *displace* the personal name is comparable to idolatry. But perhaps the words “LORD thy God” are already displaced with regard to the hebraicized form, “Yahweh thy Elohim”, substituting the singularity of the personal name with the common nouns “god” and “lord”? Periphrases (such as Adonai) have indeed been used in the Jewish tradition since the Second Temple, and thus these are meant as a precaution against using the proper name in vain.

Jean-Luc Marion has summarized one traditional analogy as follows: “For Christians and Jews, where man is made in the image of God, if God is unknowable, then man is unknowable too.”²⁰ As it seems that the prohibition of iconolatry is not restricted to the portrayals of Yahweh, could we suggest that taking *any* name in vain, displacing the proper name in general as “the signifier that transcends any meaning it might attract”,²¹ is already a transgression and bearing false witness with regard to the singularity denoted by it, the radical alterity with regard to all generic designations? Such universalization has indeed been suggested in a psychoanalytic context, namely with reference to Jacques Lacan’s discussion of the Decalogue, in an article by Kenneth Reinhard and Julia Reinhard Lupton:

The commandment establishes the difference between any referent and its representa-

²⁰ Jean-Luc Marion, in discussion with Jacques Derrida following the conference paper “In the Name”, in John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon, eds., *God, the Gift, and Postmodernism* (Bloomington Indiana: Indiana U. P., 1999), p. 47. — According to a tradition of commentators, the ‘resemblance’ between man and God does not, of course, reside in a visual likeness, but rather in man’s being “‘cut off’ from both God and nature through the alienating function of language”; this is what Kenneth Reinhard and Julia Reinhard Lupton write in their article “The Subject of Religion” (2003, *op. cit.*). They explain the Hebrew word “*tselem* — likeness, idol, semblance, originally meaning ‘something cut off,’ hence coordinate with carved or graven” — so that we may see difference rather than identity as constitutive to the ‘resemblance’ between man and God, or between Adam and Yahweh. Their separation is *their* separation, it does not only separate man and God from each other but also brings them together, it is something that keeps them absolutely apart from each other but also from “nature”, and this separation from nature (even though the inverted commas are here left out, they should obviously silently and invisibly accompany the word “nature” here) is what constitutes their resemblance, their togetherness. “Although Feuerbach delighted in reversing Genesis by declaring that man has made God in his own image, the wit is only apparent [...]. God completes the creation of man in his image by placing him over nature, as its master: the ‘likeness’ of man to God depends on man’s difference from the natural world. Moreover, what alienates man from nature is the subject’s alienation in language, precisely what makes him God-like. If man and God appear to mirror each other in a projective fashion à la Feuerbach, this mirroring is expressed in the form of a chiasmus, a schematic relation created in and by language, produced through the syntactical inversions of words and not in the realm of visual likeness or ontology: ‘And God created man in His image, in the image of God He created him.’ The Hebrew *tselem* [...] at once locates ‘man’ and ‘God’ in a potentially idolatrous continuum and defines man as ‘cut off’ from both God and nature through the alienating function of language.” (Kenneth Reinhard and Julia Reinhard Lupton, “The Subject of Religion”, p. 79.)

²¹ See Reinhard and Reinhard Lupton, “The Subject of Religion”, p. 78.

tion — hence its possible prohibition of all visualizations — by recourse to the limit case of God, the singular referent for which there can be no adequate symbol. In what Lacan calls ‘the laws of speech’ incarnated by the Ten Commandments, the name of God is the exception that proves the rule, [...]. [“The Subject of Religion”, p. 78.]

Thus the name of God — the unpronounceable name for which even the word “God” is a periphrasis²² — or the figure without a figure, is indeed an *antitype*, “a sort of extreme exception that proves the rule”, in other words: a *counter-figure*, in a pre-eminent but still also paradigmatic sense (see the epigraphs above).

On the other hand, the Second Commandment marks “the institution of the rule of speech at the expense of the idolatrous pleasures of the imaginary”, as Kenneth Reinhard and Julia Reinhard Lupton reformulate Lacan’s analysis.²³ Entering the order of speech, namely into the symbolic order, means “the sacrifice of the image” and blocking off “the infantile play of phantasms” (“The Subject of Religion”, p. 78). This scheme is not Lacan’s invention, however. To see the name as a counter-figure of the image is a Hegelian theme *par excellence*. It is in names that we think, says Hegel, and it is the name that “sublates” or, let us say, *relieves* (*aufhebt*) the image.²⁴ In “La littérature et le droit à la mort”, Maurice Blanchot paraphrases Hegel’s early *Jenaer Systementwürfe* (1803-1804): “Adam’s first act, which made him master of the animals, was to give them names, that is, he annihilated them in their existence (as existing creatures).”²⁵ Blanchot draws from this the conclusion that “before any word is spoken, there must be a sort of immense hecatomb, a preliminary flood plunging all of creation into a total sea [*comme préface à toute parole, une sorte d’immense hécatombe, un déluge préalable, plongeant dans une mer complète toute la création*]”.²⁶ A *preface* before speech: speech before speech, a *Vorschrift* which commands and permits man to be the master of the animals.

²² Cf. e.g. Reinhard & Reinhard Lupton, “The Subject of Religion”, pp. 75-76, 78.

²³ “The Subject of Religion”, p. 72. Cf. Lacan: “[T]he second commandment, the one that formally excludes not only every cult, but also every image, every representation of what is in heaven, on earth, or in the void, seems to me to show that what is involved is in a very special relationship to human feeling as a whole. In a nutshell, the elimination of the function of the imaginary presents itself to my mind, and, I think, to yours, as the principle of the relation to the symbolic, in the meaning we give that term here; that is to say, to speech. Its principal condition is here.” (*The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VII: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis, 1959–1960*, trans. Dennis Porter [New York: Norton, 1986], pp. 98-99; the translation is cited and modified by Reinhard & Reinhard Lupton, “The Subject of Religion”, pp. 77-78.)

²⁴ Cf. e.g. *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften* (1830), ed. Friedhelm Nicolini & Otto Pöggeler (Hamburg: Meiner, 1991), § 462, p. 375. “To relieve” is meant here as a translation of Derrida’s translation of *aufheben* and *die Aufhebung* by *relever* and *la relève*; the traditional English translation is “to sublate”, “sublation”.

²⁵ The French translation of Hegel’s text is cited in “La littérature et le droit à la mort”, in *La part du feu* (Paris: Gallimard, 1949), p. 325. Trans. “Literature and the Right to Death”, by Lydia Davis, in *The Gaze of Orpheus and Other Literary Essays by Maurice Blanchot*, ed. P. Adams Sitney (Barrytown, NY: Station Hill, 1981), pp. 21-62. Hegel’s original text reads: “Der erste Act, wodurch Adam seine Herrschaft über die Thiere constituirt hat, ist, daß er ihnen Nahmen gab, d. h. sie als seyende vernichtete, und sie zu für sich ideellen machte.” (“System der Philosophie: III. Geistesphilosophie [Fragm. 20]”, in *Jenaer Systementwürfe I. Gesammelte Werke, Bd. VI*, ed. Klaus Düsing & Heinz Kimmerle [Hamburg: Meiner, 1975], p. 288.)

²⁶ Blanchot, *La part du feu*, p. 326. Trans. Davis.

To plunge all Creation into this ocean of annihilation is not only to plunge all created beings into it ('Creation' as according to the metonymy of the Verb transferred into its nominal effects), but even to plunge the Act of Creation into an image, into a troubled and even blasphemous reflection, an inverted antitype of Itself: a Mirror of Creation. Adam's act of annihilation is an inverted parallel of God's Act of Creation out of Nothing, and where these parallels meet, where they cross each other in a chiasmus, in this *prefiguration of the Flood* (*un déluge préalable*), we find also God's remorse pre-figured. But the crossing of a chiasmus is never merely a crossing-out, a cancellation: the scene figured and pre-figured as a scene of remorse, or the scene of forgiveness, is also a performative, constitutive act of a covenant.

And perhaps this chiasmus between remorse and grace, silently situating itself also between what we have just called the first and the second moments of the Second Commandment, the first prohibiting the making of images and the second only their worship, also marks the origin of literature, as a creation of verbal 'images' and their prohibition, or rather the prohibition of their worship. The literary character of the sacred text, the Word of God mediated by the mouth of man, allows for antagonistic interpretations and doctrines while never ceasing to insist on its letter. The letter insists upon itself. The written text always says the same, repeats itself, regardless of what we would like to ask it. This is at least what Socrates has taught us.

But the two moments of the Second Commandment also seem almost identical to a certain beginning or even origin of philosophy. At the beginning of his Third Meditation, the one concerned with God's existence (*De Deo, quod existat*), René Descartes describes or prescribes the philosopher's procedure of self-examination, inviting him, himself (future indicative, first person singular: "*Claudam nunc oculos, ...*") or, in principle, anyone, to close his eyes and block his ears and retire all the senses from their activities. And it is not only these external influences that are to be excluded, but in this quest for itself, the *res cogitans* must, in order to recognize itself for what it is, even efface out of the sphere of consciousness all the images of corporeal things, *or at least, because such an effacement of all these images is hardly possible*, as Descartes says, regard them as useless and deceptive things of nought (*ut inanes et falsas nihili*).²⁷ The images, all the images, cannot be effaced altogether, their total annihilation is impossible, but their empire must be suspended as a whole.

²⁷ "*Claudam nunc oculos, aures obturabo, avocabo omnes sensus, imagines etiam rerum corporalium omnes vel ex cogitatione mea delebo, vel certe, quia hoc fieri vix potest, illas ut inanes et falsas nihili pendam, [...]*" The original French translation by Duc de Luynes, reviewed by Descartes himself, reads (here in modernized orthography): "Je fermerai maintenant les yeux, je boucherai mes oreilles, je détournerai tous mes sens, j'effacerai même de ma pensée toutes les images corporelles, ou du moins, parce qu'à peine cela se peut-il faire, je les réputerai comme vaines et comme fausses ; [...]" (Descartes, *Méditations métaphysiques / Meditationes de prima philosophia*, Texte latin accompagné de la traduction du duc de Luynes, / *Méditations de philosophie première*, Présentation et traduction de Michelle Beyssade [Paris: Le Livre de Poche, cop. 1990], p. 82.)

So what we are suggesting is that such a dialectic of remorse and grace, such an interior dialogue, can even be situated in the hiatus between the two moments of the Second Commandment. And this is possible by virtue of the very letter of the text, its *literariness* so to say, and by virtue of the “imagination of man’s heart”, this interior scene that allows man to enter even the *other* interior scene and imagine what the “LORD said in his heart”, to feel the grief “at his heart”. But between these two hearts, between these two scenes and between my imagination and the grief in (or “at”) the other’s heart, just as between the two moments of the Second Commandment, between the image and the other-than-image (let us say: between the pipe and the image of a pipe, with the legend painted below, in Magritte’s *Trahison des images*: “*Ceci n’est pas une pipe*”), there *must* be a moment of halt, suspension, hiatus, check, *caveat*, a moment of *fear and trembling* that forever suspends my identification with the object of my imagination,²⁸ an *Atemwende* to mark the irreducible distance, the radical alterity between *my* heart or *my* imagination, and the interiority, *viz.* the invisibility of the other’s heart. “Everything is like everything”, as Donald Davidson says in his famous essay on metaphor,²⁹ but every thing is also unlike anything else. “*Tout autre est tout autre.*”³⁰

²⁸ I would like to refer here, not only to Kierkegaard (*Kierkegaard’s Writings VI: Fear and Trembling. Repetition*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong [Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1983]), but also to Derrida’s *Donner la mort* (Paris: Galilée, 1999), with its reading of *Fear and Trembling* as well as of Kafka’s *Brief an den Vater*, both containing powerful demonstrations of imagining the other’s interior scene or figuring out a response — this tremendous book by Derrida and its theory of literature (as hereditary to the religious discourse *and* as perjury against this inheritance and as desacralization [p. 205]) cannot be discussed in detail in the present treatise, but its profound effect must be hereby affirmed. The book also both explicitly and implicitly speaks of Celan’s poetry and of the “phenomenality” and “meteor-like” quality of the poetic “things” that Celan actually saw as counter-figures to metaphoricity. (We shall of course return to this.)

²⁹ “What Metaphors Mean”, in *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 5 No. 1, Special Issue on Metaphor (Autumn 1978), pp. 39, 41 (cf. below).

³⁰ Cf. Jacques Derrida, *Donner la mort* (Paris: Galilée, 1999), *passim*.

PROLEGOMENON II

This prolegomenon begins — rhetorically, no doubt — with an excerpt from a certain *Art of Poesy*, namely Boileau's, and proceeds to discuss another *Poetics*, and a *Rhetoric* too, namely Aristotle's, with regard to the fact that these two contain the first known theory of metaphor. Aristotle is not only known to have defined metaphor and to have formulated its first theory, he is also known for his tendency to *reduce* the metaphors of his opponents *ad absurdum*; he is not only the first known theorist of metaphor but also the first 'critic' of metaphorical discourse. Aristotle was, as far as we know, the first to define, but also the first to *decline*, metaphor — the gift of metaphor, as a token for natural talent. This ambivalence can be most economically portrayed by referring to a certain contradiction between *having* clarity and *being* obscure. In the *Poetics*, the talent for using metaphor well is considered as a token of another, more general talent common to both the poet and the philosopher, namely as showing "an eye for resemblances"; the metaphorical talent showing the general aptitude for observing similarity is praised as "the greatest thing by far".³¹ The *Rhetoric* states that "it is metaphor above all that gives perspicuity [to the diction]"; or more verbatim, metaphor *has* perspicuity or clarity, besides having a certain charm and "a foreign air".³² But in the *Topics*, this *having* clarity is contested (while *Topics* is indeed the treatise on the "counterpart" of rhetoric, dialectical argumentation), when Aristotle states that "metaphorical expressions are always obscure".³³ Everything that is said metaphorically is unclear (*pan gar asaphes to kata metaphoran legomenon*), says Aristotle, but the always obscure metaphor has clarity more than any other stylistic element (*to saphes ... echei malista hê metaphora*). But is this contradiction between having and being just relative to the context? Is it just so that Aristotle may grant clarity to metaphor in the context of rhetoric and, more specifically, when speaking of rhetorical *style*, which is the topic of the third book of the *Rhetoric*, while in the other context, the context of dialectical argumentation, clarity is precisely what metaphorical expression lacks? Is the rhetorical clarity just not clear enough for the purposes of the dialectic? Not

³¹ "[B]ut by far the greatest thing is the use of metaphor [or, more verbatim, 'by far the greatest is to be metaphorical', πολὺ δὲ μέγιστον τὸ μεταφορικὸν εἶναι]. That alone cannot be learnt; it is the token of genius [εὐφυΐας τε σημείον ἐστί]. For the right use of metaphor means an eye for resemblances [τὸ γὰρ εὖ μεταφέρειν τὸ τὸ ὅμοιον θεωρεῖν ἐστίν]." (*Po.* 22, 1459a5-9. Ed. Kassel; En. trans. W.H. Fyfe; reproduced at *The Perseus Digital Library Project*, <http://perseus.csad.ox.ac.uk/>, accessed May 2001; henceforth abbreviated as *PDL*.) See also the fourth chapter of the *Poetics* (1448b4 ff), where, in a parallel manner, "imitation" is characterized as properly human and congenital [σύμφυτον] to human beings.

³² "It is metaphor above all that gives perspicuity, pleasure, and a foreign air, and it cannot be learnt from anyone else; but we must make use of metaphors and epithets that are appropriate. [καὶ τὸ σαφὲς καὶ τὸ ἡδὺ καὶ τὸ ξενικὸν ἔχει μάλιστα ἢ μεταφορά, καὶ λαβεῖν οὐκ ἔστιν αὐτὴν παρ' ἄλλου. δεῖ δὲ καὶ τὰ ἐπιθέτα καὶ τὰς μεταφοράς ἀρμοστούσας λέγειν.] This will be secured by observing due proportion; otherwise there will be a lack of propriety [τοῦτο δ' ἔσται ἐκ τοῦ ἀνάλογον· εἰ δὲ μή, ἀπρεπὲς φανεῖται], because it is when placed in juxtaposition that contraries are most evident [διὰ τὸ παρ' ἄλληλα τὰ ἐναντία μάλιστα φαίνεσθαι]. We must consider, as a red cloak suits a young man, what suits an old one; for the same garment is not suitable for both. [ἀλλὰ δεῖ σκοπεῖν, ὥς νέω φοινικίς, οὕτω γέροντι τί· οὐ γὰρ ἡ αὐτὴ πρέπει ἐσθῆς]" (*Rh.* III, 2, 1405a8-14, trans. Freese [1967; *PDL*].) Cf. the translation by W. Rhys Roberts: "Metaphor, moreover, gives style clearness, charm, and distinction as nothing else can; and it is not a thing whose use can be taught by one man to another. Metaphors, like epithets, must be fitting, which means that they must fairly correspond to the thing signified: failing this, their inappropriateness will be conspicuous: the want of harmony between two things is emphasized by their being placed side by side. It is like having to ask ourselves what dress will suit an old man; certainly not the crimson cloak that suits a young man." (*Rhetorica*, 1924.)

³³ *Top.* VI, 2, 139b34-35, trans. E. S. Forster (1966).

to mention the higher purposes of philosophy, as well as the apodeictic ideal of logic in the *Analytics*? Perhaps the heuristic function that metaphor has in rhetoric and even in poetry must be abandoned in the realms of logic and philosophy? While rhetoric is the “counterpart” (*antistrophos*) of dialectic, metaphor seems to have a very different role in these two realms. The only justification for the presence of metaphor, or rather, of proportional analogy, in philosophical, dialectical or epistemic discourse, would seem to be the systematic elaboration of the *restricted*, four-term proportional analogy into an argument, or into a discussion that is in accordance with *universal* analogy; but when we have systematicity, we no longer have metaphor, and vice versa. Metaphor and systematicity are mutually exclusive, as it seems.³⁴ But our question will be, then, whether the concept of metaphor, ever since Aristotle’s “focus” upon single words (*onoma*, in Aristotle’s definition) in the “frame” of a single sentence (a *logos* “speaking of one thing”), excluding systematicity and the play of syntax, excluding “the excess of syntax over semantics”, is not a *condescending* gesture: whether locating metaphor in the region of poetry does not deprive poetry, or literature, of its own ‘discursive’ power to precisely *resist* metaphor.³⁵ To focus on isolated metaphors may mean a failure to question “what a metaphor is when it is located in a text [*was eine M. denn sei, wo sie im Text stehe*]” (Paul Celan).³⁶

THE GIFT OF METAPHOR AND ITS DECLINE

DEATH OF TRAGEDY, BIRTH OF METAPHOR (“QU’IL DÉCLINÂT SON NOM”)

J’aimerais mieux encore qu’il déclinât son nom
Et dît : “Je suis Oreste, ou bien Agamemnon”,
Que d’aller, par un tas de confuses merveilles,
Sans rien dire à l’esprit, étourdir les oreilles :
Le sujet n’est jamais assez tôt expliqué.

(Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux, *L’art poétique*)

*I’d rather much the nauseous Dunce should say
Downright, my name is Hector in the Play;
Than with a Mass of Miracles, ill joyn’d,
Confound my Ears, and not instruct my Mind.
The Subject’s never soon enough exprest.*

(Trans. William Soames, revised by John Dryden)³⁷

³⁴ Cf. Derrida, “La mythologie blanche : la métaphore dans le texte philosophique”, in *Marges — de la philosophie* (Paris: Minuit, cop. 1972).

³⁵ The present *prolegomenon* cannot furnish a systematical exposition of Aristotle’s theory and the relations between what we call *restricted* analogy (four-term proportion) and *general* or *universal* analogy (the analogy of being, the analogy of attribution; *pace* Pierre Aubenque, it can be, and has been demonstrated that Aristotle does entertain a “doctrine of ontological analogy” — if it can be called a doctrine); I am leaving this topic for another occasion.

³⁶ *TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 60/582.

³⁷ Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux, *L’art poétique*, III, 33-37 (*Œuvres classiques disposés d’après l’ordre*

“The Subject’s never soon enough exprest.” Even if all cannot be explained all at once, a dissertation must yield to the maxim expressed by Boileau, and Soames and Dryden as his translators. They do not say: never *too* soon, but: never soon *enough*. The subject should be expressed as soon as possible, but it can never be expressed soon enough. Soon enough to instruct the mind, as Soames and Dryden’s translation put it, and not to confound the ear. Even if innumerable figures should be needed — and Boileau indeed recommends the usage of innumerable figures for the sake of delight (“*De figures sans nombre égayez votre ouvrage*”) — they should never lead too far from their principal subject.³⁸ So let us try to explain ours, as soon as possible: the present dissertation will not have been about metaphor.

Such denial would not be very significant without the appearance to the contrary. And Boileau’s instruction is only significant, also as our epigraph, since the explication of a subject *may* require time and effort and often does. Or more than that: since to say that the subject is *never soon enough* expressed suggests, taken absolutely, that an explication never quite succeeds in a given time, that there will always remain a deferral of explication. Had Orestes never had any trouble in expressing his subject,³⁹ that is, to put it short, and with reference to Euripides’ *Orestes*, his being subject to the divine verdict of Apollo urging him to commit matricide and also justifying the deed, Boileau’s instruction would not be very significant. Were there no instances of such hesitation and confusion on stage, it would hardly be worth-while giving such advice to the author and to the actor.⁴⁰ Commentators have

chronologique, avec Introduction [etc.] par Ch-M. des Granges, 2ème éd. [Paris: Librairie Hatier, 1918], p. 234). English translation by Dryden and Soames (p. 31) as an electronic text in the *University of Virginia Library Electronic Text Center*, <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/BoiArtO.html>, last accessed in January 2007.

³⁸ Aristotle says that metaphor causes “the soul to search” or, as it is put in Freese’s translation, unlike an explicit simile, metaphor forces “the mind [...] to] examine” its underlying or, as it is said in the modern theories, “principal” subject: “For the simile, as we have said, is a metaphor differing only by the addition of a word, wherefore it is less pleasant because it is longer; it does not say that this is that, so that the mind does not even examine this [οὐκοῦν οὐδὲ ζητεῖ τοῦτο ἡ ψυχή]” (*Rh.* III, 10, 1410b17ff). After discussing simile, metaphorical diction, λέξις in general and the enthymeme in the same passage, he also says that the popular metaphor should be “neither strange [ἄλλοτριάν], for then it is difficult to take in at a glance, nor superficial, for then it does not impress the hearer” (ll. 31-33). So the strange term transferred in metaphor (μεταφορά δε ἐστὶν ὀνόματος ἄλλοτρίου ἐπιφορά) (*Po.* 1457b6-7) should not be far-fetched: it should impress the hearer and be liable to be taken in at a glance. The distinction between “principal subject” and “subsidiary subject” stems from the modern “interaction theory” of metaphor (cf. the works of Max Black [1962] and Ricœur [1975], and below).

³⁹ In French, *sujet* corresponds also to such expressions as *motif*, *occasion*, *raison* (cf. *Le petit Robert 1: Dictionnaire alphabétique et analogique de la langue française*, ed. Paul Robert et al. [Paris: Robert, 1984]; henceforth cited as *Petit Robert*), as for instance in the following three expressions in *La nouvelle Héloïse*: “Tu te presses beaucoup d’être fière de ta laideur ; sois plus humble, crois-moi, tu n’as encore que trop sujet de l’être.” “[...] il faudrait me mépriser beaucoup pour ne pas me croire heureuse avec tant de sujet de l’être.” “[...] si je sacrifie mon bras à la conservation d’une chose plus précieuse, qui est mon corps, je sacrifie mon corps à la conservation d’une chose plus précieuse, qui est mon bien-être. Si tous les dons que le ciel nous a faits sont naturellement des biens pour nous, ils ne sont que trop sujets à changer de nature [...]” (Éd. Michel Launay [Paris: Flammarion, cop. 1967], pp. 245, 274, 279.)

⁴⁰ “Je me ris d’un acteur qui, lent à s’exprimer, / De ce qu’il veut, d’abord, ne sait pas m’informer : / Et qui, débrouillant mal une pénible intrigue, / D’un divertissement me fait une fatigue.” (Boileau, “L’Art Poétique”, ll. 29-32.) Trans. Dryden and Soames: “That, from the very op’ning of the Scenes, / The first may show us what the Author means / I’m tir’d to see an Actor on the Stage / That knows not whether he’s to

viewed Agamemnon's opening line and its direct sequel in the beginning of Racine's *Iphigénie* as perfectly corresponding to Boileau's preference:

Oui, c'est Agamemnon, c'est ton Roi qui t'éveille.
Viens, reconnais la voix qui frappe ton oreille.⁴¹

These very lines are mocked by Diderot, or the voice of "the First", in *Paradoxe sur le comédien*, where he bids his interlocutor, "the Second", to imagine King Henry IV of France to use such "absurd" words in facing his own imminent death by murder, speaking, in agony, to his friend Sully in the middle of the night⁴² — a situation where one would expect loss of eloquence rather than such a perfect alexandrine, as it seems.

To be sure, Boileau's Orestes ("qu'il déclînât son nom") does not *decline his name* in the sense of refusing his name or his responsibility or in some other odd, ambiguous sense. The French idiom in Boileau's lines is, to an extent, untranslatable. To an extent, since Soames and Dryden's "say downright" certainly fits into the mediation provided by such explanations and quasi synonyms as "[t]o say or recite formally or in definite order" (*OED*), "*dire, énoncer*"; or as the expression "*décliner son nom*" is translated, "to state, give, one's name".⁴³ And we may always assure ourselves that the "*ou bien*" is introduced by Boileau, not only as an expletive, but to say that the character should be right away introduced *either* as Orestes *or* as Agamemnon (or indifferently even as "Hector in the Play", as the translators would have it) and not in such a confusing manner that the spectator could not be certain of his identity. The verb *décliner* is used here, if not in the sense of explaining one's descendancy in lineage or saying: "I am Orestes son of Agamemnon", then indeed somewhat in the sense of "to say downright". In English, the corresponding figurative sense (figurative since it is thought to derive from usage as a grammatical term) would be "[t]o say or recite formally or in definite order". According to the *OED*,⁴⁴ such recital, this "obsolete" and "transferred sense", is instantiated by Queen Margaret's line, addressed to Queen Elizabeth, in Shakespeare's *King Richard the Third*: "Decline all this, and see what now thou art."⁴⁵ What now thou art: a breath, a bubble —

⁴¹ Laugh, or Rage ; / Who, an Intrigue unravelling in vain, / Instead of pleasing, keeps my mind in pain". Racine, *Théâtre, Tome II* (Paris: Hachette, 1948), p. 119. Let us add that in Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling (Frygt og Bæven)* Agamemnon, the king and tragic hero who sacrificed his daughter for the sake of the community, figures as a sort of *antitype* of Abraham (in the sense of an 'opposite type'), who has no analogues.

⁴² Denis Diderot, *Le paradoxe sur le comédien* (Paris: Le Livre de Poche, 2001), p. 84.

⁴³ Cf. *Petit Robert*, entry "décliner": "I. V. trans. [...] 3° Fig. *Décliner ses nom, prénoms, titres et qualités*. V. Dire, énoncer." Cf. also *Harrap's Standard French and English Dictionary*, ed. J.E. Manson (London: Harrap, 1934).

⁴⁴ *OED*: "decline, v. [II.20.]b. *transf.* To say or recite formally or in definite order. *Obs.* / 1594 SHAKES. *Rich. III*, IV. iv. 97 Decline all this, and see what now thou art." (*OED*, 00058818.)

⁴⁵ Quarto, IV.IV. 2868 / Folio, IV.IV. 2861. For Shakespeare's works, I have used the *New Variorum Edition* (ed. H.H. Furness et al., Philadelphia: Lippincott, etc., 1871 ff) and the electronic versions of the early Quarto and Folio editions in the Electronic Text Center, University of Virginia Library (<http://etext.virginia.edu/shakespeare/>); when other sources have been used, they are specified in the footnotes.

A dreame of what thou wast, a garish Flagge
 To be the ayme of euery dangerous Shot;
 A signe of Dignity, a Breath, a Bubble;
 A Queene in ieast, onely to fill the Scene.⁴⁶

Such figures of Shakespeare's furnish text-book examples of literary metaphor. But not always, even in Shakespeare, is this gift — the gift of metaphor — accepted without further ado, or eloquence praised: "Why should calamity be full of words?"⁴⁷

For Boileau, Euripides would have been one to commit the fault of confounding the ear with a mass of miracles.⁴⁸ On the subject of Euripides' *Orestes* we could perhaps agree with young Nietzsche in accusing the poor playwright of being "the murderer of tragedy".⁴⁹ Or is it rather the *suicide* of tragedy that takes place in Euripides? Perhaps we might venture to also say that in Euripides the birth of metaphor, or at least *euphuism*, takes place. It is precisely "after praising Euripides at the expense of Aeschylus", as C. M. Turbayne remarks, that Aristotle praises metaphor without reserve, as it seems: "The greatest thing by far is to be a master of metaphor. It is the one thing that cannot be learned from others. It is the mark of genius [*euphuia*]." (*Poetics*, 1459a.)⁵⁰ Aristotle has just pointed out, before these words of appraisal, that instead of the plain and ordinary verb in Philoctetes' line in Aeschylus, "The ulcer *eats* the flesh of my foot", Euripides uses "feasts upon" (cf. *Po.* 1458b).⁵¹ The naming of pain, with a verb that makes us wonder whether it is after all metaphorical or not, turns into a feast of eloquence. (Whether it is metaphorical or not: could it be that *being eaten* by the wound is the most accurate, the most immediate description of the torment that we can imagine? And not only imaginable to us, but experienced in flesh and blood by Philoctetes himself?)

⁴⁶ Quarto, IV.IV. 2859-2862 (cf. Folio, IV.IV. 2868).

⁴⁷ This minimal sign of the thematization of eloquence would be found precisely in the scene just quoted from *Richard III*, as the Duchess of York asks Queen Elizabeth this question right after Margaret's exit (Folio, IV.IV. 2898).

⁴⁸ On these suggestions concerning Racine's *Iphigénie* and Euripides as possibly corresponding to Boileau's preference and blame, cf. the footnotes in two Larousse editions of Boileau's *Art poétique*: *Œuvres poétiques de Boileau* (Paris: Larousse, 1926); *Le Lutrin / L'art poétique* (Paris: Larousse, 1934).

⁴⁹ In *The Birth of Tragedy* (*Die Geburt der Tragödie*, 1872) Nietzsche speaks of Euripides' late play *Bacchanals* — here toward the end of chapter 10: "What was your wish, sacrilegious Euripides, when you tried to force that dying myth [of Dionysus and the Maenads] into your service once more? It died beneath your violent hands: [etc.]." And in the beginning of chapter 11, just a few lines later: "Greek tragedy met her death in a different way from all the older sister arts: she died tragically by her own hand, [...]." (*The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music*, ed. Michael Tanner, trans. Shaun Whiteside [London: Penguin Books, 1993], p. 54.) So Nietzsche actually accuses Euripides of the *suicide* of tragedy.

⁵⁰ Cit. Colin Murray Turbayne, *The Myth of Metaphor* (New Haven: Yale U.P., 1962), p. 21. We shall return to both Aristotle and Turbayne soon.

⁵¹ "Ἀισχύλος μὲν γὰρ ἐν τῷ Φιλοκτῆτῃ ἐποίησε »φαγέδαιναν ἢ μου σάρκας ἐσθίει ποδός,« ὁ δὲ ἀντὶ τοῦ ἐσθίει τὸ θοινᾶται μετέθηκεν." (*Po.* 1458b22ff. Ed. Kassel; quotation marks added.) Translation by Fyfe: "Aeschylus in the Philoctetes wrote, 'The ulcer eats the flesh of this my foot,' and Euripides instead of 'eats' put 'feasts upon.'" (*Aristotle in 23 Volumes, Vol. 23*, translated by W.H. Fyfe [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1932]. *PDLF*.)

Euripides' Orestes seems to recover surprisingly fast from his horrible deed and his madness — and from being haunted by the Furies, which Euripides seems to have transformed into mere hallucinated representatives of a psychosomatic disorder, a mere pathological displacement. A clinical metaphor, that is. Or a myth to be destroyed by metaphor. He recovers in order to play the part of an eloquent villain in all the sophisms and anti-sophisms of the play. Such is this ingenious double move, perfect for an *antitype* of a tragic hero, an anti-hero — I cite Arthur S. Way's poetically sensitive translation:

Orestes. Yet I can cast my burden of affliction —
Menelaus. Nay, speak not thou of death! — not wise were this.
Orestes. On Phoebus, who bade spill my mother's blood.⁵²

Instead of a tragic hero or heroine like Oedipus or Antigone, assuming responsibility for his or her deed, choosing death or blindness rather than living in disgrace, what we have here is a tragi-comical anti-hero, who puts the blame on others, on a god in this case.

This son of Agamemnon tells Menelaus, in a translation by Edward Philip Coleridge: "My body is gone, though my name has not deserted me."⁵³ Or, as Arthur S. Way translates (p. 157): "My life is gone: my name alone is left." The word *sōma* [σῶμα], rendered as "body" but also as "life" by these translators, refers here in the first place to the ghastly psychosomatic disorder in which Menelaus encounters his nephew, the "wild matted locks", the "fearful glare of his stony eyes", a "visage marred past all imagining".⁵⁴ Thus by metonymy Orestes may affirm that his "body is gone" as the order of his countenance is heavily disturbed by his mental trouble. But in its juxtaposition with *name* [ὄνομα], the body may also be understood as the residence of particularity, individuality, 'subjectivity' in a broad sense, or indeed "life".⁵⁵ In becoming subject to his name, to his name as the token of his descent as

⁵² There are quite different readings of these lines (413-6) of Euripides' *Orestes*. Here is E.P. Coleridge's rendering: "ORESTES But I have a way to recover from these troubles. [ἀλλ' ἔστιν ἡμῖν ἀναφορά τῆς συμφορᾶς.] MENELAUS Do not speak of death; that is not wise. [μὴ θάνατον εἶπης· τοῦτο μὲν γὰρ οὐ σοφόν.] ORESTES It is Phoebus, who commanded me to kill my mother. [Φοῖβος, κελεύσας μητρὸς ἐκπρᾶξαι φόνον.]" I quote above Arthur S. Way's more poetic translation which seems also to make more sense, without being too liberal on the (equivocal) sense of ἀναφορά and συμφορά. And, thirdly, an edition by N. Wecklein reads ἀθάνατον instead of θάνατον and explains Menelaus' line (415) as follows: "ein Gott kann nicht dafür verantwortlich gemacht werden". Way's translation seems to catch the comic effect of Orestes' wordplay with ἀναφορά and συμφορά, as Apollo is the deity in a very specific sense "responsible" for his matricide and at once his 'means of recovery' if not of expiation, and thus he unknowingly anticipates the *deus ex machina* which will fulfil Loxia's prophecy in the end (l. 1666). (*Euripides' Orestes*, ll. 413-6, trans. Arthur S. Way [London: Heinemann, 1965]. Greek text from *PDL*, based on the following book: Euripides, *Euripidis Fabulae*, ed. Gilbert Murray, vol. 3 [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913]. E. P. Coleridge's translation from Euripides, *The Complete Greek Drama*, edited by Whitney J. Oates and Eugene O'Neill, Jr., in two volumes: 2. *Orestes* [New York: Random House, 1938]. Wecklein's note from Euripides, *Orestes*, mit erklärenden Anmerkungen von N. Wecklein [Leipzig: Teubner, 1906].) — Sophisms and anti-sophisms: the play could be read in the light of a dialectic of the Sophistic Enlightenment and its opposing forces, i.e. also in the light of Nietzsche's *Die Geburt der Tragödie* (1872).

⁵³ "τὸ σῶμα φρουδον· τὸ δ' ὄνομ' οὐ λείλοιπέ μοι." Orestes's words to Menelaus, trans. E.P. Coleridge, l. 390; ed. Oates & O'Neill, Jr., 1938 (*PDL*).

⁵⁴ Expressions borrowed from Way's translation and adapted into our syntax.

⁵⁵ That is, not only in the anachronistic sense of modern 'subjectivity' but also as ὑποκείμενον in an Aristote-

Agamemnon's son, and thus to his duty of avenging his father's death, Orestes must renounce his individual life — let us say, improperly and anachronistically, his 'subjectivity'. Euripides' Orestes is one of the literary sons who would let us hear his father's voice reverberating in his own:

O brother of my father, deem that *he*
Hears this, who lies 'neath earth, that over thee
His spirit hovers : what I say he saith.⁵⁶

Deem that *he* hears the voice, beneath the earth and hovering over his brother and son, the voice of his son being the voice of his own. The decline of the body leaves the name, the spirit, the voice still hovering.⁵⁷ Albeit this son of Agamemnon cannot be quite sure whether he is actually speaking in the name of the father or of the son, or of a third party, Apollo, upon whom he would cast his "burden of affliction":

I trow, my father, had I face to face
Questioned him if I must my mother slay,
Had earnestly besought me by this beard
Never to thrust sword through my mother's heart,
Since he should not win so to light again,
And I, woe's me! should drain this cup of ills!⁵⁸

For young Nietzsche the decline — or the assassination, or suicide — of tragedy would have happened in unison with an effacement of an originary metaphoricity and a shift to another kind of metaphoricity,⁵⁹ this latter subservient to the reasonings of the Sophistic Enlightenment and Socratic philosophy. But to see this decline as a decline of *metaphor* is very paradoxical, since the concept of metaphor only arrived after Socrates, with Aristotle's *Poetics* and the *Rhetoric*, as far as we know. And it would seem that, in Aristotle's work, parallel to the role of *mimesis* in Plato's *Republic*, it is precisely the concept of metaphor which serves as an instrument in *subjecting* poetical and rhetorical diction to properly philosophical discourse.

Could it be that such a sense of anachronism that perhaps forced Euripides to murder or rather *suicide* tragedy in the ruthless dawn of Socratic philosophy (yes, I am using the verb

lian sense: the particularity of a concrete "essence" or "substance" (οὐσία), its numerical distinctiveness, resides in its material distinctiveness from other representatives of its species.

⁵⁶ Trans. Way, ll. 673-676.

⁵⁷ The proper name is not necessarily the residence of individuality or of subjectivity. Here it seems rather to be understood as the locus of a filial bond.

⁵⁸ Trans. Way, ll. 288-293.

⁵⁹ To extract only one relevant sentence from Sarah Kofman's work on Nietzsche and metaphor: "Aussi est-ce au niveau du concept que l'activité métaphorique, la plus dissimulée, devient par là même la plus dangereuse : grâce au concept, l'homme range l'univers entier dans des rubriques logiques bien ordonnées, sans savoir qu'il continue alors l'activité métaphorique la plus archaïque." (*Nietzsche et la métaphore*, [2nd ed.] Paris: Galilée, 1983, p. 55.) The effacement of "the originary metaphor" seems to have been, for Nietzsche, a historical process that took place in the shift from Pre-Socratic philosophy to Socrates and from Dionysian tragedy to Euripides.

‘to suicide’ here, transitively and as a parallel to the verb ‘murder’), such a sense of losing substance (body, life, subject matter) while still retaining the name, has also befallen metaphor — the phenomenon named by Aristotle as far as we know? And perhaps already at the time of Aristotle, whose attitude toward metaphor is, to say the least, ambivalent? He praises the gift of metaphor in the *Poetics* only to vehemently depreciate it elsewhere, he praises metaphor for having clarity in the *Rhetoric* only to denounce metaphor as “always unclear” in the *Topics*, to name only a couple of instances of this strange ambivalence.⁶⁰ But isn’t already the gesture of *defining* metaphor, of revealing the rules of its composition, an indication for all ‘modern’ poetry that is to strive free from the ‘poetical’ (poetological) subjection to such *classifying* gestures, that metaphor cannot simply be *used* anymore in the way Aristotle describes? Aristotle may be the first to have given metaphor its *coup de grâce* — or perhaps metaphor was already dead before its birth by definition?

THE PARADOXICAL TOKEN OF *EUPHUIA* (ARISTOTLE)

Aristotle defined but also *declined* metaphor. He praised the gift for metaphor⁶¹ as a token of natural talent, common to both the philosopher and the poet, but elsewhere he vehemently denounced metaphor in the philosophical, dialectical and epistemic discourse in general. On the other hand, we might say that *metaphor* named itself, and also *declined its name* in a peculiar sense in Aristotle’s text, and then, elsewhere, *Aristotle declined metaphor*, denounced its use in the name of clarity. Let us try to shed some light on this strange self-defining, self-declining figure. Metaphor, whose name seems to be derived from the ‘source domain’ of ‘physics’.

The term *metaphysics* derives, on the other hand, as if by accident, from Aristotle’s texts compiled under that heading, and we find the term metaphor used in that work now and then. For instance in the ninth chapter of the first book, we find a passage that could be described both as *anti-metaphysical* and as *anti-metaphorical*:

To say that the Forms are patterns, and that other things participate in them, is to use empty phrases and poetical metaphors; for what is it that fashions things on the model of the Ideas? [τὸ δὲ λέγειν παραδείγματα αὐτὰ εἶναι καὶ μετέχειν αὐτῶν τᾶλλα

⁶⁰ *Rh.* 1405a9; *Top.* 139b33-140a23.

⁶¹ The gift of metaphor, the talent for metaphor, has been considered a natural, primordial talent by many others, too: Vico, Rousseau, Herder, Shelley, Nietzsche... We leave this tradition altogether undiscussed in the present treatise. Let us quote Pierre Fontanier, however: “Les tropes peuvent sans doute convenir à la prose : il peuvent lui convenir, puisque, comme nous l’avons déjà observé, ils ne nous sont pas moins donné par la nature que le langage ; puisque nous n’avons pas besoin d’étude pour les apprendre, et qu’ils se glissent à notre insu jusque dans la conversation la plus familière [...]. Les facultés qui ont le plus de part à la production des Tropes ou à leur reproduction, sont un don de la nature [...]” (*Les figures du discours* [Paris: Flammarion, cop. 1977, repr. 1999], pp. 180, 182; Fontanier’s treatises were originally published in 1821-1830.) The possibility of such ‘unconscious’ tropes, and whether these are really “*Tropes-figures*” as Fontanier terms the ‘figurative tropes’, in contradistinction to such “non-vraies figures” as catachresis, would merit a detailed discussion of its own.

κενολογεῖν ἐστὶ καὶ μεταφορὰς λέγειν ποιητικὰς. τί γάρ ἐστι τὸ ἐργαζόμενον πρὸς τὰς ἰδέας ἀποβλέπον;]⁶²

When Aristotle reproaches his teacher Plato, it is the writer of the *Rhetoric* and of the *Poetics* who reproaches Plato for using “empty phrases and poetic metaphors”, the Plato who compares rhetoric with cosmetics and would subordinate the true rhetoric to philosophy and exclude the poets from becoming citizens of his ideal *Republic*. It is Aristotle who praises poetry for being more philosophical than history, reproaching Plato, who condemns poetry as mere imitation of imitation, as a second-hand imitation of the things that precisely “fashion themselves on the model of the Ideas”. To see the *pro*-poetic and *pro*-metaphoric Aristotle criticizing the *anti*-poetic and *anti*-rhetorical Plato for being poetical and metaphorical indeed puzzles the casual reader.

Here Aristotle condemns, if not *the* poetic metaphor on the whole, at least *a specific* metaphor, as used in a properly philosophical discourse. Perhaps the problem with this *empty metaphor* is, then, that it fails to reveal a true correspondence between the sensible things and their intelligible ‘model’, and thus to fill the form of analogy with a *properly* metaphorical content; however, such a ‘full’ metaphor would for Aristotle no longer be metaphor, but analogy. By an anachronism, we might say that Aristotle condemns Plato’s discourse for its ‘empty’ formalism, and this is not the only time when a philosopher has associated formal ‘symbolism’ with artistic or poetical ‘symbolism’.⁶³ If we translate the suggestion of modern

⁶² *Met.* I, 9, 991a20-23; trans. Tredennick. Cf. *Met.* XIII, 6, 1079b25-27. Cf. Joe Sachs’s translation of 991a20ff (*Aristotle’s Metaphysics*, 1999): “And to say that [the forms] are patterns and the other things participate in them is to speak without content and in poetic metaphors. For what is the thing that is at work, looking off toward the forms?” As Tredennick points out, the “thing that is at work (τὸ ἐργαζόμενον)” fashioning the other things after the models or patterns is, for Plato (or Plato’s Socrates), “the Demiurgus” (*Tim.* 28c-29a). The specific point of reference for Aristotle’s scorn can be identified as the passage in *Parmenides* where Socrates says: “I think the most likely view is, that these ideas exist in nature as patterns, and the other things resemble them and are imitations of them; their participation in ideas is assimilation to them, that and nothing else. [τὰ μὲν εἶδη ταῦτα ὥσπερ παραδείγματα ἐστάναι ἐν τῇ φύσει, τὰ δὲ ἄλλα τούτοις εἰκέναι καὶ εἶναι ὁμοιώματα, καὶ ἡ μέθεξις αὐτῇ τοῖς ἄλλοις γίγνεσθαι τῶν εἰδῶν οὐκ ἄλλη τις ἢ εἰκασθῆναι αὐτοῖς.]” (132^d. Trans. H. N. Fowler. Text and translation based on the following books: *Platonis Opera*, ed. John Burnet, Oxford University Press, 1903; *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 9 translated by Harold N. Fowler, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1925; *PDL*).

⁶³ The term “empty metaphor” comes from D. M. Armstrong: “If the words ‘participation’ and ‘imitation’ are taken literally, then it is clear that they do not capture the nature of the relation. But if the words are taken analogically, then it is impossible to specify the point of resemblance to literal participation and imitation. In Aristotle’s phrase, they are ‘empty metaphors’. [...] So it seems that the theory of Forms explains *a*’s being *F* by reference to *a*’s having a relation of which we are unable to give any concrete account to an object of which we are unable to give any concrete account. We are explaining the known by the unknown.” (*Nominalism and Realism* [1978], p. 104.) The last sentence refers to one traditional feature of metaphor as “the means by which the less familiar is assimilated to the more familiar”. “What we primarily demand is that the similarity should be a true similarity and that it should have lain hitherto unperceived [...]: something hitherto unknown is suddenly made known.” (J. M. Murry, “Metaphor” [1972], pp. 28, 30.) But what does Armstrong actually mean when he cleverly turns this “pattern” around and says that Plato tries to explain the “known by the unknown”? In what way do we already “know” that which is being “explained by the unknown” in the theory of Forms? The theory is an attempt to explain precisely this relation of knowledge (which can only concern something fixed, permanent, the *same* in one way or the other), even if this attempt fails. And the attempt does not fail only because the metaphor fails: the “poetic metaphor” is, for Aristotle, only a symptom of a more general failure of Platonism to account for the role of ideas with re-

metaphor theory, “that the metaphor creates the similarity [rather than] formulates some similarity antecedently existing” (Max Black),⁶⁴ back to the Aristotelian ‘system’ which affirms an “eye for resemblance”, we might say that an ‘empty’ metaphor, or the ‘always obscure’ metaphor, fails to establish an underlying analogy.

As far as we know, metaphor enters the scene of theory⁶⁵ in Aristotle’s *Poetics*; it is the first known text where the word *metaphora* is used in the sense of a specific figure of speech, and defined as such a figure. Aristotle was probably not the first to have used the word *metaphora* for this specific linguistic phenomenon. The name may have already been established as a term of rhetoric at the time he lectured on rhetoric and poetics. Nevertheless, the first known definition and theory of metaphor appear in the lectures whose surviving fragment is known to us by the name of *Poetics*, and in the third and final section of the more complete treatise called the *Rhetoric*. Let us cite *in extenso* what is usually given as Aristotle’s definition of metaphor in the twenty-first chapter of the *Poetics*:

Metaphor is the application of a strange term either transferred from the genus and applied to the species or from the species and applied to the genus, or from one species to another or else by analogy. [μεταφορά δέ ἐστιν ὀνόματος ἀλλοτρίου ἐπιφορά ἢ ἀπὸ τοῦ γένους ἐπὶ εἶδος ἢ ἀπὸ τοῦ εἶδους ἐπὶ τὸ γένος ἢ ἀπὸ τοῦ εἶδους ἐπὶ εἶδος ἢ κατὰ τὸ ἀνάλογον.] An example of a term transferred from genus to species is “Here stands my ship.” Riding at anchor is a species of standing. [λέγω δὲ ἀπὸ γένους μὲν ἐπὶ εἶδος οἷον “νηὺς δέ μοι ἦδ’ ἔστηκεν.” τὸ γὰρ ὁρμῆν ἐστιν ἐστάναι τι.] An example of transference from species to genus is “Indeed ten thousand noble things Odysseus did,” for ten thousand, which is a species of many, is here used instead of the word “many.” [ἀπ’ εἶδους δὲ ἐπὶ γένος “ἦ δὴ μυρί’ Ὀδυσσεὺς ἐσθλὰ ἔοργεν.” τὸ γὰρ μυρίον πολὺ ἐστιν, ὥ νῦν ἀντὶ τοῦ πολλοῦ κέχρηται.] An example of transference from one species to another is “Drawing off his life with the bronze” and “Severing with the tireless bronze,” where “drawing off” is used for “severing” and “severing” for “drawing off,” both being species of “removing.” [ἀπ’ εἶδους δὲ ἐπὶ εἶδος οἷον “χαλκῷ ἀπὸ ψυχὴν ἀρύσας” καὶ “τεμῶν ταναῆκεῖ χαλκῷ.” ἐνταῦθα γὰρ τὸ μὲν ἀρύσαι ταμεῖν, τὸ δὲ ταμεῖν ἀρύσαι εἴρηκεν· ἄμφω γὰρ ἀφελεῖν τί ἐστιν.] Metaphor by analogy means this: when B is to A as D is to C, then instead of B the poet will say D and B instead of D. [τὸ δὲ ἀνάλογον λέγω, ὅταν ὁμοίως ἔχη τὸ δεύτερον πρὸς τὸ πρῶτον καὶ τὸ τέταρτον πρὸς τὸ τρίτον· ἐρεῖ γὰρ ἀντὶ τοῦ δευτέρου τὸ τέταρτον ἢ ἀντὶ τοῦ τετάρτου τὸ δεύτερον.] And sometimes they add that to which the term supplanted by the metaphor is relative. For instance, a cup is to Dionysus what a shield is to Ares; so he will call the cup “Dionysus’s shield” and the shield “Ares’ cup.” [καὶ ἐνίοτε προστιθέασιν ἀνθ’ οὗ λέγει πρὸς ὃ ἐστι. λέγω δὲ οἷον ὁμοίως ἔχει φιάλη πρὸς

spect to “other things”. Julia Annas sums up an important problem in Plato’s theory from Aristotle’s viewpoint: “Plato often tends to think of Forms in such a way that a Form can be taken to be both a characteristic and a perfect example of that characteristic. The Form of Beauty in the *Symposium*, for example, seems to be both what makes all beautiful things beautiful and also itself a supremely beautiful object.” (Annas’s introduction to her translation of *Aristotle’s Metaphysics, Books M and N*, translated with introduction and notes by Julia Annas [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976], p. 14.)

⁶⁴ “Metaphor”, in *Models and Metaphors. Studies in Language and Philosophy* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press 1962), pp. 25-47, here p. 37.

⁶⁵ Cf. Jacques Derrida, “Le retrait de la métaphore”: “la métaphore peut-être se retire, se retire de la scène mondiale, et s’en retire au moment de sa plus envahissante extension” (in *Psyché — inventions de l’autre* [1987; or second, augmented edition in two volumes, vol. I, Paris: Galilée, 1998], pp. 63-93, here p. 65).

Διόνυσον καὶ ἀσπίς πρὸς Ἄρη· ἔρεϊ τοίνυν τὴν φιάλην ἀσπίδα Διονύσου καὶ τὴν ἀσπίδα φιάλην Ἀρεως.] Or old age is to life as evening is to day; so he will call the evening “day’s old-age” or use Empedocles’ phrase; and old age he will call “the evening of life” or “life’s setting sun.” [ἢ ὁ γῆρας πρὸς βίον, καὶ ἑσπέρα πρὸς ἡμέραν· ἔρεϊ τοίνυν τὴν ἑσπέραν γῆρας ἡμέρας ἢ ὥσπερ Ἐμπεδοκλῆς, καὶ τὸ γῆρας ἑσπέραν βίου ἢ δυσμὰς βίου.] Sometimes there is no word for some of the terms of the analogy but the metaphor can be used all the same. For instance, to scatter seed is to sow, but there is no word for the action of the sun in scattering its fire. Yet this has to the sunshine the same relation as sowing has to the seed, and so you have the phrase “sowing the god-created fire.” [ἐνίοις δ’ οὐκ ἔστιν ὄνομα κείμενον τῶν ἀνάλογον, ἀλλ’ οὐδὲν ἦττον ὁμοίως λεχθήσεται· οἷον τὸ τὸν καρπὸν μὲν ἀφίεναι σπείρειν, τὸ δὲ τὴν φλόγα ἀπὸ τοῦ ἡλίου ἀνώνυμον· ἀλλ’ ὁμοίως ἔχει τοῦτο πρὸς τὸν ἥλιον καὶ τὸ σπείρειν πρὸς τὸν καρπὸν, διὸ εἴρηται “σπείρων θεοκτίσταν φλόγα.”] Besides this another way of employing metaphor is to call a thing by the strange name and then to deny it some attribute of that name. For instance, suppose you call the shield not “Ares’ cup” but a “wineless cup.” [ἔστι δὲ τῷ τρόπῳ τούτῳ τῆς μεταφορᾶς χρῆσθαι καὶ ἄλλως, προσαγορεύσαντα τὸ ἀλλότριον ἀποφῆσαι τῶν οἰκείων τι, οἷον εἰ τὴν ἀσπίδα εἴποι φιάλην μὴ Ἀρεως ἀλλ’ ἄοινον.]⁶⁶

This definition can be divided into three sections. The first part is what I would call the *generic formula*: “Metaphor is the application of a strange term”, or in other words: “Metaphor (*meta-phora*) consists in giving the thing a name that belongs to something else”, as Colin Murray Turbayne translates the formula.⁶⁷ The second part can be designated as consisting of *formal specifications*: “the transference (*epi-phora*) [as] being either from genus to species, or from species to genus, or from species to species, *or* on the grounds of analogy.”⁶⁸ The third part of the definition consists of *examples* of metaphor, and it seems indeed that the definition is not complete without these instantiations and what can be inferred from them. And the instantiations can be multiplied *ad infinitum* upon this “propositional function, in which infinite concrete instances can be inserted”, as Umberto Eco remarks in his rich, valuable and detailed discussion of Aristotle’s definition, which, as he continues, “represented a stroke of genius”.⁶⁹ However, within this definition, or elsewhere as far as I can see, Aristotle does not explicitly provide all the necessary grounds for differentiating metaphor from other kinds of logical operations between species and genera or by analogy. This lack has been brought into relief by C. M. Turbayne.

⁶⁶ *Po.* 21, 1457b6-33. Trans. W. H. Fyfe; ed. Kassel. *Aristotle in 23 Volumes*, Vol. 23, translated by W.H. Fyfe (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1932), *PDLF*.

⁶⁷ *The Myth of Metaphor*, p. 11. Or as S. H. Butcher [1911] translates: “the application of an alien name by transference...”, or as Richard Janko [1987]: “A ‘metaphor’ is the application [to something] of a name belonging to something else”. (The addition in square brackets is by Janko.)

⁶⁸ Turbayne’s translation and emphasis. Turbayne does not quite explain why he adds the transliterated words *meta-phora* and *epi-phora* and hyphenates them.

⁶⁹ Umberto Eco, “The Scandal of Metaphor: Metaphorology and Semiotics”, trans. Christopher Paci in collaboration with the author, in *Poetics Today* Vol. 4, No. 2, *Metaphor* (1983), pp. 217-257, here p. 226. With regard to the discussion to follow, it must be mentioned that also Eco, in passing, points to the fact that “when someone creates metaphors, he is literally speaking, *lying* — as everybody knows” (p. 219).

As has been observed by Jay T. Keehley, it is a question of “perhaps *the* definitive property of metaphors: their ‘as-iffness’ or ‘pretense-that.’”⁷⁰ And this definitive property is not given by Aristotle in his definition. Rather, it must be inferred from his examples; it seems to be a clarification *given by metaphor*.

First of all, to say that metaphor consists of giving the thing a name that belongs to something else, is to provide only the *genus* of metaphor, and not only the general definition for different kinds of metaphor, but the *genus under which* metaphor belongs, as a species of “sort-crossing”.⁷¹ The generic formula defines only what Turbayne, in his very interesting account of the first two parts of this definition, calls “sort-crossing”, which is far broader than what we have come, following Aristotle, to call metaphor. It is indeed also broader than what Aristotle himself means by this term. This lack of differentiation in the generic formula can be illustrated by Turbayne’s remarkable example: “When I say that the timber-wolf is a wolf I am actually giving to timber-wolves a name that belongs to other wolves, and I mean that the timber-wolf is a sort included in the larger sort *wolf*” (*The Myth of Metaphor*, p. 14). ‘Sorts’ do not even have to be ‘crossed’ when something is called by the name belonging to something else: even when the singular being ‘becomes’ a particular *wolf*, even when the species *timber wolf* is predicated of this canine creature, and when the genus belonging to this species or the genus into which this species belongs, namely the sort *wolf*, is predicated of the species predicated of the individual, the individual wolf has been named by a name that belongs (also) to something else. It does of course belong originally and essentially to this particular canine animal, but this does not change the fact that the predication of essence (*ousia*, “thinghood”, traditionally translated as “substance”) is still predication, that *ousia* is one of the categories, and that its meaning is double: *ousia* is divided into the so-called first substance and second substance (first and second thinghood, to use Joe Sachs’s translation), broadly corresponding to the later terms *existentia* and *essentia*,⁷² and the second is predicated of the first, the species or form of wolf or timber wolf is predicated of the individual being; it is not only the so-called ‘accidents’ that are predicated, and these are sometimes associated with genera; there is no such thing as ‘an animal’ without being *some sort of* animal, such as wolf or man; but this sort of generic predicate differs of course from such incidents as ‘being a musician’ or ‘white-fanged’. These *ways* in which being is spoken of are not usually considered *tropic* uses of language, but they are indeed ‘figures’ and ‘tropes’ of being, in a broader sense, figures (*schemata*) taken on by the being *pure and simple* (*to on haplôs le-*

⁷⁰ Jay T. Keehley, “Metaphor Theories and Theoretical Metaphors”, in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* Vol. 39, No. 4 (June 1979), pp. 582-588, here p. 587.

⁷¹ As Turbayne puts it, “the use of a sign in a sense different from the usual, which use I shall call ‘sort-crossing’[...] is the first defining feature of metaphor and, according to Aristotle, its genus” (*The Myth of Metaphor*, p. 11).

⁷² Cf. Martin Heidegger, “Die Metaphysik als Geschichte des Seins” (1941), in *Nietzsche II* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1961), p. 406, *passim* (also *GA* 6.2.).

gomenon), so to say.⁷³ So metaphor is a *sort of* giving a thing a name that belongs to something else (too).

Of course, the pertinent species and genera properly and essentially belong to the particular individual of which they are predicated (*Socrates is a human being* and human beings *are animals* in possession of *logos*), and all the predicables (definition, property, genus, and accident) may be ‘properly’ predicated of the *hypokeimenon* or “first thinghood”; in this sense they are not *allotrios*, namely belonging *exclusively* to something else.⁷⁴ But the values of *inclusion* and *exclusion* could precisely substitute the opposition between *contiguity* and *resemblance*, in order to distinguish metonymy and metaphor from each other. When I speak of ‘sails’ instead of ‘ships’, when I say ‘court’ instead of the “persons and proceedings” *included* in “the place” *also* or “primarily” called “court” (“[court] primarily meaning the place but including the persons and proceedings”; *OED*), I am speaking in terms which either *include* one another or *are included* in a common relation of relations, either material or logical, or within a common ‘semantic field’. This is the case with metonymy (and synecdoche), but this is not the case with metaphor, namely metaphor *by analogy*. So this seems to be a matter of translation: “belonging to another” is not a sufficient rendering of *allotrios*, but “strange” and “alien” are also too vague. But to say that it is a question of a name (or term) that belongs *exclusively* to something else does not apply to all of Aristotle’s types and examples of metaphor, as we shall see.

The second part of the definition, providing the formal specifications in addition to the generic formula, is still far too broad to provide the needed *differentiae*. The formal defi-

⁷³ “But since being, spoken of simply, is meant in more than one way, of which one is incidental, another is as the true (and nonbeing as the false), and besides these there are the modes of predication (such as what, of what sort, how much, where, and when something is, and anything else ‘is’ means in this way), and still besides all these being-potentially and being-at-work [...]” [ἀλλ’ ἐπεὶ τὸ ὄν τὸ ἀπλῶς λεγόμενον λέγεται πολλαχῶς, ὡς ἐν μὲν ἦν τὸ κατὰ συμβεβηκός, ἕτερον δὲ τὸ [35] ὡς ἀληθές, καὶ τὸ μὴ ὄν ὡς τὸ ψεῦδος, παρὰ ταῦτα δ’ ἐστὶ τὰ σχήματα τῆς κατηγορίας οἷον τὸ μὲν τί, τὸ δὲ ποίον, τὸ δὲ ποσόν, τὸ δὲ πού, τὸ δὲ ποτέ, καὶ εἴ τι ἄλλο σημαίνει τὸν τρόπον τοῦτον, ἐτι παρὰ ταῦτα πάντα τὸ δυνάμει καὶ ἐνεργείᾳ] (*Met.* VI, 2, 1026a33ff. Trans. Joe Sachs, in *Aristotle’s Metaphysics* [2002], p. 111. The Greek text: *Aristotle’s Metaphysics*, ed. W.D. Ross [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924]; *PDLP*.) Cf. Derida, “Le supplément de copule”, in *Marges — de la philosophie* (Paris: Minuit, cop. 1972, repr. 1997), pp. 219-220.

⁷⁴ Cf. *LSJ*: “ἀλλότριος [...] / A. of or belonging to another, βίοςτος, νηῦς, ἄχρα, *Od.* 1.160, 9.535, *Il.* 20.298; γυνή *another man’s* wife, *A.Ag.* 448 (lyr.); ἀλλοτρίων χάρισασθαι to [p. 71] be bountiful of *what is another’s*, *Od.* 17.452; γναθμοῖσι γελοίων ἀλλοτρίοισιν with faces *unlike their own*, of a *forced, unnatural* laugh, *ib.* 20.347; ἄ. ὄμμασιν εἶρπον by the help of *another’s* eyes, *S.OC* 146 (lyr.); οὐκ ἄ. ἄτην not inflicted by *other hands*, *Id.Ant.* 1259; but ἄ. φόνος murder of a *stranger* (cf. 11.1), *Pl.Euthphr.* 4b: πρὸν., ἄ. ἄμᾶν θέρος reap where *one has not sown*, *Ar.Eq.* 392, cf. *Hes.Th.* 599; ἀλλοτριωτάτοις τοῖς σώμασιν χρῆσθαι deal with one’s body as if it belonged to *another*, *Th.* 1.70; τὰ ἀλλότρια, contr. τὰ ἀλλότρια, *what belongs to others, not one’s own*, τὰ. ἀποστερεῖν, δειπνεῖν, *X.Ages.* 4.1, *Theopomp. Com.* 34. / *Il.* opp. οἰκεῖος, *foreign, strange*, [...]” [etc.] So *allotrios* is defined, delimited, distinguished by its opposition to *oikeios*, being not one’s own, not one of one’s own possessions, not of one’s own nature, but something belonging to another, or unnatural, foreign, strange; moral values seem to penetrate the whole series of these acceptations: you are not supposed to touch what belongs to another, another man’s wife for example, not to take upon yourself a face unlike your own and laugh a forced, unnatural laugh, and so on.

nition, consisting of the generic formula and the further specifications concerning the logical operations in terms of species and genera and proportion, gives the outlines to what may be more properly called ‘sort-crossing’. But if we define metaphor as sort-crossing, it would remain “logically indistinguishable from trope, the use of a word or phrase in a sense other than that which is proper to it”, as Turbayne says. The term ‘proper’ means here primarily ‘usual’, as in Turbayne’s first definition of sort-crossing as “the use of a sign in a sense different from the usual” (*The Myth of Metaphor*, p. 11). The sort-crossing (basically consisting of various logical relations between species and genera) that Aristotle calls by the name ‘metaphor’ covers a certain variety of tropes, also those that would later be designated by the names metonymy and synecdoche and also catachresis. Only on further examination do we discover that Aristotle, just as the tradition following him, seems to prefer the analogical *meta-phora* to the other types of this *epi-phora* or this sort-crossing. But this specific difference belonging to the ‘genus’ of ‘*meta-phora*’, namely the analogical or proportional metaphor, which has usually been considered as metaphor proper, also covers the phenomenon of catachresis (which means, in Turbayne’s definition, “giving the thing which lacks a proper name a name that belongs to something else”), the catachresis *of* metaphor.

Nevertheless, just as Turbayne suggests, “Aristotle apparently regarded the features that distinguish metaphor from trope [in general] as psychological, but he did not specify them” (*The Myth of Metaphor*, pp. 11-12). The *formal* definition is not yet sufficient to differentiate metaphor with regard to the *trope* in its more or less broad acceptations. By more or less broad, I mean what I called the ‘tropes’ of being, the schemata of categorial predication that actually classify as propositions (*S-copula-P*) on the one hand, and on the other, the more or less unusual or unorthodox ways of using words, such as the explicitly figurative metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche and catachresis. At first it seems that the tropes that the later tradition has defined as metonymy, synecdoche and catachresis are, for Aristotle, subdivisions of metaphor. But there is an important distinction to be made between metaphor and these other tropes. Metonymies, synecdoches and catachreses are often very close to what we call literal language, or the standard application of words. To be more precise, this proximity or rather assimilation to literal or proper usage happens by catachresis, which can be a catachresis of metaphor as well as a catachresis of synecdoche or of metonymy. Metaphor proper, without catachresis, has an extra feature, the implicit psychological feature which Turbayne just a couple of pages later reveals: “The use of metaphor involves the pretense that something is the case when it is not. That pretense is involved is only sometimes disclosed by the author” (p. 13). This extra feature that distinguishes metaphor from the figures of predication (or any naming by another’s name in general, when it is not figurative or tropic in any obvious sense: family names are a case in point) and from what Pierre Fontanier calls “not true figures [*non vraies figures*]”, namely catachreses (cf. *Les figures du discours*, pp. 213ff), is not immediately clear or explicit in Aristotle’s definition, but must be inferred from the third

part of the so-called definition, namely the examples he uses within the definitory passage of the *Poetics*' chapter 21, while "sort-crossing" in general does not always have to involve this feature of conscious pretense, "the *as if* or *make-believe*" (*The Myth of Metaphor*, p. 17).⁷⁵

We leave the guidance of Turbayne's very helpful analysis of the Aristotelian definition after a final quotation, namely his own definition of metaphor, derived not only from his analysis of Aristotle but also from Gilbert Ryle's "alternative definition of category-mistake", combining two somewhat antithetic conceptual moments: "sort-crossing or the fusion of different sorts, and the pretense or *as if* feature" (*The Myth of Metaphor*, p. 18). Perhaps these two moments could be called the *epiphoric* and the *diaphoric* moment of metaphor: the *epi-phoric* assimilation and the *dia-phoric* consciousness of the actually irreducible difference between the assimilated. The differentiating *dia-phora* is the necessary counter-figure to the assimilating *epi-phora* within the structure of the figure called *meta-phora* itself.

⁷⁵ Turbayne continues: "When Descartes says that the world is a machine or when I say with Seneca that man is a wolf, and neither of us intends our assertions to be taken literally but only metaphorically, both of us are aware, *first*, that we are sort-crossing, that is, re-presenting the facts of one sort in the idioms appropriate to another, or, in other words, of the duality of sense. I say 'are aware,' but of course, we *must* be, otherwise there can be no metaphor. We are aware, *secondly*, that we are treating the world and man as if they belong to new sorts." (*The Myth of Metaphor*, p. 17.) Let it be noted in passing, that when such scholars as Freud and Jakobson seem to extend to the realm of the subconscious the meaning of what more or less corresponds to the traditional concepts of metaphor and metonymy, they do hesitate to completely associate their discoveries with these concepts. The concepts of *Traumdeutung* (GW II/III) such as *Verdichtung* and *Verschiebung* are actually not directly associated with metaphor and metonymy by Freud himself, but by Lacan (cf. "L'instance de la lettre dans l'inconscient ou la raison depuis Freud", in *Écrits I*, Nouvelle édition [Paris: Seuil, 1999], pp. 490-526; "Appendice II: La métaphore du sujet", in *Écrits II*, Nouvelle édition [Paris: Seuil, 1999], pp. 359-363). *Verdichtung* or "condensation" is in Jakobson's view rather synecdochic than metaphorical, and in his terminology, *Verschiebung* or "displacement" is metonymic. These both thus belong to the side of contiguity, while "identification and symbolism" belong to the axis of similarity ("Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances", 1956, in Jakobson and M. Halle, *Fundamentals of Language*, 4th ed. 1980, pp. 67-96, here p. 95). However, Freud indeed speaks of the "symbolism" of dreams and Jakobson sees in actual metaphor and metonymy the distinct manifestations of the fundamental and mostly non-thematic ('unconscious') processes of language belonging to the axes of selection and combination, paradigm and syntagm, similarity and contiguity. These "find their most condensed expression in metaphor and metonymy respectively", and therefore Jakobson names the two semantic lines taken by a development of discourse the "METAPHORIC way" and the "METONYMIC way", which should be the "most appropriate term[s]", while he nevertheless makes the clear distinction between these ways of development and their actual expressions in (conscious) tropes of metaphor and metonymy (p. 90). Actually Jakobson seems to approve of how H. Jackson has termed the expressions, such as "*Spyglass* for *microscope*, or *fire* for *gaslight*", used by a patient who suffers from the contiguity disorder, "QUASI-METAPHORIC EXPRESSIONS [...] since, in contradistinction to rhetoric or poetic metaphors, they present no deliberate transfer of meaning" (p. 86). Lacan's use of the terms 'metaphor' and 'metonymy', as an adaptation of Freud's *Verdichtung* and *Verschiebung*, will be ignored in the present study. As Lacan himself observes, his use of the term 'metaphor' deviates from the traditional Aristotelian schema of the proportional analogy: "On peut s'étonner que j'éprouve le besoin de pousser les choses aussi loin concernant la métaphore." (*Écrits II*, p. 362.) The fact that we shall, apart from this brief note, disregard Lacan's discussion, is not meant to suggest that it is uninteresting, but just that it lies beyond the scope of the present treatise. His unorthodox redefinition of metaphor is actually very interesting indeed, since it suggests the metonymic motivation of the metaphor: "L'étincelle créatrice de la métaphore ne jaillit pas de la mise en présence de deux images, c'est-à-dire de deux signifiants également actualisés. Elle jaillit entre deux signifiants dont l'un s'est substitué à l'autre en prenant sa place dans la chaîne signifiante, le signifiant occulté restant présent de sa connexion (métonymique) au reste de la chaîne." (*Écrits I*, p. 504.)

The definition of metaphor, Aristotle's or anyone's,⁷⁶ seems at first glance itself metaphorical. The alleged definition of metaphor applies itself to itself. This circularity, the involvement of the *definiendum* in the *definiens*, and Aristotle's own words about the mutual exclusion of metaphor and definition taken into account,⁷⁷ is scandalous. But this scandal does not lend metaphor, or rather the concept of metaphor, more credibility, in the sense that metaphor is so omnipresent that it even defines itself. To the contrary, this makes it rather more suspicious. It should lead us to question *why* should we not, then, generalize the concept so that it becomes a basic, inescapable feature of all language, and this is indeed what many have already done, perhaps without asking some further questions concerning, for instance, the status of Aristotle's discourse on metaphor *as* a discourse. The apparent metaphoricity of Aristotle's alleged definition of metaphor should lead us to question whether Aristotle himself ever saw the things in this light; further, in case he did perceive this dilemma, how could he get away with it; if he did perceive it, why did it not bother him any more than it seems to have done, namely, not at all. Nothing prevents us from considering Aristotle's definition of metaphor, or the short formula which has so often been considered as his definition of metaphor (which it cannot be, however, as we have already seen), in terms of this definition itself, except the fact that it is situated in a discourse which behaves like an argument or systematic exposition, *and* except the fact that the basic rules of definition, laid out by Aristotle, prohibit the inclusion of the *definiendum* in the *definiens*, and exclude the use of metaphor in defining anything.

However, when we deal with metaphors, we are dealing with isolated sentences and single words detached from their context. If we apply this principle to Aristotle's definition itself and sever the generic formula or its terms (*metaphora*, *epiphora*, *allotrios*) from their context, nothing prevents us from considering them as metaphorically used words, as a metaphorical sentence. Or is there another "psychological feature" that prevents this self-application? Let us see.

⁷⁶ A remarkable example, from Nelson Goodman: "Briefly, a metaphor is an affair between a predicate with a past and an object that yields while protesting." (*Languages of Art, an Approach to a Theory of Symbols* [2nd ed., 5th pr.] [Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1985 [1st ed. 1968], p. 69.) Cf. Paul Ricœur: "Céder en protestant, voilà, sous forme de métaphore, notre paradoxe : la protestation est ce qui reste du mariage ancien — l'assignation littérale — que la contradiction défait ; céder est ce qui arrive finalement par la grâce du rapprochement nouveau." (*La métaphore vive* [Paris: Seuil, 1975], p. 249. Cf. also pp. 296-297, and Ricœur's comment on Goodman's description: "On parle encore de la métaphore en termes de métaphore : mais cette fois l'écran, le filtre, la grille, la lentille cèdent la place à l'union charnelle!". The choice of these metaphorical names for metaphor is interesting with respect to the allusion to *hymen*: the screen — which could also be a filter — and the filter, the grating, the lense, all these photographic images give way to intercourse, a penetration. But *non*-penetration, *non*-perpetration are features of the Mallarméan *hymen*, which is no longer metaphorical: cf. Derrida, "La double séance", in *La dissémination* [Paris: Seuil, cop. 1972, repr. 1997].)

⁷⁷ "If we are to avoid arguing in metaphors, clearly we must also avoid defining in metaphors and defining metaphorical terms [δῆλον ὅτι οὐδ' ὀρίξεσθαι οὔτε μεταφοραῖς οὔτε ὅσα λέγεται μεταφοραῖς]; otherwise we are bound to argue in metaphors [διαλέγεσθαι γὰρ ἔσται μεταφοραῖς]." (*An. Post.* 97b37, trans. Tredennick. Cf. *Top.* VIII, 3.)

The generic formula, which itself appears to be metaphorical or at least provokes metaphorical allusions (*epiphora*, in its juxtaposition with *allotrios*, could be ‘dowry’, and so on),⁷⁸ must be supplemented, not only with the formal classifications (which are still too general), but with *examples*, instantiations of metaphor. And from these we must infer a certain ‘psychological’ distinctive feature, namely the feature of pretense, “the *as if* or *make-believe*” (Turbayne, *The Myth of Metaphor*, p. 17).

Aristotle’s definition is perhaps not yet a sufficient definition of metaphor, insofar as we consider it only as to its formal characterizations: none of these applications of a name belonging to another, the transference from species to genus, from genus to species, from species to species nor the transference by analogy, has to be metaphorical in the sense that Aristotle seems to ascribe to this term. Firstly, there is a certain contradistinction between the first three types of ‘metaphor’ on the one hand, and the most prominent type, namely the metaphor by analogy, on the other. The transferences that the later tradition has rather called metonymy or synecdoche are not always such that a ‘name’ belonging to another (*allotrios*) is applied, and this is even clear from the examples used by Aristotle: ‘to ride at anchor’ belongs to ‘standing’ in a large sense, as a species belongs to its genus (while we can also say that a genus belongs to its species, as Aristotle elsewhere points out; the sense of ‘standing’ belongs to the meaning of ‘lying at anchor’), ‘ten thousand’ or a ‘myriad’ belongs to ‘many’, and ‘drawing off’ instead of ‘severing’ and ‘severing’ instead of ‘drawing off’ both belong to ‘removing’. It seems that an extra feature has to be ‘induced’ from these examples in order to understand why an “alien name” or “strange term” is thought to be involved in such transferences. Namely, all of these examples seem to involve a moment of fiction, “make-believe” as Turbayne puts it or, to use Nietzsche’s characterization of metaphor, a “lie in an extra-moral sense”, all except perhaps the first which says “here stands my ship”,⁷⁹ in which the translation does not seem to account for the “application of a strange term”, since this application seems to imply no ‘live metaphor’ at all; but to use *estanei* instead of *hormein* is to use a

⁷⁸ Cf. Liddell – Scott – Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon (LSJ)*: “ἐπιφέρω [...] — bring, put or lay upon [...] 2. place upon, esp. of placing offerings on the grave [...] lay on, apply, φάρμακον Pl[ato] Ep.354b [...] 3. bring as a charge against [...] 4. bring, i.e. confer, impose upon, in good or bad sense [...] 5. add to, increase [...] 6. give a name to, ὀνομαζέ. τινί Pl[ato], Plt. 307b, R. 596a, al., Arist. Rh. 1408a7, al.; assign an attribute to a substantive [...] Pl. Sph. 251a. [...] 10. In [Stoic] Logic, assert as a conclusion or inference [...] II. Med., bring with or upon oneself, bring as a dowry [οὐδὲν ἐπιφερομένην, Lysias 19.14] 2. consume (eat) in addition [...] 3. wear or carry on one’s person [...] III. pass. [...] 4. of phrases, to be applied [etc.]”, “ἐπιφορά, ἡ, (ἐπιφέρω) bringing to or upon : hence, 1. donative, extra pay [...] 2. application, ὀνομάζων Pl[ato] Lg. 944b, cf. Cra. 430d. 3. second course [at dinner] [...] 5. application, τὴν τῆς αἰσθησεως ἐ. ποιεῖσθαι to concentrate attention, Plu[tarch] 2.1144b. [...] II. (from Pass.) offering made at the grave, Plu. Num. 22. 2. impact, [...] sudden attack [...] attack of an orator, [...] 3. vehemence in oratory, [...] 5. Medic. epiphora, persistent flow of tears, as a disease [...] III. Rhet., second clause in a sentence [...] 2. repetition [...] 3. succession of clauses ending in the same word [...] IV. in Stoic Logic, the conclusion of a syllogism [...] 2. question at issue [etc.]” (*LSJ/PDLP*.) It must be noted that Aristotle’s use of the term *epiphora* is based on an already established usage that is equivalent to the “application (of a name)” or “attribution”.

⁷⁹ “Here stands my ship [νηὺς δέ μοι ἦδ’ ἔστηκεν.]” is from the *Odyssey*, I, 185 and XXIV, 308 (cf. Janko [1987] ad 1457b10).

general term instead of the specific verb reserved for ‘riding at anchor’, a proper name of sorts, and in this sense it is a deviation from the ordinary usage.⁸⁰ Nevertheless, *murion*, “ten thousand” or “numberless” as the amount of Odysseus’ noble deeds is a sort of hyperbolical approximation for a great number, a ‘myriad’;⁸¹ “drawing off” or “severing” are indeed literal ways of “removing” something, but here the ‘thing’ removed is the *life* or the *soul* of a man, and only this connection seems to make these ‘removals’ metaphorical, since we may always ask whether anybody has ever *seen* or experienced how a soul is *removed*, *drawn off* or *severed* with a “bronze” from the body?

Chalkos, which is a common metonymy in Greek poetry “for *anything made of metal*” (*LSJ*), stands for a sword in the first of these two examples, and it has been suggested that a “cupping-bowl” is the referent of the second; it could also refer to “drawing water”.⁸² It is easy to see that many of Aristotle’s exemplary ‘metaphors’ in the context of the ‘definition’ are complex figures, involving not only one kind of trope but rather woven of several, like these two that illustrate the transference from species to species and employ this metonymy of ‘bronze’. Not to mention the riddles that provide good metaphors and can be composed of several, i.e. of several metaphorical words, such as the other cupping-bowl example that Aristotle repeatedly refers to: “I saw a man who welded bronze on another man by fire.”⁸³ But it also seems that for Aristotle, each metaphorically used vocable is an individual metaphor.

In the case of the analogical metaphors, the examples are, if possible, even more clearly fictitious or mythical. But who says that for the Greeks, or for the *pre-Aristotelian* Greek poets, “the god-created flame” was a *metaphor* for the sun or its light? The concept of metaphor inaugurated by Aristotle is a way to relate the ‘primitive’ myth to epistemic concerns, such as the *episteme* of the *phusis*.

The generic formula with its term *allotrios* must not be severed from the rest of the definition, or *vice versa*, because every transference from species to genus, from genus to

⁸⁰ On these verbs, cf. the *OED* entry “stand, v.” (*OED*, 50236064) (“[32.]b. Of a ship: To ride at anchor”) and the *LSJ* entries ὀρμέω (“to be moored, lie at anchor, of a ship”) and ἵσθημι (“[IV.]B. Pass. and intr. tenses of Act., to be set or placed, stand, Hom. etc.”).

⁸¹ *LSJ* gives “numberless” or “countless” as a primary meaning for μυρίος and the exact number “ten thousand” appears first as assigned to this term in Hesiod. The example (“ἦ δὲ μυρί’ Ὀδυσσεὺς ἐσθλὰ ἔοργεν”) is taken from the *Iliad*, II, 272 (cf. Janko *ad* 1457b11).

⁸² Fyfe adds a note to this: “Probably ‘the bronze’ is in the first case a knife and in the second a cupping-bowl. This would make the metaphor intelligible.” Butcher translates as follows: “From species to species, as: ‘With blade of bronze drew away the life,’ and ‘Cleft the water with the vessel of unyielding bronze.’ Here *arusai*, ‘to draw away’ is used for *tamein*, ‘to cleave,’ and *tamein*, again for *arusai* – each being a species of taking away.” For two other metaphors with a cupping-bowl (or cupping-glass, as this instrument is more often called) as their referent, this time more specifically a riddle, cf. *Rh.* III, 3, 1405b1f. and *Po.* 22, 1458a29-30, where it is a question of the following example: “I saw a man who welded bronze on another man by fire (ἄνδρ’ εἶδον πυρὶ χαλκὸν ἐπ’ ἀνέρι κολλήσαντα)” (trans. Golden). But Janko writes (*ad* 1457b13-14): “Both quotations are from Empedocles (see on 47b18), whom Aristotle regarded as a genius of metaphor. The first (frag. 138D) refers apparently to killing a man, the second (frag. 143D) to drawing water.”

⁸³ “ἄνδρ’ εἶδον πυρὶ χαλκὸν ἐπ’ ἀνέρι κολλήσαντα” (*Po.* 1458a29f.; cf. *Rh.* II, 2, 1405a35-b6; cf. *Po.* 22, 1458a21-30.)

species, from species to species or by analogy does not have to be metaphorical, and because in order to be metaphorical, such a transference or attribution (*epiphora*) must be *deviant*, and the examples are indispensable in order that we can ‘induce’ the feature that belongs to this deviation, namely the rhetorically stylistic or poetical function of this deviance becomes apparent. Aristotle must restrict the scope of metaphor to a certain unorthodox usage of language, even though the ability to use metaphor well is an extraordinary gift of nature, or a token of a common gift that belongs to man by nature. Not only a talent common to both the poet and the philosopher but, at least in principle, common to all mankind or man’s essence (of which an individual human being can always be deprived *de facto*, of course, by privation of what belongs to him *de jure*, as his birthright).

In metaphor, the *epiphor* must be accompanied by a *diaphoric* moment,⁸⁴ and Aristotle’s definition states this quite clearly by the word *allotrios*. So, to speak of metaphor as a deviant predication in the manner of the modern theorists is only a commentary on Aristotle’s theory and an explication of its implications and not its complete revision. To put it briefly and perhaps provocatively: All that can be said on metaphor can be found in Aristotle already.⁸⁵ That is, inasmuch as his statements also contradict each other in a remarkable way:

⁸⁴ To be sure, this is not the only way to understand the contradistinction of *epiphor* and *diaphor*. *Epiphora* has been translated by modern authors as either *transport* (Guy Bouchard, *Procès de la métaphore* [1984], pp. 270-271n3; 284n14) or *transference* (I. A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* [1950], p. 135). *Diaphora* is most usually rendered as “difference”. However, Philip Wheelwright conceives of the pair *epiphor* (“which is usually translated ‘transference’”) — *diaphor* as follows: “For whereas ‘epiphor’ connotes a semantic movement (*phora*) from something on to (*epi-*) something else, the word ‘diaphor’ connotes a semantic movement through (*dia-*) a grouping of several particulars. [...] [A]nd I would suggest that a metaphor is perhaps epiphoric to the extent that an antecedent resemblance is effective, diaphoric to the extent that the significant resemblance is that which has been induced by, and is emergent from, the metaphor itself.” (“Semantics and Ontology” [1972], p. 67.) Douglas Berggren summarizes Wheelwright’s conception as follows: “Diaphoric metaphor does not merely compare antecedently given similarities between principal and subsidiary subjects, but introduces new meaning by construing the one in terms of the other.” (“The Use and Abuse of Metaphor” [1962], s. 242.) The difference is between operating on an antecedent difference and *making* a difference (*diaphora*), i.e. producing a new ‘specific’ meaning, by introducing an ‘epiphoric’ transfer, a quasi-identity across an antecedent difference. But metaphor also retains the antecedent tension while it negates some of the ordinary attributes of the “subsidiary subject” (“wineless cup” — which is actually quite a complex example). — A different view on *epiphora* could be ‘inferred’ from the fact that while *metaphora* has sometimes been translated into Latin as *translatio*, *epiphora* has been rendered as *illatio*, these being participial forms of the verbs *transferre* and *inferre*. In Wilhelm von Moerbeke’s translation (1278), Aristotle’s formula reads as follows: “*Metaphora autem est nominis alieni illatio*.” (Thomas Schestag indicated this translation to me in his pre-examination report.) The ‘carrying over’ in metaphor would be established by ‘carrying in’, ‘bringing in’ or simply ‘applying’, ‘introducing’ an ‘alien name’ for that which either already has or has not a name of its own. The verb “sowing” in the figure of “sowing the god-created fire” is Aristotle’s example of the latter situation, as we have seen, and it is clearly not a question of ‘substitution’ here. Whether it is simply a question of *resemblance* or rather of a more complex structure of analogy remains questionable (cf. Derrida, “La mythologie blanche”, pp. 290-291).

⁸⁵ Cf. Paul Ricœur, *La métaphore vive* (Paris: Seuil, cop. 1975); Guy Bouchard, *Le procès de la métaphore* (Quebec: Hurtubise, 1984); and e.g. the following statement by Umberto Eco, with whose view I would partly agree, at least on this matter: “Not the least of the contradictions encountered in a ‘metaphorology’ is that, of the thousands and thousands of pages written about metaphor, few add anything of substance to the first two or three fundamental concepts stated by Aristotle. In effect, very little has been said about a phenomenon concerning which, it seems, there is everything to say.” (“The Scandal of Metaphor” [1983], pp. 217-218.)

metaphor both *gives* clarity and *is* always unclear. If this is true, if both of these claims are true at the same time, we must ask the question of metaphor's givenness, or at least two questions: (1) What are the presuppositions for the concept of metaphor, the horizon upon which it can be given, stated or defined? (2) What is the horizon of the individual metaphor and why would Aristotle not consider some of the apparent metaphors in his own text, for instance, metaphorical? This second question should be examined with regard to the two forms of analogy, *restricted* and *universal*, the latter understood also as a quest for the systematization of human discourse (as an 'onto-theological' discourse, a systematization that proceeds also through a broadly speaking 'doxographical' analysis), but this project cannot be undertaken in the present context.

In any case, it seems that insofar as we consider Aristotle's definition of metaphor in the terms that are provided by the definition itself, namely, if we consider its words and sentences as detached from their context, without relating them to the overall discourse of which they are part (and the limits of this context are not easy to determine), the definition destroys itself as a definition. If we fold the definition back upon itself and consider the generic formula and its single terms in isolation from the context, we see how metaphor refuses its name — *declines* its name, by definition.

The name *metaphora* derives from the verb *metapherein* [μεταφέρειν] — let us at least pretend that the verb and its infinitive form is the root of all the derived forms, for instance the noun and the adjective. The adjective form *metaphoretos* appears in the second chapter of the fourth book of the *Physics*. There Aristotle discusses place, *topos*, and in that context the verb *metapherein* denotes concrete, let us say 'physical', transportation:

Place seems to be something like a vessel [καὶ γὰρ δοκεῖ τοιοῦτό τι εἶναι ὁ τόπος οἷον τὸ ἀγγεῖον], the vessel being a transportable place [ἔστι γὰρ τὸ ἀγγεῖον τόπος μεταφορητός]. But the vessel is no part of the thing [τὸ δ' ἀγγεῖον οὐδὲν τοῦ πράγματός ἐστιν]. [*Phys.* IV, 2, 209b28-30.]⁸⁶

A vessel is a transportable place, *topos metaphoretos*. Quite literally too, as we may add. Aristotle does not simply accept this seeming or supposed and logically dubious 'likeness' between place and vessel, of course. A jar is a sort of place, and indeed a portable, transportable place. It is *topos* insofar as it surrounds and limits that which is contained within it. But the nature of the *topos* requires that this figure, not yet sufficient in itself, be inverted.

The transportable place, namely the vessel, plays a remarkable role in the difficult discussion concerning place in the first to fifth chapter of the fourth book of the *Physics*. In the second chapter, the vessel is indeed a metaphorizable place (*topos metaphoretos*) since it appears to represent all place, place in general or the concept of place, as if it were not only

⁸⁶ The translation by R. P. Hardie and R. K. Gaye modified (*Physics*, in *The Complete Works Of Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes [Princeton: Princeton U. P., 1984]); the Greek text from Aristote, *Physique (I-IV)*, T. I, texte établi et traduit par Henri Carteron (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1926). Cf. Joe Sachs' translation: "And place seems to be something of the kind that a jar is (for the jar is a portable place), but the jar in no way belongs to the thing." (*Aristotle's Physics: A Guided Study* [2001], p. 98.)

an exemplary place but the metaphor of all place. But this metaphor is treated in a peculiar fashion which merits our specific attention. A second metaphor is to do away with the first in this economy. The vessel represents place as separate from its content, the thing contained, and namely, transportable. But place itself is immobile, unmovable or rather irremovable:

As the vessel is transportable place, so place is a non-portable vessel [ἔστι δ' ὥσπερ τὸ ἀγγεῖον τόπος μεταφορητός, οὕτω καὶ ὁ τόπος ἀγγεῖον ἀμετακίνητον].
[*Phys.* IV, 4, 212a14f.]⁸⁷

This chiasmatic formula, consisting of a double metaphor as it seems, resembles the last of Aristotle's exemplary uses of metaphor in the twenty-first chapter of the *Poetics*, where Ares' shield is called a "wineless cup" as according to the principle by which a strange term is first applied and then its usual attribute is denied, an operation which only follows the deviant attribution as according to the analogy that constituted the expressions "Ares' cup" and "Dionysus' shield" in the first place.⁸⁸ But now the figure seems to be used as if to reveal that the analogy between the vessel and place in general is false or, rather, that the representation of all place by the exemplary 'metaphorizable place', the vessel, turns out to be insufficient. The vessel still metaphorizes place, but in order to do so, the first metaphor has to be undone by the second one: now place in general is not represented by a vessel as a transportable place, but by a non-portable (irremovable) vessel, or rather both in their chiasmatic crossing-through. If the vessel, a transportable place, represents place in general, it fits the scheme of transference from species to genus. Place understood as a non-portable vessel may be taken as another kind of transference, from genus to species plus an explicit negation of an impertinent attribute (portability, removability), but it may also be understood as an extension of the scope of the term "vessel" [ἀγγεῖον] by the very method of such transference and negation. This chiasmic configuration, and the whole dialectical discussion of place in *Physics* IV, 1-4,⁸⁹ lead to what would seem to be Aristotle's concluding definition of place: "So that is what place is: the first unchangeable limit of that which surrounds."⁹⁰ In the systematic, dia-

⁸⁷ En. trans. R. P. Hardie and R. K. Gaye (1984); Greek text ed. Carteron (1926). Cf. Joe Sachs (2001): "But just as the jar is a portable place, so also place is an immovable jar." Cf. Edward Hussey (*Aristotle's Physics, Books III and IV*, trans. with notes by Edward Hussey [Oxford: Clarendon Press 1983]): "Just as the vessel is a place which can be carried around, so place is a vessel which cannot be moved around."

⁸⁸ It actually seems that in the metaphor of the "cup without wine", not only wine but each and every attribute of the cup, except the strange and enigmatic detour through the emblem or metonymy of Dionysus, is being abstracted — the "wineless cup" standing for Ares' shield is indeed a remarkable example of metaphor, quite different from the minimalism of, say, "Man is wolf".

⁸⁹ "Dialectical" is to be understood here in the Aristotelian sense of dialectic as the method "by which (in theory at least) the philosophical inquirer started from the accumulated material of common-sense intuitions, previous opinions of philosophers, and observed facts relevant to the subject, and ascended by a process of rational criticism and generalization to the correct account of the subject, which would usually be enshrined in a definition of the central term"; this is how Edward Hussey describes the "practice of Aristotelian dialectic [which] is codified in the *Topics*, [while] *Physics* III and IV provide one of the earliest surviving examples of its application" (*Aristotle's Physics, Books III and IV*, p. ix).

⁹⁰ "Ὡστε τὸ τοῦ περιέχοντος πέρας ἀκίνητον πρῶτον, τοῦτ' ἔστιν ὁ τόπος." (*Phys.* IV, 4, 212a20-21.) Trans. Hussey. The Greek text is from Carteron's edition (1926); this is his translation: "Par suite la

lectical discussion which leads to this definition, the metaphors neutralize each other — or support each other, if you will, which is not a completely different matter, just a different ‘metaphor’ — and reduce each other *as* metaphors. In this discursive systematization, they cease to be mere metaphors, if they ever were that, which is doubtful: a vessel *is* a transportable place, and the metaphor of place as a non-portable vessel needs this counterpart, this counter-figure in order to be reduced *as* metaphor, while of course the figure of the vessel as *topos metaphoretos* would remain incomplete, insufficient without its own chiasmatic counterpart or counter-figure.

In any case, this discussion of place is the ‘source domain’ from which Aristotle derives the name for metaphor. Proper naming and defining, however, reject metaphor. If metaphor can only be named and defined *by* metaphor, if metaphor can only derive its name by metaphor, we must conclude that *metaphor declines its name*: the phenomenon named metaphor cannot be properly named or defined since proper naming and defining reject metaphor. The subject of the refusal is, in the first place, metaphor itself.⁹¹

It would therefore not be altogether impertinent to suggest that the concept of metaphor, bending back upon itself and indefinitely calling for renewed attention and greater precision, in order to differentiate it from what it is not, or contrarily, in order to extend its scope far beyond its traditional limits, is an *undecidable* concept of sorts. The concept of metaphor calls for an indeterminate discursive frame that is actually denied to the metaphor itself, and yet, it also remains itself so indeterminate that it seems to allow us to transfer it all over and expand its scope *ad infinitum*, since when considered narrowly enough, this concept seems to invite this very procedure of self-application, the unlimited metaphorization of metaphor.

If metaphor can only be named by metaphor, by transporting the name or definition from an alien ‘source domain’, does metaphor not refuse the possibility of giving the proper name to itself? This paradox has not escaped Pierre Fontanier’s attention, as he introduced the concept of catachresis or forced metaphor. A forced metaphor (*métaphore forcée*) is not properly a metaphor, it is a pseudo-figure (*non vraie figure*), and the word ‘figure’ itself is a catachresis and not a true figure, since the original sense of this word is to an extent incompatible with its catachrestic use. Incompatible to an extent, since there must be some analogical relation that has made it possible to use such a metaphor in the first place, to use such a pseudo-figurative metaphor in the absence of another word for the idea.⁹²

limite immobile immédiate de l’enveloppe, tel est le lieu.”

⁹¹ According to Aristotle himself, metaphors cannot be used in defining; metaphor and definition are mutually exclusive. Metaphor should not enter the definition of metaphor, for two reasons at least: (1) the *definiendum* must not be used in the *definiens*, and (2) as Aristotle himself says, metaphorical speech is “always unclear” and therefore: “If we are to avoid arguing in metaphors, clearly we must also avoid defining in metaphors and defining metaphorical terms; otherwise we are bound to argue in metaphors.” (*An. Post.* 97b37, trans. Tredennick. Cf. *Top.* VIII, 3.)

⁹² Pierre Fontanier, *Les figures du discours*, pp. 213-219 and p. 63: “Le mot *figure* n’a dû d’abord se dire, à ce qu’il paraît, que des corps, ou même que de l’homme et des animaux considérés physiquement et quant aux limites de leur étendue. Et, dans cette première acception, que signifie-t-il? Les contours, les traits, la forme

Aristotle himself affirms that one may name by metaphor something hitherto unnamed.⁹³ But his example of such metaphorical naming (namely “sowing the god-created fire”) could be considered poetic and expressly mythological, while in this context he says nothing of the parallel possibility of using metaphor in a theoretical discourse, such as his own theoretical discourse concerning metaphor. He seems to evade the question. And at once, the question does not evade his text: the formula reveals or *re-marks* its own method.

But why do we usually *not* make the mentioned self-application of Aristotle’s formula? Perhaps there is another ‘psychological feature’ involved. We expect from the theoretical discourse a certain sincerity, no pretense and no dissimulation. This intentional feature, in two senses of the term ‘intentionality’, namely the generally phenomenological sense (directedness to something) and the sense related to the purposes and designs of a conscious subject, an author’s intentions, is irreducible insofar as we are to distinguish between theory and fiction. But this does not mean that we are automatically to expect pretense and insincere intentions from a literary text, or absence of all dissimulation, irony and figurativity from epistemic or theoretical discourse.

If reading Aristotle’s definition in its own terms, bending it back upon itself, seems *sycophantic* in the sense given to this term by Aristotle himself and relating to the *reductio ad absurdum* of an opponent’s metaphor,⁹⁴ why should we accept that *poetic texts* are read in

extérieure d’un homme, d’un animal, ou d’un objet palpable quelconque. / Le discours, qui ne s’adresse qu’à l’intelligence de l’âme, n’est pas, même considéré quant aux mots qui le transmettent à l’âme par les sens, un corps proprement dit. Il n’a donc pas de *figure*, à proprement parler. Mais il a pourtant, dans ses différentes manières de signifier et d’exprimer, quelque chose d’analogue aux différences de forme et de traits qui se trouvent dans les vrais corps. C’est sans doute d’après cette analogie qu’on a dit par *métaphore*, *Les figures du discours*. Mais cette métaphore ne saurait être regardée comme une vraie *figure*, parce que nous n’avons pas dans la langue d’autre mot pour la même idée.”

⁹³ Cf. the definition already cited above: “Sometimes there is no word for some of the terms of the analogy but the metaphor can be used all the same. For instance, to scatter seed is to sow, but there is no word for the action of the sun in scattering its fire. Yet this has to the sunshine the same relation as sowing has to the seed, and so you have the phrase ‘sowing the god-created fire.’” (*Po.* 1457b25-30, trans. Fyfe.) This is followed by the description of the type of metaphor that the “unmovable vessel” represents: “Besides this another way of employing metaphor is to call a thing by the strange name and then to deny it some attribute of that name. For instance, suppose you call the shield not “Ares’ cup” but a “wineless cup” (b30-33).

⁹⁴ Aristotle has been criticized for reading his precursors or opponents too literally, and that is to say, for applying the “sycophantic” method of reducing metaphor to absurdity recommended in the *Topics* (cf. *Top.* 139b34ff), a method that seems suspiciously sophistic. But in these occasions where he seems to interpret “vague [*sic*] statements literally for polemic purposes” or to insist “on taking metaphor in philosophy literally”, he also shows that the theories of his opponents are “fundamentally wrong, not just mistaken in details”, as Julia Annas has argued in her commentary on the two last books of the *Metaphysics* (*op. cit.*, pp. 214-217). Aristotle’s criticism against Plato’s “poetic metaphors” is indeed a case in point. The aim of Annas’s work is to show that Aristotle’s treatise, in these concluding books of the *Metaphysics*, mainly concerned with the philosophy of mathematics of the Platonists and the Pythagoreans, is not merely “a pettifoggish discussion of mystical nonsense” (p. 1). However, we may indeed find passages of which we may say with Annas: “This [1092a29-b3] looks like a joking reduction to absurdity of metaphors about generation and parenthood in connection with numbers” (p. 217). Most often, in the passages commented on by Annas, the vagueness or metaphoricity of Aristotle’s opponents’ arguments is not their only fault and he is able to show that the non-metaphorical alternatives or theories “are fundamentally wrong, not just mistaken in details” (p. 217). Thus Aristotle’s method is not mere “sycophancy” in the sense given in the *Topics* (139b36).

terms of isolated words and sentences providing material for a theory of metaphor? If the philosophical text is “allowed to deconstruct its own metaphors” (de Man), and is indeed expected to do so, why should we not allow poems, epic or tragic, or whatever their genre, a parallel force of deconstruction or *reductio ad absurdum*? Parallel, but not identical.

Perhaps the theories of metaphor should follow the example of, say, Max Black, and restrict themselves to such simple examples as “Man is a wolf”, “Smith is a pig”, “My sweetheart is my Schopenhauer”?⁹⁵ It must be said in favour of Max Black that he wisely refuses to superimpose his theory of metaphor on to the more “complex” cases, as he calls them, in poetry and the discourse of mysticism, such as W. H. Auden’s verses “Oh dear white children, casual as birds, / Playing amid the ruined languages”, and Thomas Browne’s apophatic sentence “light [is] but the shadow of God”;⁹⁶ both of these are meta-rhetorical rather than simply rhetorical figures. But more often those turns of phrase that do not easily fit into the theories concerning “standard beliefs” and “systems of associated commonplaces” are still violently reduced into being just more complex instances of metaphor, “difficult metaphors”.⁹⁷ It makes very little difference whether we focus on Achilles rushing like a lion or on Achilles portrayed as a rushing lion, the basic structure, mediated by a “common genus”⁹⁸ or *tertium comparationis*, is in both cases quite simple; furthermore, it still makes little difference whether we reformulate this simple structure in terms of “current platitudes” (Black), and so on. Here is Aristotle’s version of the most simple instances of the ever-returning “raids of the bestiary”.⁹⁹

The simile also is a metaphor; for there is very little difference. [ἔστιν δὲ καὶ ἡ εἰκὼν μεταφορά· διαφέρει γὰρ μικρόν·] When the poet says of Achilles, “he rushed on like a lion,” it is a simile; if he says, “a lion, he rushed on,” it is a metaphor [ὅταν μὲν γὰρ εἴπῃ τὸν Ἀχιλλέα « ὥς δὲ λέων ἐπόρουσεν », εἰκὼν ἐστίν, ὅταν δὲ « λέων ἐπόρουσε », μεταφορά·]; for because both are courageous, he transfers the sense and calls Achilles a lion. [διὰ γὰρ τὸ ἄμφω ἀνδρείους εἶναι, προσηγόρευσεν μετενέγκας λέοντα τὸν Ἀχιλλέα.] The simile is also useful in prose, but should be less frequently used, for there is something poetical about it. [χρήσιμον δὲ ἡ εἰκὼν καὶ ἐν λόγῳ, ὀλιγάκις δὲ ποιητικὸν γάρ.] (*Rh.* III, 4, 1406b, trans. Freese; ed.

⁹⁵ Cf. Wayne C. Booth, “Metaphor as Rhetoric: The Problem of Evaluation”, *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (Autumn 1978), pp. 49-72, here p. 56.

⁹⁶ Cf. Max Black, “Metaphor”, in *Models and Metaphors*, pp. 26-27, *passim*. Browne’s sentence actually reads as follows: “The Sunne it self is but the dark *simulachrum*, and light but the shadow of God.” (Sir Thomas Browne, “The Garden of Cyrus”, in *Urne Buriall and The Garden of Cyrus*, ed. John Carter [Cambridge U.P., 1958], p. 105.)

⁹⁷ Cf. Black, “Metaphor”. For instance Leibniz, admiring the beauty and courage of Angelus Silesius’ poetry, deems his “metaphors” difficult. Heidegger cites Leibniz’s letter in *Der Satz vom Grund* (p. 68), but does not directly comment on Leibniz’s use of the term “metaphor”; however, Heidegger’s most famous argument against the notion of metaphor as a “handy crutch” of interpretation happens only some twenty pages later in the book. — On Leibniz’s comments on Angelus Silesius, cf. also Derrida, *Sauf le nom* (Paris: Galilée, 1993), pp. 16-17.

⁹⁸ Cf. Aristotle, *Rh.* III, 10, 1410b10-15, and below.

⁹⁹ This expression “raid of the bestiary” is borrowed from Jonathan Culler’s “Commentary”, in *NLH* Vol. VI, No 1 (Autumn 1974), p. 222. Culler’s expression corresponds roughly to the “system of commonplaces” evoked by such trivial metaphors as “Man is a wolf” (cf. Max Black, “Metaphor”).

Ross.)

The multivalent term *logos* is here rendered as “prose” — but what is “prose”, anyway, what was “prose” for the Greeks, beyond the anachronism of this translation? A partial answer can be found just a few lines before the definition of metaphor in the *Poetics*, in a definition of *logos* whose translation is enough to show how painfully untranslatable by one word this Greek word *logos* remains:

A phrase [*logos*] is a composite sound with a meaning, some parts of which mean something by themselves. It is not true to say that every “phrase” is made up of nouns and verbs, e.g. the definition of man; but although it is possible to have a “phrase” without verbs, yet some part of it will always have a meaning of its own, for example, Cleon in “Cleon walks.” A “phrase” may be a unit in two ways; either it signifies one thing or it is a combination of several “phrases.” The unity of the *Iliad*, for instance, is due to such combination, but the definition of man is “one phrase” because it signifies one thing. [λόγος δὲ φωνὴ συνθετὴ σημαντικὴ ἧς ἔνια μέρη καθ’ αὐτὰ σημαίνει τι (οὐ γὰρ ἅπας λόγος ἐκ ῥημάτων καὶ ὀνομάτων σύγκειται, οἷον ὁ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ὀρισμός, ἀλλ’ ἐνδέχεται ἄνευ ῥημάτων εἶναι λόγον, μέρος μὲντοι αἰεὶ τι σημαῖνον ἔξει) οἷον ἐν τῷ βαδίζει Κλέων ὁ Κλέων. εἰς δὲ ἐστὶ λόγος διχῶς, ἢ γὰρ ὁ ἐν σημαίνων, ἢ ὁ ἐκ πλειόνων συνδέσμων, οἷον ἡ Ἰλιάς μὲν συνδέσμων εἷς, ὁ δὲ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου τῷ ἐν σημαίνειν.] [*Po.* 1457a23-30; trans. Fyfe; ed. Kassel.]

In the *Metaphysics* it is said that “not to mean one thing is to mean nothing”, and “For it is not possible to think without thinking one thing, so if thinking is possible, one could set down one name for this thing.”¹⁰⁰ The unity of the *Iliad* would consist of sentences that mean one thing; but of course, metaphor is not the only way to say one thing and mean another. Even though Aristotle clearly acknowledges the possibility of using metaphor and related stylistic devices ironically (there are numerous examples of this in the *Rhetoric* and the *Poetics*), the restriction of metaphor to single words in single sentences means also the exclusion of such discursive powers that might undermine the power of some single metaphor; on the other hand, while the “inspiration” and “enthusiasm” of spontaneous emotions characterize poetry, ironical use of such high-flown style seems to be more appropriate in “prose”.¹⁰¹ So it never

¹⁰⁰ *Met.* IV, 4, 1006b7ff, trans. Sachs (2002). “... τὸ γὰρ μὴ ἐν σημαίνειν οὐθὲν σημαίνειν ἐστίν, μὴ σημαίνοντων δὲ τῶν ὀνομάτων ἀνήρηται τὸ διαλέγεσθαι πρὸς ἀλλήλους, κατὰ δὲ τὴν ἀλήθειαν καὶ πρὸς αὐτόν· οὐδὲ γὰρ ἐνδέχεται νοεῖν μὴ νοοῦντα ἐν· εἰ δ’ ἐνδέχεται, τεθεῖη ἂν ὄνομα τούτῳ τῷ πράγματι ἐν” (1006b7-11, ed. Christ).

¹⁰¹ Cf. e.g. *Rh.* III, 7, where Aristotle for instance speaks of the “emotional”, “inspired” or “enthusiastic” style of poetry and, on the other hand, of the ironic use of such high-flown language in for instance Plato’s dialogues: “Compound words, a number of epithets, and ‘foreign’ words especially, are appropriate to an emotional speaker; for when a man is enraged it is excusable for him to call an evil ‘high-as-heaven’ or ‘stupendous.’ He may do the same when he has gripped his audience and filled it with enthusiasm, either by praise, blame, anger, or friendliness, as Isocrates does at the end of his Panegyricus: ‘Oh, the fame and the name!’ and ‘In that they endured.’ For such is the language of enthusiastic orators, and it is clear that the hearers accept what they say in a sympathetic spirit. Wherefore this style is appropriate to poetry; for there is something inspired in poetry [ἐνθεον γὰρ ἡ ποίησις]. It should therefore be used either in this way or when speaking ironically [μετ’ εἰρωνείας], after the manner of Gorgias, or of Plato in the *Phaedrus*.” (1408b; trans. Freese; ed. Ross.)

seems to occur to Aristotle that the metaphor (or simile), in terms of which we see Achilles in the image of a lion, might be subjected to irony *within* the poetic work itself, within the *logos* called the *Iliad*.

What if there was a textual, discursive force or rather antitypy (resistance to force) that would ruin or frustrate the *tertium comparationis*? What if we, for once, allowed the text, even such a classical text as the *Iliad*, to “deconstruct its own metaphors” (as Paul de Man suggests), to resist the force of its own metaphors or its metaphors of force?

TO RESIST THE FORCE OF METAPHORS AND THE METAPHORS OF FORCE: SIMONE WEIL'S PACIFISTIC READING OF THE *ILIAD*

Has perhaps the naïve, *spontaneous* metaphor been forever lost since the Homeric world? Or, more precisely, the *Iliadic* world, in which it may have been still plausible to see Achilles in the figure of the leaping lion or the lion in the figure of Achilles, as it seems. The world whose monument, Achilles' shield, is wrought by the gods themselves — as if they already mourned the loss of the world of this blood-thirsty innocence. The world after Achilles' is the world of Odysseus, the brave new world that is no longer *that* brave pure and simple, the world of *Polytropos*, the ‘no one’ of many names, the hero and anti-hero of the *Odyssey*, an antitype to the divine but naïve Achilles, an antitype whose thousand noble deeds are counter-poised by his thousand perhaps less noble schemes, ‘tropes’. *Polytropos*, a man of many devices.

Simone Weil has written on the *Iliad* as a “poem of force” (in the essay “L’*Iliade* ou le poème de la force”), and according to her its true epic genius can only be rediscovered when the Europeans learn to *not* admire the force, to *not* hate the enemies, to *not* despise the unfortunate, to *not* appeal to a divine destiny that would justify the use of force, and such a renaissance of the Homeric genius is not at all likely to take place very soon.¹⁰² The genius of this poem does not reside in its metaphors and similes of force, but rather in its final resistance to being transported into an enthusiasm by these tropes: “*Quant aux guerriers, les comparaisons qui les font apparaître, vainqueurs ou vaincus, comme des bêtes ou des choses ne peuvent faire éprouver ni admiration ni mépris, mais seulement le regret que les hommes puissent être ainsi transformés.*” On the other hand, the art of warfare, argues Simone Weil, is nothing but the art of provoking such transformations. She also writes: “*Il n’est possible d’aimer et d’être juste que si l’on connaît l’empire de la force et si l’on sait ne pas le respecter.*”¹⁰³

¹⁰² Cf. “L’*Iliade* ou le poème de la force”, in *La source grecque* (Paris: Gallimard, 1953), p. 42.

¹⁰³ Weil, “L’*Iliade* ou le poème de la force”, pp. 33, 38, 41. Cf. also p. 32: “Telle est la nature de la force. Le pouvoir qu’elle possède de transformer les hommes en choses est double et s’exerce de deux côtés ; elle pétrifie différemment, mais également, les âmes de ceux qui la subissent et de ceux qui la manient. [...] Les batailles ne se décident pas entre hommes qui calculent, combinent, prennent une résolution et l’exécutent, mais entre hommes dépouillés de ces facultés, transformés, tombés au rang soit de la matière inerte qui n’est

You may only resist the power of similes and metaphors if you recognize it, and moreover, if you recognize the *gap* that is opened precisely where the ground for comparison, the ‘common genus’ or *tertium comparationis* is to be found; but perhaps this recognition of power means also the danger of being exposed to it, being suspended between the more immediate dispositions of admiration or contempt, and the more reflective attitudes of regret, or knowing how not to respect. For Aristotle, the heuristic function of the poetic metaphor resides in its ability to “teach by means of a common genus”, to “send the soul searching” for the meaningful yet abstract generic relation, but never too far;¹⁰⁴ an indefinite suspension over the abyss, undecided as to whether we, as readers or spectators, should identify or rather differentiate, would not seem fit for poetry.

Such double exposure, showing the empire of the images of force in order to show their deceptiveness, but without explicitly and thematically moralizing upon them, is dangerous of course: the reader may always fall prey to identification and admiration instead of recognizing the abyss. Aristotle’s implicit and explicit distinctions between the two “eyes for resemblance”, the poet’s and the philosopher’s, according to which (to name one of these distinctions) enthusiasm and inspiration are proper to poetry, while the prosaist should not fall for the seductions of elevated style, can be seen as a paradoxical gesture of moralism: the apparent amorism of not stating immediately and explicitly one’s purpose may be proper for a Gorgias or Plato, or the rhetor and the dialectician in general, perhaps partly because such irony can nevertheless be more or less immediately recognized by their audience, trained to follow such an intellectual game; but another kind of immediacy is expected from poetry.

The lion-likeness quite often appears in the *Iliad*, but in the final twenty-fourth book (not to mention related images, of men seen as wolves, hounds, etc.), in Apollo’s reproach to the other gods for their unjust favouring of Achilles, the lion-like nature is explicitly juxtaposed with what would be fitting to a man; this is Chapman’s impressive and intelligent translation, which in its psychologically sensitive liberality pays attention to the fact that Achilles, in his lion-like nature, seems essentially deprived of the “ruth that now should draw so deep / In all the world”, incapable, by his very privation of some essential characters of human nature, to bear the ambivalent weight of shame that should befall man, who should be neither “mere wild” nor “slave to his pride”:

que passivité, soit des forces aveugles qui ne sont qu’élan. C’est là le dernier secret de la guerre, et l’*Iliade* l’exprime par ses comparaisons, où les guerriers apparaissent comme les semblables soit de l’incendie, de l’inondation, du vent, des bêtes féroces, de n’importe quelle cause aveugle de désastre, soit des animaux peureux, des arbres, de l’eau, du sable, de tout ce qui est mû par la violence des forces extérieures.” When Weil speaks of “force”, she actually constantly speaks of the force of metaphors and comparisons, comparisons and metaphors of force.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. *Rh.* III, 10, 1410b; cf. *infra*, *passim*.

[.....] Achilles, that withstands
 All help to others, you can help — one that hath neither heart
 Nor soul within him that will move or yield to any part
 That fits a man, but lion-like, uplandish, and mere wild,
 Slave to his pride, and all his nerves being naturally compil'd
 Of eminent strength, stalks out and preys upon a silly sheep:
 And so fares this man — that fit ruth that now should draw so deep
 In all the world being lost in him, and shame (a quality
 Of so much weight that both it helps and hurts excessively
 Men in their manners) is not known, nor hath the power to be,
 In this man's being. [...]¹⁰⁵

Deprived of mercy (*eleos*) and shame (*aidos*), these two interrelated temporalities, Achilles seems also deprived of “the moment of hesitation which only provides us with our regard towards our fellow men [*ce temps d'arrêt d'où seul procèdent nos égards envers nos semblables*]” (Weil, p. 22).

The poetic motivation for Achilles' lion-likeness does not, finally, reside in the characteristic of courage or some other virtue, not even in some vice, such as ruthlessness, that is common to the great warrior and the lion. Rather, it is motivated by the privation of other characteristics that this comparison reveals, when read in its context. In the discursive ‘frame’ the metaphorical ‘focus’ thus turns back against itself.¹⁰⁶ Being like a lion turns out to be not

¹⁰⁵ Chapman's *Homer: The Iliad and the Odyssey*, trans. George Chapman (Ware: Wordsworth, 2000 [Chapman's *Iliad* first appeared in 1611]), p. 394 (Book XXIV, ll. 40ff). Cf. the trans. by A.T. Murray: “Nay, it is the ruthless Achilles, O ye gods, that ye are fain to succour, him whose mind is nowise right, neither the purpose in his breast one that may be bent; but his heart is set on cruelty, even as a lion that at the bidding of his great might and lordly spirit goeth forth against the flocks of men to win him a feast; even so hath Achilles lost all pity, neither is shame in his heart, the which harmeth men greatly and profiteth them withal.” [ἄλλ' ὅλοῶς Ἀχιλῆϊ θεοὶ βούλεσθ' ἐπαρήγειν, / ὥς οὐτ' ἄρ φρένες εἰσὶν ἐναΐσιμοι οὔτε νόημα / γναμπτόν ἐνὶ στήθεσσι, λέων δ' ὥς ἄγρια οἶδεν, / ὅς τ' ἐπεὶ ἄρ μεγάλη τε βίη καὶ ἀγήνορι θυμῶ / εἶξας εἰς' ἐπὶ μῆλα βροτῶν ἵνα δαῖτα λάβῃσιν· / ὥς Ἀχιλεὺς ἔλεον μὲν ἀπώλεσεν, οὐδέ οἱ αἰδῶς / γίγνεται, ἢ τ' ἀνδρας μέγα σίνεται ἡδ' ὀνίνησι.] (*The Iliad with an English Translation by A.T. Murray*, Ph.D. in two volumes [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1924]; Greek text: *Homeri Opera* in five volumes [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1920], *PDLP*. Also Samuel Butler's translation is reproduced in the *PDLP*: “So, then, you would all be on the side of mad Achilles, who knows neither right nor ruth? He is like some savage lion that in the pride of his great strength and spirit springs upon men's flocks and gorges on them. Even so has Achilles flung aside all pity, and all that decency which at once so greatly banes yet greatly boons him that will heed it.” [Mineola: Dover, 1999 (orig. 1898).] With regard to the famous contrast between Chapman's and Alexander Pope's *Homer (The Iliad, 1715-1720)*, cf. Pope's rendering of these lines: “Is then the dire Achilles all your care? / That iron heart, inflexibly severe; / A lion, not a man, who slaughters wide, / In strength of rage, and impotence of pride; / Who hastes to murder with a savage joy, / Invades around, and breathes but to destroy! / Shame is not of his soul; nor understood, / The greatest evil and the greatest good.” (*The Iliad of Homer*, Translated by Alexander Pope, with notes by the Rev. Theodore Alois Buckley, M.A., F.S.A. and Flaxman's Designs [1899], reproduced electronically as a *Project Gutenberg E-Text*, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/6130/6130-pdf.pdf>. Last accessed in January 2007.)

¹⁰⁶ However, “frame”, the term originally introduced into metaphor theories by Max Black, has been described as “that minimal unit which establishes the incongruity” (Eva F. Kittay, *Metaphor: Its Cognitive Force and Linguistic Structure* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987], p. 24 / cit. Phyllis Perrin Wilcox, *Metaphor in American Sign Language* [Gallaudet U.P., 2001], “Chapter One” of which is reproduced electronically in the following URL: <http://gupress.gallaudet.edu/excerpts/MASLone.html>). Whether we understand the frame of metaphor as the sentence in which the metaphor's focus-word occurs or as the “system of commonplaces”, it is still a question of a “minimal unit” and this explains why the concept of metaphor often

(just) a sign of extreme strength but (also) of an essential weakness. Achilles is a tragic character, because in “this man’s being” (not his essence as a human being, though, but in Chapman’s translation, Homer’s words¹⁰⁷ are taken absolutely to mean that Achilles is devoid of shame, which *in his very being* “hath [not] the power to be”), he remains a “slave to his pride” and to his, if this anachronism be allowed, narcissistic work of mourning.¹⁰⁸

fails to deal with text and discourse, or “system” or “syntax” (cf. Derrida, “La mythologie blanche”).

¹⁰⁷ “... οὐδέ / οἱ αἰδῶς γίγνεται ...”

¹⁰⁸ Here I would like to refer to Derrida’s numerous texts on the work of mourning as narcissism — and as a certain process of figuration (cf. e.g. *Mémoires — pour Paul de Man* [Paris: Galilée, 1988]).

PROLEGOMENON III

Antitypy – resistance to force, for example the resistance offered by a text to its own metaphors of force, or to the force of its own metaphors – is one of the types, but not the only type of ‘counter-figures’. This plurality resists being subsumed under generic unity, but also being referred back to any focal source of meaning that should govern the polysemy. This plurality is neither a genus nor an analogical unity governed by a punctual source, radiating itself all over the series of meanings in a regulated polysemy. Rather, the irreducibly plural term of counter-figures points – without pointing – to the plurality which refuses such reduction or regulated polysemy.

The first counter-figure is the Second Commandment. But if you never made an image in the first place, how could you abstain from worshipping it? So this Second Commandment is already divided into two antagonistic moments.

As well, the antitypous resistance is divided: the text, the tissue may contain metaphors, for instance, if we only “allow the text to deconstruct its own metaphors” (Paul de Man) they may ‘frustrate’ themselves (‘to frustrate’ is one of the translations for the verb used by Celan, *durchkreuzen*); on the other hand, the text, the tissue, may resist an exterior attempt at figuration, it may resist metaphor as an instrument of criticism, as a “poetic overall key” (Heidegger), or resist “criticism [as] a metaphor for the act of reading” (de Man, again). “*La poésie déjoue l’image.*” (Paul Celan.)¹⁰⁹

Counter-figurative antitypy is also the resistance offered by the ‘materiality’ of language, not only the sonorities and tonalities or “*timbre*” (Celan) or the “grain of the voice” (Barthes) that are untranslatable, but also what Martin Heidegger has called *Nennkraft*, “naming power”. Irony can be a counter-figure, metonymy can be a counter-figure to metaphor.

And we call counter-figures those sentences by which the metaphoricality of a given expression, apparently metaphorical, is being denied, in spite of appearances to the contrary. This denial takes the form of a quasi-Magrittean legend: “*Ceci n’est pas un pipe.*” The counter-figurative sentence – “*ce[ci] n’est pas une métaphore*” – seems of course diametrically opposed to the sentence painted into Magritte’s ambiguously titled work, *La trahison des images*: we do not say that “this is not a pipe” because it is a picture, an image of a pipe, but rather something like “this is not an image” – but an image need not be a metaphor (or symbol) and a metaphor need not be an image.¹¹⁰

The image may always commit treason on itself, the mask may always reveal itself as a mask: there is a counter-figurative power residing within the figure, and a “counter-metaphorical thrust” (Murray Krieger) within the literary metaphor itself. Moreover, other fig-

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Paul de Man, *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*, Second Edition, Revised (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, cop. 1983, repr. 1997), p.107; *Allegories of Reading* (New Haven: Yale U.P., cop. 1979), p. 72; Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe Bd. 52: Hölderlins Hymne »Andenken«* [1941/42] (Frankfurt a.M.: Klostermann, 1982), p. 40 (=GA 52:40); Paul Celan, *Mikrolithen*, p. 127, No. 230.2.

¹¹⁰ The phrase “*ce n’est pas une métaphore*” occurs, as such and in a paradoxical context, in at least Derrida’s *Schibboleth — pour Paul Celan* (Paris: Galilée, 1986); we shall return to this. — A couple of more examples, first from Walter Benjamin: “Es gibt kein Geschehen oder Ding weder in der belebten noch in der unbelebten Natur, das nicht in gewisse Weise an der Sprache teilhätte, denn es ist jedem wesentlich, seinen geistigen Inhalt mitzuteilen. Eine Metapher aber ist das Wort »Sprache« in solchem Gebrauche durchaus nicht.” (“Über Sprache überhaupt und über die Sprache des Menschen” [1916], in *Sprache und Geschichte. Philosophische Essays* [Stuttgart: Reclam, 2000], p. 30.) — Another one, from Martin Buber: “Gefühle wohnen im Menschen; aber der Mensch wohnt in seiner Liebe. Das ist keine Metapher, sondern die Wirklichkeit; [...]” (*Ich und Du* [Stuttgart: Reclam, 2001] [1st ed. 1923, revised 1957].)

ures can be counter-figures to metaphor. Irony and hyperbole can undermine metaphor (as in Lautréamont), apparent metaphors can show themselves to be metonymies and metonymy may deconstruct metaphor (see Genette's, de Man's and Culler's readings of Proust). Catachresis, which can be either catachresis by metaphor or by metonymy or synecdoche, as Pierre Fontanier shows, is for him a pseudo-figure, "*non vraie figure*"; for us, it can be also counter-figure. But isn't the best metaphor always already a catachresis, an 'abuse' of metaphor, and thus already something other than metaphor, even opposed to metaphor: rather, the most accurate expression for that which previously had no name?

If we are willing to affirm, with Heidegger, that his talk of the "home of being [*Haus des Seins*]" is no metaphor,¹¹¹ we are dealing with a counter-figure in two senses of this plural term; one of these senses is the already mentioned paradoxical quasi-Magrittean denial of the metaphoricity of a given apparently metaphorical sentence; but there are also other ways to speak of counter-figurativity with respect to this denial and to that which it concerns. There are figures "worse than metaphor", says Aristotle.¹¹² Even worse, as we might add. From a viewpoint very different from that of Aristotle's, Rudolf Carnap seems to affirm that there are indeed turns of phrase worse than metaphor. He scorns Heidegger's "metaphysical" talk of "the Being" and "the Nothing" (*das Sein, das Nichts*), and especially his sentence "the Nothing itself nothings" (*das Nichts selbst nichtet*) with the coined verb *nichten*, pointing out that such talk is not, strictly speaking, even metaphorical, since metaphors deal with terms that mean something, with words that have some meaning to begin with, but "to nothing" has none.¹¹³

¹¹¹ Cf. "Brief über den »Humanismus«", in *Wegmarken* (Frankfurt a.M.: Klostermann, 1996), pp. 313-364, here p. 358 (a separate printing, similar pagination with *Gesamtausgabe* 9).

¹¹² "Words are sometimes used neither equivocally, nor metaphorically, nor in their proper sense; for example, the law is said to be the 'measure' or 'image' of things naturally just. [ἔνι αὖ δ' οὕτε καθ' ὁμωνυμίαν οὕτε κατὰ μεταφοράν οὕτε κυρίως εἴρηται, οἷον ὁ νόμος μέτρον ἢ εἰκὼν τῶν φύσει δικαίων.] Such phrases are worse than metaphors; for a metaphor in a way adds to our knowledge of what is indicated on account of the similarity, for those who use metaphors always do so on account of some similarity. [ἔστι δὲ τὰ τοιαῦτα χεῖρω τῆς μεταφορᾶς· ἡ μὲν γὰρ μεταφορὰ ποιεῖ πῶς γινώριμον τὸ σημαίνονμενον διὰ τὴν ὁμοιότητα· πάντες γὰρ οἱ μεταφέροντες κατὰ τινὰ ὁμοιότητα μεταφέρουσιν.] But the kind of phrase of which we are speaking does not add to our knowledge; for no similarity exists in virtue of which the law is a 'measure' or an 'image,' nor is the law usually described by these words in their proper sense. [τὸ δὲ τοιοῦτον οὐ ποιεῖ γινώριμον· οὕτε γὰρ ἡ ὁμοιότης ὑπάρχει, καθ' ἣ μέτρον ἢ εἰκὼν ὁ νόμος ἐστίν, οὕτε κυρίως εἴωθε λέγεσθαι.] So, if anyone says that the law is a 'measure' or an 'image' in the proper sense of these words, he is lying; for an image is something whose coming into being is due to imitation, and this does not apply to the law. If, however, he is not using the word in its proper sense, obviously he has spoken obscurely, and with worse effect than any kind of metaphorical language. [ὥστε εἰ μὲν κυρίως μέτρον ἢ εἰκόνα τὸν νόμον φησὶν εἶναι, ψεύδεται· εἰκὼν γὰρ ἐστὶν οὗ ἢ γένεσις διὰ μιμήσεως, τοῦτο δ' οὐχ ὑπάρχει τῷ νόμῳ· εἰ δὲ μὴ κυρίως, δῆλον ὅτι ἄσαφώς εἴρηκε καὶ χεῖρον ὁποιοῦν τῶν κατὰ μεταφοράν λεγομένων.] (Top. VI, 2, 140a6-18, trans. Forster.) — For Thomas Hobbes too, there are more dangerous figures than metaphor, namely the "inconstant names": "For one man calleth *Wisdom*, what another calleth *feare*; and one *cruelty*, what another *justice*; [...] such names can never be true grounds of any ratiocination. No more can Metaphors, and Tropes of speech: but these are less dangerous, because they profess their inconstancy; which the other do not." (*Leviathan*, ed. by C. B. Macpherson [Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976], pp. 109-110; i.e. Pt. I: *Of Man*, Ch. iv: *Of Speech; Inconstant names*. Partly cited by Ted Cohen in his "Metaphor and the Cultivation of Intimacy" [1978], p. 4.)

¹¹³ Rudolf Carnap: "The Overcoming of Metaphysics through Logical Analysis of Language", trans. Arthur Papp, repr. in Michael Murry, ed., *Heidegger and Modern Philosophy. Critical Essays* (New Haven: Yale U.P., 1978), pp. 23-34, cf. esp. pp. 24-26, 28. Originally "Überwindung der Metaphysik durch logische Analyse der Sprache", *Erkenntnis* 2 (1931). Here we have an excerpt, dealing with a sentence detached from Heidegger's "Was ist Metaphysik?" (1929), "*Das Nichts selbst nichtet*", and the neologism therein, the verb *nichten*: "We pointed out before that the meaningless words of metaphysics usually owe their origin to the fact that a meaningful word is deprived of its meaning through its metaphorical use in metaphysics. But here we confront one of those rare cases where a new word is introduced which never had a meaning to begin with." (Pp. 24-25.)

But while metaphors always deal with words having meaning, with words that refer to determined beings, the talk of being (*das Sein*) and nothingness (*das Nichts*) themselves cannot be metaphorical either, although the question of being has always been fixed by what has been called, by Jacques Derrida, “ontic metaphors”.¹¹⁴ The history of being (*Geschichte des Seins*) consists of these determinations of being in terms of some determined being or some way of being, from the Platonic ideas to ‘being’ determined as presence (*ousia* as *parousia*) and being-at-work (*energeia*) to the modern notion of subjectivity and indeed, to ‘being’ determined, by the logical positivism represented by Carnap, as “observable data”, being “accessible to empirical science”, and so on. Carnap’s and Heidegger’s “overcomings of metaphysics” are diametrically opposed to each other.¹¹⁵

Perhaps Derrida bears in mind even Carnap’s sense of “overcoming metaphysics” and of the original meaningfulness of the terms rendered less meaningful by metaphysical metaphors, when he points out, in “Violence et métaphysique” (1964), that ‘being’ and ‘nothing’ are the only ‘things’ that escape metaphor; on the other hand, being and nothingness can only arrive in language and thought, they can only dwell in *logos*, they are contemporaneous with *logos*; language and being are equiprimordial (*gleichursprünglich*).¹¹⁶ But while being that, while being equiprimordial with language and meaning, and while being only articulatable by the apparent “ontic metaphors”, being and nothingness escape metaphor since they escape meaning or determination: being, and nothingness as its counterpart, withdraw from every determination, while they make positive determinations and their negations possible. Having no meaning to begin with, being and nothingness, and the turns of speech addressing them, are absolutely counter-figurative; these instances of naming being or nothingness are, as Derrida says, extremely rare. Or are they?

What does it mean to have meaning in the first place? If “being speaks always and everywhere throughout language”,¹¹⁷ what is it to have meaning? To repeat Heidegger’s and Derrida’s question: Are we sure, for instance, that we already know what a ‘home’ or ‘house’ is? And are we sure we can know this before comprehending ‘being’ in one way or another, although this term appears to remain, and rightly so, the most unfamiliar and uncanny? That we know already, definitely and once and for all, what a ‘home’ is? Is there a ‘transcendental signified’ which regulates the polysemy (and the ‘semantic field’) of, for instance, ‘home’, such a ‘focal meaning’ which, for Aristotle, regulates the whole equivocal unity of being and the ‘analogy of attribution’ – namely, presence as the highest being and as characterizing the ‘beingness’ or ‘thinghood’ belonging to all beings or things in the primary sense (*prôtê ousia*, ‘first thinghood’)? Or is the equivocality irreducible? How could the talk of language as a ‘home of being’ – concerning both the possibility of metaphor (language) and that which escapes all metaphor (being, *das Sein*, *l’être*), even though it has always been articulated in terms of beings, in terms of what is (*Seiendes*, *l’étant*), i.e. in terms of ‘ontic metaphors’ –

¹¹⁴ Cf. “Le retrait de la métaphore” (1978), in *Psyché — inventions de l’autre* (Paris: Galilée, 1987 [nouvelle édition augmentée, tome 1, 1998]), pp. 63-93.

¹¹⁵ “Überwindung der Metaphysik” is not only a part of Carnap’s title, but also one of Heidegger’s (in *Wegmarken* [GA 9]), while these two texts seem to have no other connection but the partial identity of the title.

¹¹⁶ “S’il n’y a d’histoire que par le langage et si le langage (sauf quand il nomme l’être lui-même ou le rien : presque jamais) est élémentairement métaphorique, Borges a raison : « Peut-être l’histoire universelle n’est-elle que l’histoire de quelques métaphores ». [...] L’être lui-même peut seulement être pensé et dit. Il est contemporain du Logos qui lui-même ne peut être que comme Logos de l’être, disant l’être.” (*L’écriture et la différence* [Paris: Seuil, cop. 1967], pp. 137, 212.) Derrida would elaborate on this later, in “Le retrait de la métaphore”.

¹¹⁷ Heidegger / cit. Derrida, in “Différance”, trans. Alan Bass, in *Margins of Philosophy* (New York: Harvester, 1982), p. 27. Heidegger’s sentence, “das Sein spricht überall und stets durch alle Sprache hindurch”, is from “Der Spruch des Anaximander”, in *Holzwege* (5. Aufl.) (Frankfurt a.M.: Klostermann, 1972), p. 338 / GA 5:366.

be metaphorical if it suddenly turns out that the term which we thought familiar, 'home' or 'house', is actually even more unfamiliar than the strange term 'being', since we must already somehow 'know' being in order to know *what*, and even *that*, a home or house *is*? The being of the house resides in the house of being.¹¹⁸

This list of counter-figures is not complete, but this incompleteness is not just accidental and due to lack of systematization. The list is not complete without an extra figure, an extra counter-figure which *re-marks* the whole plurality and frustrates the quest for a "last instance" of meaning (as Derrida puts it), for a transcendental signified that should govern the equivocality. Re-marks, that is: a sign refers to another sign *and also* to this movement of referring, its own movement of referring.¹¹⁹ This endless movement of reference without a last instance of meaning, without a thematic unity, a semantic halt that governs the various tropes and is represented by tropes, metaphors and metonymies, is nevertheless no longer the movement of metaphor but the movement of (no)-more-metaphor: "*plus de métaphore*". This pun, hardly translatable without the clumsy parentheses, is not only the title of one of the subchapters in Derrida's "La mythologie blanche",¹²⁰ but also the consequence of a long demonstration, in "La double séance", to show that we are not simply dealing with metaphors and metonymies anymore when we are dealing with Mallarmé's poetic practice of "*syntaxier*" and the tropes referring to each other; the "excess of syntax over semantics" frustrates the quest for unifying themes and semes, the quest for a source of meaning that should govern the displacements and condensations. When we are dealing with re-marking, with the excess of syntax over semantics, with the always already divided origin of meaning, we are dealing with *dissemination*. But dissemination is not only a name for this abysmal referentiality (*if* it is a name, which is contestable, since it belongs to the moving chain that it re-marks), but also for the limit of all hermeneutical enterprises; in his memorial speech for Hans-Georg Gadamer, published as the book *Béliers* (2003),¹²¹ Derrida brings up this old theme or counter-theme in a new light, not in order to contest the necessity of hermeneutical exegesis but to "counter-sign" that irreducible necessity in his own way...

We shall not discuss all these questions directly in the present treatise, but I would consider it necessary to make these indications in order to clarify the horizon of 'counter-figures' from which we shall proceed. The horizon for reading is gained through interpretation (namely, the hermeneutical spiral just mentioned), but at a certain point this horizon recedes and you are free to read again, as if for the first time, "alone with the lamp"...¹²² Free but responsible: "*Die Welt ist fort, ich muß dich tragen.*"¹²³

¹¹⁸ These questions cannot be elaborated in detail in the present treatise. They must be mentioned, however. The most important point of reference is Jacques Derrida's "Le retrait de la métaphore" and the texts discussed therein.

¹¹⁹ Cf. Derrida, "La double séance", in *La dissémination* (Paris: Seuil, cop. 1972, repr. Points Essais, 1993); cf. Rodolphe Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror: Derrida and the Philosophy of Reflection* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard U.P., 1986).

¹²⁰ *Marges* (cop. 1972), pp. 261ff; cf. "La double séance" (in *La dissémination*, repr. 1993), pp. 307-315 (on p. 315: "*plus de métaphore, plus de métonymie*"); cf. *passim*.

¹²¹ *Béliers. Le dialogue ininterrompu : entre deux infinis, le poème* (Paris: Galilée, 2003).

¹²² Cf. Celan, "Stimmen [II]", in *Sprachgitter* (GW 1:147).

¹²³ This is the last line of "Grosse, glühende Wölbung", in *Atemwende* (GW 2:97), discussed by Derrida in *Béliers*.

METAPHORICIANS & METAPHYSICIANS

Als Stilfigur im Sinne der rhetorischen Definition ist die Metapher tatsächlich tot.¹²⁴

La métaphore est morte, vive la métaphore !¹²⁵

[...] and she is expected to be as fine a resurrection as ever the doctor handled.¹²⁶

“We shall soon no doubt have more metaphoricians than metaphysicians” — this is what Wayne C. Booth predicted in 1978, in the important “Special Issue on Metaphor” of *Critical Inquiry* (Vol. 5, No. 1). And he continued: “I have in fact extrapolated with my pocket calculator to the year 2039; at that point there will be more students of metaphor than people.”¹²⁷

¹²⁴ Beda Allemann, “Metapher und das metaphorische Wesen der Sprache” (1968), pp. 38-39. A first published version, in the English translation by Günther Rebing, reads as follows: “Metaphor as a figure of style as defined by traditional rhetoric is indeed dead.” But it also continues: “But we need not insist on the traditional definition of metaphor.” (“Metaphor and Antimetaphor” [1967], p. 116.) We shall return later to this remarkable article, or these *two* articles (the English and the German version, whose first and most striking difference resides in the title), and to this abruptly interrupted extract.

¹²⁵ Jean Greisch, “Les mots et les roses: La métaphore chez Martin Heidegger” (1973), p. 455.

¹²⁶ S. J. Pratt / cit. *OED*, entry “resurrection, *n.*”: “[4]b. A disinterred corpse. (Cf. 6.) *rare.* / 1775 S. J. PRATT [i.e. Samuel Johnson Pratt] *Liberal Opin.* cxxxiii. (1783) IV. 203 The doctor is attending a lady of your parish, who is troubled with a complication...and she is expected to be as fine a resurrection as ever the doctor handled.” (*OED*, 50204577. Last accessed Jan. 2007.)

¹²⁷ Wayne C. Booth, “Metaphor as Rhetoric: The Problem of Evaluation”, in *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 5, No. 1, Special Issue on Metaphor (Autumn 1978), pp. 49-72, here p. 49. (The same articles concerning metaphor, pp. 3-176, were published again in Sheldon Sacks, ed., *On Metaphor* [Chicago: Chicago U. P., 1979].) Booth’s sentence, the first we quoted, continues after a dash (p. 49): “or should that be metamorticians, the embalmers of dead metaphor?” — I would like to briefly take up Booth’s sample metaphor which he discusses at length and from various viewpoints (p. 52): “A lawyer friend of mine was hired to defend a large Southern utility against a suit by a small one, and he thought at first that he was doing fine. All of the law seemed to be on his side, and he felt that he had presented his case well. Then the lawyer for the small utility said, speaking to the jury, almost as if incidentally to his legal case, ‘So now we see what it is. They got us where they want us. They holding us up with one hand, their good sharp fishin’ knife in the other, and they sayin’, ‘you just set still, little catfish, we’re *jes* going to *gut* ya.’” At that moment, my friend reports, he knew he had lost the case. ‘I was in the hands of a genius of metaphor.’” This piece of discourse could lend itself to an indefinite analysis, but just a remark or two, in addition to Booth’s, will do. The lawyer’s genius (regardless of whether he really thought and empathetically felt what he said or whether he was just a good professional, or a born rhetorician) or the force of the image employed by him does not, perhaps, reside so much in resemblance or in proportional analogy (p. 54: “large utility is to fisherman as small utility is to catfish; knife is to catfish’s vital center as large utility’s measures are to small utility’s vital center; and so on”); these are, after all, rather abstract and formal in regard of the potent emotive and intellectual impact of the discourse. The fisherman-and-catfish image should be taken very literally, first, and then the identity and difference in the relation between the image and the situation into which it is applied may be envisaged in a more striking light than the formal analysis or paraphrase could offer. It is the principle, or the rule of reflection (Kant on hypotyposis; cf. below), or rather the ‘emotional mood’ — and the error involved — that we are perhaps invited to apply: the large utility deals with the small one *as if* it was dealing with a catfish. An indifference that is not even cruelty, because it apparently lacks emotion, even hostile emotion, or perverts emotion (the fisherman’s words to the catfish). Such conduct is deprived of the sense of reverence that should be involved when human beings and communities deal with each other, an ethical aspect which even economical interests should not overrule; so the “category mistake” resides rather on the side of the “large utility” than on the side of the “small one” or its lawyer. And this is not to suggest that it is allright to treat catfish or other nonhumans indifferently and without the same kind of respect. In any case, such an ex-

Ted Cohen, another contributor to the same special issue, wrote: “These are good times for the friends of metaphor. Now that the respectability of metaphor seems to be acknowledged all round, the only serious questions thought open concern how metaphor is to be described”.¹²⁸ As we are, at the moment of my writing the present dissertation, still less than half-way between the moment of Booth’s extrapolating and its result, it seems that the growth is no longer quite as exponential as it used to be in the 1970s, even though new treatises on metaphor are, to be sure, written all the time, penetrating deeper and deeper into the only serious questions thought still open, those concerning the description of metaphor.

Cohen’s own answer to these serious questions is “the joke”. Not *a* joke, but the “cultivation of intimacy” that is involved when we tell jokes to each other and understand them, an unspoken common code which cannot really be paraphrased. In this respect metaphors are like jokes: good metaphors, like good jokes, cannot be paraphrased, and the prerequisite for grasping them is a common code. This is indeed very suggestive, and perhaps this description of metaphor in terms of the cultivation of intimacy — a shared horizon of a certain complaisance — and jokes is also one of the features which make metaphor, for many poets and theorists of literature, so unacceptable. Unpoetic, even anti-poetic, since poems are not usually jokes. This is not to claim that poetry is an exclusively serious matter, but that poems may be something radically different from both jokes and metaphors.

It is no joke and no metaphor if I say that today Metaphorics threatens to become the New Metaphysics. Seriously. Almost a religion, or if not an onto-theology, then at least a celebration of “this uncanny onto-linguistic power we call metaphor”.¹²⁹ The “old subject”¹³⁰ called Metaphor, whose death some had already announced, can always be resurrected, and indeed has been, as it seems. ‘Resurrection’ is not the only religious ‘metaphor’ involved here. Metaphor is not only “alive”, it is also “primal”, “absolute”, and even equal to an “infinite semiosis”. Let us read the concluding paragraph from a fairly recent study on

tra view or aspect (extra with respect to Booth’s several ways of looking at the image) may strip at least some of the simply metaphorical coating off the surface of the discourse by showing, in this specific case, that we are dealing with a suggestion concerning a *literal* attitude of indifference, literal but falsely applied. — Yet, the exact *intention* of the small utility’s lawyer, his motivation as such, remains of course inaccessible to us. Whether the emotive plea was just cold rhetorical calculation or really a double-edged empathetic piece of fiction (not only a fish-eye perspective on the defendant’s conduct but a penetration into the defendant’s spirit and perspective as a fisherman holding a knife), we never know. And this is precisely why, even in such apparently obvious cases, the metaphoricity of a given expression, or at least the exact *focus* of its metaphoricity (for instance whether it is the speaker’s metaphor or someone else’s “category mistake”), may remain questionable. It can always be a question of something that might very literally apply, for example, to a fisherman (here the indifference or feigning of indifference — feigning also in regard of the *spoken address* directed to the poor catfish!), but is then mistakenly (or mischievously) applied to another “category”, that of human relations, for instance. — This may seem waggish or over-the-top, but the motivation for such quibbling should eventually become clearer. And it is also a counter-quibble.

¹²⁸ “Metaphor and the Cultivation of Intimacy”, in *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 5 No. 1 (Autumn 1978), p. 3

¹²⁹ William Franke, “Metaphor and the Making of Sense: The Contemporary Metaphor Renaissance”, in *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 33.2 (2000), pp. 137-153, here p. 143.

¹³⁰ Cf. Jacques Derrida, “Le retrait de la métaphore”.

“The Contemporary Metaphor Renaissance” (2000), which “reassert[s] the veritable vocation” of rhetoric in a manner that is more than bold:

What the new, hermeneutic theories of metaphor, taken together, show is how metaphor, as absolute and “alive,” affords a glimpse into the creative making of sense that makes perceptions and experiences into a world. Metaphor assumes a transcendental-hermeneutic function and reveals the world in the moment of its emergence as a linguistic creation or construction. Even from within the disciplines of language and literature themselves, the *primal metaphor*, variously named *die absolute Metapher*, *la métaphore vive*, *la metafora inaudita*, or *infinite semiosis*, has reopened the most basic ontological questions about language and its relation to the world on its own new terms. Reality has shown itself in this new perspective to be graspable, if at all, only in and through metaphor. What are the ontological implications of this mediation of all our language, and therefore of our very knowledge and experience of the world, by metaphor? In other words, what does unlimited metaphoricity, such as it has recently been rediscovered, imply about the way things are and are known? These recently reopened questions open the horizon of rhetoric in such a way that, far from accepting being relegated to the status of a technical, adjunct discipline, it is enabled to reassert its veritable vocation as first philosophy. [William Franke, “Metaphor and the Making of Sense”, p. 151.]

In the seventies, the only questions left open, they said, concerned description and evaluation. Towards the millennium, as it seems, the veritable vocation of rhetoric as first philosophy — which is quite a radical displacement with regard to the original, Aristotelian meaning of these terms, and a displacement which presupposes a radical “generalized restriction”¹³¹ of the Aristotelian understanding of rhetoric, too — arose precisely from questions concerning not only the epistemological but also the ontological implications of metaphor. However, the author of the article just cited seems to ignore that for instance Paul Ricœur remains, in spite of certainly being a proponent of the “live metaphor”, quite far from confusing the heuristics of metaphor with the so-called ontological analogy, or rhetorico-poetical language and “speculative” language in general. One of Ricœur’s main concerns in *La métaphore vive* (1975) is, anyway, to secure the autonomy of “speculative discourse” against the unlimited extensions of the concept of metaphor; actually Ricœur altogether misperceived, in his polemic against Derrida, the direction where the attack against this distinction was to be expected from — but this is another story.

The modern “metaphor renaissance”, especially in the vein of the “cognitive theory of metaphor” which should, however, not be confused with the hermeneutic approach à la Ricœur or the broadly speaking structuralist view à la Genette, for instance, seems sometimes amazingly ahistorical. This critique has been expressed by some of the proponents of this movement, too, such as Olof Jäkel who has pointed out that the major theorists of the cognitive approach, Lakoff and Johnson (or Lakoff with his other collaborators), have overlooked the contributions of such authors as Vico, Locke, Herder, Kant and Hans Blumenberg, not to

¹³¹ Cf. Gérard Genette, “La rhétorique restreinte”, in *Figures III* (Paris: Seuil, cop. 1972 [repr. 1992]), pp. 21-40, here p. 22.

mention the eighteen other more or less impressive names Jäkel lists at the beginning of his article.¹³² However, it is perhaps not altogether insignificant that for instance Locke and Kant do *not* exactly use the term ‘metaphor’ but speak of “*obvious sensible Ideas [...] transferred to more abstruse significations*” (Locke) — which, in spite of the appearances to the contrary, need not always be *metaphorically* transferred, to be exact — and of ‘symbols’, *symbolical hypotyposes* (Kant).¹³³ By the term ‘metaphor’ the post-Aristotelian tradition, including Locke, has most often meant very precisely “a rhetorical device unsuitable for philosophical discourse”, or an “artistic trope”,¹³⁴ thus implying a rather reductive notion of ‘art’ as some sort of ‘rhetoric’.

If “we cannot refer to time without speaking metaphorically”, as one of the “forgotten contributors”, Harald Weinrich claims (cited in Jäkel’s article on p. 19), then it seems that such treatises as Edmund Husserl’s *Vorlesungen zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewusstseins* (1928) and Heidegger’s *Sein und Zeit* (1927), or Aristotle’s discourse on time in the *Physics*, or Kant’s discussion of time as an a priori form of intuition and as auto-affection,¹³⁵ and all the treatises that have tried to challenge the Platonic image of *time as an image of eternity*, must still be metaphorical through and through. Such a claim would be against the grain of more or less the whole Occidental philosophical tradition until, say, George Lakoff. Husserl complains, of course, that he cannot think of a better word to de-

¹³² Cf. Olof Jäkel, “Kant, Blumenberg, Weinrich: Some Forgotten Contributors to the Cognitive Theory of Metaphor”, in Raymond Gibbs Jr. and Gerard J. Steen, eds., *Metaphor in Cognitive Linguistics: Selected Papers from the Fifth International Cognitive Linguistics Conference, Amsterdam, 1997* (Amsterdam: J. Benjamins, 1999), pp. 9-27, here pp. 9-10.

¹³³ Cf. Jäkel, “Kant, Blumenberg, Weinrich”, pp. 11-12: “[...] the British philosopher John Locke is condemned by [Mark] Johnson for his rejection of metaphor as a rhetorical device unsuitable for philosophical discourse [...]. What is overlooked is the fact that in the passage criticized, Locke is only concerned with the artistic trope. In the first chapter of his philosophy of language, though, as part of his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* from 1689, Locke explains the central ‘Cognitive Linguistic’ tenet quite precisely: / [‘]It may also lead us a little towards the Original of all our Notions and Knowledge, if we remark, how great a dependance our *Words* have on common sensible *Ideas*; and how those, which are made use of to stand for Actions and Notions quite removed from sense, *have their rise from thence, and from obvious sensible Ideas are transferred to more abstruse significations*, and are made to stand for *Ideas* that come not under the cognizance of our senses[’] [...]. Put sarcastically, Locke’s only failure would be not to have addressed these ‘Words taken from the Operations of sensible Things, and applied to certain Modes of Thinking’ [...] explicitly as *conceptual metaphors*.” A few lines later, Jäkel continues, this time on Kant: “Now there are concepts without any *directly* corresponding sensual intuition. Such concepts need to be ‘sensualized’ *indirectly*, and according to Kant this is the cognitive function of metaphor.” (Jäkel, p. 12.) Is it really? “Kant does not have [i.e. does not *use* here] a special term *metaphor*, but speaks of *symbols* instead [cf. *KdU*, § 59, B254-B260].” (*Ibid.*) Perhaps Kant does not *use* the term ‘metaphor’ because it would be inappropriate, the rhetorical determinations of this special term taken into account. We cannot say, to be exact, that Kant’s text “ascertains the *ubiquity* of metaphor in everyday language” (p. 13), without paying attention to the possibility that Kant ignored the term ‘metaphor’ on purpose. Hypotyposis (which can be either schematic or symbolic) need not be metaphor. Hypotyposis, or analogy, or symbol (words in Kant’s vocabulary): none of these need be metaphor.

¹³⁴ Cf. Jäkel, “Kant, Blumenberg, Weinrich”, already cited in the note above.

¹³⁵ Cf. *KrV* B 67-68: “[...] die Zeit [...] [als] die Form der Anschauung [...] nichts anders sein kann, als die Art, wie das Gemüt durch eigene Tätigkeit [...] durch sich selbst affiziert wird [...]”; cf. also Rudolf Eisler, *Kant-Lexikon. Nachschlagewerk zu Immanuel Kant* (1930), entries “Zeit”, “Affektion”, “Analogie”, “Symbol” (electronic version in *Textlog.de*, <http://www.textlog.de/kant-lexikon.html>, accessed Nov. 11th, 2006).

scribe the absolute time-constitute subjectivity than “stream [*Fluß*]”, not to mention for instance the neologism *Zeithof*, borrowed by Paul Celan into his poetry and poetics from this treatise by Husserl, as we shall see, and all the other “parallels” and “analogies” between time and space that we are forced to use. “Für all das fehlen uns die Namen.”¹³⁶ But this complaint, and the whole systematic discourse, whatever its shortcomings might be, are meant to reduce the metaphoricity of such a metaphor — or, to be exact, catachresis. What is more, we are not to see the time-constituting ‘flow’ of subjectivity, in Husserl’s sense, in the image of streaming water, but rather *in spite* of this specific image — while, of course, watching a stream flowing along its course is certainly a temporal experience, an experience in time and space.

In *Sein und Zeit*, the famously antimetaphorical thinker Heidegger asks a ‘rhetorical’ question (marked by the famously antimetaphorical poet Paul Celan in his personal copy of the book): “Is it an accident that proximally and for the most part significations are ‘worldly,’ sketched out beforehand by the significance of the world, that indeed they are often predominantly ‘spatial’, or is this ‘fact’ existential-ontologically necessary and why is it? [*Ist es Zufall, daß die Bedeutungen zunächst und zumeist »weltliche« sind, durch die Bedeutsamkeit der Welt vorgezeichnete, ja sogar oft vorwiegend »räumliche«, oder ist diese »Tatsache« existential-ontologisch notwendig und warum?*]”¹³⁷ This is not to suggest that we speak for example of time in spatial ‘metaphors’, as the “philosophy of language” would have it (according to Heidegger, “philosophical research”, namely phenomenology, should renounce this philosophy of language, in favour of the “things themselves” [“um den »Sachen selbst« nachzufragen”]), but to emphasize that all our understanding is already “worldly”, “spatial” — and indeed also temporal — and remains so, insofar as we do not just abstract the phenomena of ‘time’ and ‘space’ from this ‘concrete’ “being-in-the world”. For Heidegger, the concept of metaphor relies not only upon the metaphysical dichotomy of ‘the sensible’ and ‘the intelligible’, but also upon abstraction from the ‘things themselves’; the alleged ‘sensible’ hearing and seeing are actually ‘abstract’ hearing and seeing, as Heidegger often, and also in his antimetaphorical argument in *Der Satz vom Grund*, argues.

And much later, if we keep to the theme of time and space or being and time, or time and being and their interrelations, in the 1962 lecture “Zeit und Sein” Heidegger argues, first,

¹³⁶ Edmund Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewusstseins [Hua X]*, ed. Rudolf Boehm (Haag: Nijhoff, 1966), esp. pp. 74–75 [429], cf. e.g. pp. 5 [370], 25 [386], 26 [388], 35–36 [395–396].

¹³⁷ *GA* 2:221; i.e. *Sein und Zeit*, ed. 1949/1993, p. 166; henceforth, if the earlier pagination is given in the margin of the *Gesamtausgabe* volume, or I have used an earlier edition with identical text but different pagination, I may sometimes refer to the pagination of early editions in square brackets, as follows: *GA* 2:221 [166]. Partly cit. and trans. James K. Lyon, *Paul Celan and Martin Heidegger: An Unresolved Conversation 1951–1970* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins U.P., 2006), p. 15; the last subordinate clause (“or is this ‘fact’ ...”) is my translation. Also cited in Celan, *La bibliothèque philosophique / Die philosophische Bibliothek*. Catalogue raisonné des annotations établi par Alexandra Richter, Patrik Alac, Bertrand Badiou; préface de Jean-Pierre Lefebvre (Paris: Éditions Rue d’Ulm, 2004), henceforth cited as *La bi. phi.*, p. 379 (No. 609).

that “authentic time” proves to be three-dimensional, while time is not thinkable without the “dimensions” of the past, the present and the future, and then that actually it seems “as if [*gleichsam*]” the interplay of these three dimensions constituted the fourth dimension of time — “not only ‘as it were’, but as a fact. / The authentic time is four-dimensional [*nicht nur gleichsam, sondern aus der Sache. / Die eigentliche Zeit ist vierdimensional*]”.¹³⁸ As a matter of fact, “*aus der Sache*”, time is four-dimensional, claims Heidegger. That is to say: literally, taken that we are still to trust the opposition of ‘literal’ and ‘figurative’ here. It is not only so that authentic time consists of the past, the present and the future, and the interplay of these three as a fourth constituent, and that insofar as this is proven to be the case, we may apply the term ‘dimension’ to all these four modalities of time, “as if” they were dimensions, while the term ‘dimension’ properly applies only to space, or that properly speaking time is the *fourth* dimension besides the three dimensions of space. To the contrary, Heidegger argues that the term ‘dimension’ and precisely the characterization as ‘four-dimensional’ applies as properly as possible to time, and that the proper meaning of time is that it is four-dimensional. Only because time is the “pre-spatial locality [*vorräumliche Ortschaft*]” can there be a “where [*Wo*]” (*ibid.*). So to call time three-dimensional or properly (“*aus der Sache*”) four-dimensional is not a metaphor, insofar as we do not call every departure from the current usage a metaphor, but rather a quasi-metonymical reduction (in the sense of tracing back) of dimensionality to its grounding in temporality. In his personal copy of the 1949 introduction to “Was ist Metaphysik?”, Heidegger has written a note which inverts the order of these dimensions: “*Zeit ist vierdimensional: Die erste, alles versammelnde Dimension ist die Nähe.*”¹³⁹

We shall not consider Heidegger’s antimetaphoric objections here in detail, or rather his denouncement of the *concept* of metaphor as a “metaphysical concept” and as an “overall key of all poetics”, nor discuss any further the important notion of proximity (“*Nähe*”). Instead, let me quote another thinker, Vladimir Jankélévitch, in order, as it were, to present a couple of very good examples of the ‘always metaphorical’ discourse concerning time:

Time that erodes mountain chains and makes the pebbles of the beach smooth, time that levels all harshness and consoles all pain, soothing and healing time, is this not the vocation of decay?¹⁴⁰

Is this kind of discourse on time obviously metaphorical? With respect to the most trivial common parlance, a “vocation of decay” or an “erosion of rancor” may be metaphorical, taken that only a human subject may have a vocation and that, inversely, erosion is always a physical process that touches only upon inanimate matter, rather a geological than psycho-

¹³⁸ *Zur Sache des Denkens* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1976), p. 16.

¹³⁹ *Wegmarken*, GA 9:377, note a.

¹⁴⁰ *Forgiveness*, trans. Andrew Kelly (Chicago: Chicago U.P., 2005), p. 24. I have not had access to the original French title, *Le pardon* (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1967).

logical phenomenon. And even if Jankélévitch's text is full of metaphors and he characterizes "decay" itself here as "only a metaphor for fastening down ideas" (*Forgiveness*, p. 24), this text is still a philosophical discourse that tries to move beyond all the confusions and false assimilations toward authentic forgiveness, the 'proper' meaning of forgiveness beyond all "simili-forgivenesses", mere metaphors and illusions, toward the conditions of possibility and impossibility of true forgiveness.¹⁴¹ As we already suggested, the Aristotelian "eye for resemblances" is common to both the poet and the philosopher, but Aristotle seems also to think that it is the philosopher who must have another eye too, able to discern distinctions beyond generic identities and resemblances, analogy beyond metaphor.

But is it really metaphorical to say that time erodes mountain chains and makes the pebbles of the beach smooth? If there is anything 'literal' to say about time, is it not precisely these things, and also that time levels harshness and consoles, soothes and heals? We may always quibble and say that at least 'time' is here a metonymy (or synecdoche) for what takes place *in* time, the weather and the sea, psychological processes; but these are not only 'in' time as if in a container or a stream. They *are* time, wind and waves and consolation and healing *are temporal phenomena*. To look for the idea of time, the paradigm of time *beyond* these phenomena and not *in* these phenomena, *as* these phenomena, is like ... well, if I may have recourse to an old joke, like asking a fruit-dealer for a fruit, but not an apple or an orange or a banana, just plain fruit. A fruit for all seasons, yet for none. And still we need an *idea*, a *schema* of 'fruit' that is reducible neither to any particular or specific fruit nor to the sum of all the fruits hitherto known. The extravagant Platonic phantasy with regard to this *form* was to consider this 'idea' as something separate (*chorismos*), having an independent existence as a "paradigm" after which all other things — all 'other' fruits for instance — were "modelled", and in which all these "participate"; it would not only be fruit in general, that which provides the specific and particular fruits their form, but the most perfect, the most beautiful individual fruit, the eternal fruit after which the other fruits are more or less imperfectly modelled and seasoned, subjected to growth and decay; these notions of "modelling" and "participation" are precisely the "empty words and poetic metaphors" of which Aristotle accuses Plato in the *Metaphysics*.

Speaking of the pebbles made smooth by the sea, namely by time, it must be mentioned also that Paul Celan denies that he is using a metaphor in coining the word *Meermühle* ("sea-mill") in a poem of his: it is this quite concrete, quite worldly process of grinding to which he refers in coining that word, as an analogue to other mills or mills in general — in-

¹⁴¹ Cf. also Jacques Derrida, *Pardonner : l'impardonnable et l'imprescriptible* (Paris: L'Herne, 2005); "Le Siècle et le Pardon (entretien avec Michel Wieviorka)", in *Foi et Savoir, suivi de Le Siècle et le Pardon* (Paris: Seuil, 2001), pp. 101-133, e.g. p. 103: "En principe, il n'y a pas de limite au pardon, pas de *mesure*, pas de modération, pas de « jusqu'ou ? ». Pourvu, bien entendu, qu'on s'accorde sur quelque sens « propre » de ce mot."

cluding *Todesmühle*, which is no metaphor, either. But we shall return to these non-metaphorical figures later.

“Absolute metaphor” is an oxymoron, “conceptual metaphor” is another. When we extend the meaning of the old term ‘metaphor’, transfer it to the root of all ‘cognition’, when we establish a continuity between concept and metaphor,¹⁴² when the distinctions are not only blurred between different kinds of tropes and figures and all of them become reduced to metaphor, but also distinctions between analogy and metaphor, model and metaphor, hypotyposis and metaphor become obfuscated, we risk also losing the historico-philosophical understanding of the “sense and necessity”¹⁴³ of these distinctions within a given theory or “system”,¹⁴⁴ namely in the overall “syntax” of a given text (or corpus of texts) or discourse, from Aristotle through Kant, Hegel and Locke even to Max Black and Mary B. Hesse, who still so ‘conservatively’ cling to the distinctions between models, metaphors and analogies, and even dare to say that there are cases in which an “analogy has degenerated into metaphor”.¹⁴⁵

Mary Hesse illustrates the distinction between metaphor and analogy very well by the distinction between “angry sky” on the one hand, and “angry dog” or “angry God” on the other, in which “angry sky” is an example of metaphor and the two others are examples of analogies. Analogy in the sense instantiated by these two latter examples does not involve the same kind of identification as “angry sky” presumably does. The subjective, human feeling of anger is analogically transferred to the dog or to God (which might make us wonder if Hesse actually thought of the anagram she so strikingly uses here), across an unbridgeable distance, which we are not expected to cross; a dog’s anger and God’s anger are not only absolutely heterogeneous and dissimilar with regard to each other, but also with regard to ours; these conscious subjects are to be presumed as radically different from ours, unknown as such but either empirically observable or purely thinkable. But in the case of an angry sky, it is presumed that we poetically, that is *metaphorically*, transfer our subjective affections to inanimate nature, or to objects in general, including the other subject, but in its objective phenomenality rather than *qua alter ego*. A dog or God are called angry across an unbridgeable distance, but metaphor means a make-believe bridge between the subject and the object.

This is a good distinction to remember. Analogies and models are, in principle, not only inescapable for the scientific mind as well as for the mind and language in general, as it

¹⁴² This is what Derrida sees Nietzsche to have done; cf. “La mythologie blanche” (in *Marges*, cop. 1972), p. 313; cf. also p. 271n21; cf. also “Violence et métaphysique” (in *L’écriture et la différence* [cop. 1967, repr. 1997], pp. 117-228, here pp. 203-204); cf. also Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s “Translator’s Preface” to Derrida’s *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, cop. 1976, 2nd pr. 1977).

¹⁴³ Derrida, “Le retrait de la métaphore”, pp. 78-79.

¹⁴⁴ I am using the term “system” between inverted commas, knowing that according to Heidegger it is an anachronism to speak of a “system” with respect to Aristotle’s philosophy, for instance. But here the notion (having a Greek etymology) is not restricted to the modern metaphysics of subjectivity and its pervasive notion of “positing” (cf. “Die Metaphysik als Geschichte des Seins”, in *Nietzsche II*).

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Mary B. Hesse, “Scientific Models”, in Warren Shibles, ed., *Essays on Metaphor* (Whitewater: The Language Press, 1972), pp. 169-180, here p. 178; cf. also Hesse, *Models and Analogies in Science* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1963).

seems, but also innocent insofar as we keep in mind the radical distance implied; it is of course one of the fundamental principles of theological discourse (and not only that of the so-called *negative* theology), that the irreducible distance between God and the worldly analogues must be strictly maintained. But are we sure that this distinction between ‘scientific analogy’ and ‘poetic metaphor’, and “angry sky” as an example of the latter, or of anthropomorphism in general, does not imply a reductive understanding of poetry, and also of the ordinary, vernacular use of similar expressions? It must be said, if only in passing here, that Heidegger actually vehemently, repeatedly and at some length objects even to the notion according to which the human subject transfers her own lived experience (*Erlebnisse*) and the subjective *capability of experiencing* to the inanimate objects of nature, in speaking for instance of — well, let us say — “angry sky”, “brooding mountains”, or “joyous undulation of waves”.¹⁴⁶

The last example mentioned is Douglas Berggren’s example of a ‘Hölderlinian’ poetic metaphor, or as Berggren calls it, “textural” metaphor. Berggren’s article, “The Use and Abuse of Metaphor” (1962), is an important early contribution to what would later become known as the cognitive theory of metaphor, but has also a certain sensitivity to phenomenology. Berggren happens to be one of the very few Anglo-Saxon theorists of metaphor, in the broadly speaking Analytic tradition, to have mentioned Heidegger at all, let alone as early as 1962, in a very affirmative tone, and in support of the metaphor theory of “the appropriate mode of stereoscopic vision”. Berggren comes actually rather close to Heidegger in discussing the “joyous undulation of waves” and in refuting the notion according to which “such textures [as the mentioned ‘Hölderlinian’ example and John Clare’s description of a primrose “with its crimp and curdled leaf / And its little brimming eye”] [...] have been empathetically or unconsciously projected into perceived objects”, by pointing out that such an argument is not only “irrelevant from a phenomenological point of view; it is also based on the faulty supposition that objects are initially apprehended in a completely sterilized or immaculate manner”. He continues a little later: “If we are to apprehend swirling colors in a painting, or the joy of waves, we must in some sense see with our emotions, even though the textures we thereby apprehend are not themselves either actual feelings, or mere sense data of a sterilized sort.”¹⁴⁷ This necessity could be described in Heideggerian terms of *Befindlichkeit*, no doubt; and indeed, in order to arrive at mere sense data of a sterilized sort, we would have to abstract from the actual concrete experience or phenomena, namely from “the matters themselves”.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Heidegger, *Aristoteles, Metaphysik Θ 1-3: Von Wesen und Wirklichkeit der Kraft* [1931] (Frankfurt a.M.: Klostermann, 1990 [1st ed. 1981]), §9a, i.e. *GA* 33:70-77.

¹⁴⁷ Douglas Berggren, “The Use and Abuse of Metaphor, I” (1962), pp. 254, 256. The examples, “brooding mountains” and “joyous undulation of waves”, along with “echoing light” and “the height of nobility”, as well as the distinction between “Pictorial, Structural, and Textural” metaphors (“it is the textural mode of metaphor which is essential to poetry, and the structural mode which is essential to both science and philosophy”) are on pp. 241, 255. Heidegger is mentioned on pp. 257-258.

It is indeed Heidegger himself who radically contests the theory of subjective projection or transference that is also refuted by Berggren, although the latter does that in favour of a better understanding of metaphor, while Heidegger denounces the concept of metaphor altogether as a metaphysical concept. I cite Brogan's and Warnek's excellent English translation of Heidegger's lectures on Aristotle's concept of *dunamis* ("force"):

We are asking: Is anything actually explained by referring the positing [*Ansetzung*] of forces in things and objects themselves back to a transferral [*Übertragung*] of subjective experiences into the objects? Or is this popular explanation a sham; namely, is it something which for its part is in need of explanation in all respects and, when explained, untenable? The said explanation is indeed a sham. We shall try now, with attention to what comes later, simply to become familiar with this by adducing a few guiding thoughts. From this it shall become apparent how the said explanation fails to recognize its own presuppositions.

1. The stated explanation presupposes as self-evident that what transpires in the inwardness of subjectivity [*was wir im Inneren der Subjektivität vorfinden*] is more easily and more surely comprehended than what we encounter externally as object.

2. It is assumed that the subject, the proper I, is that very thing which is first of all experienced and which thereby presents itself at any time as the nearest. From this is derived what undergoes the transferral onto the objects.

3. The said explanation neglects to demonstrate why such a transferral from subjective determinations onto the objects is carried out at all.

4. In particular it fails to ask whether the objects themselves do not, after all, demand such a transfer of subjective experiences onto them [*ob denn am Ende die Objekte eine solche Übertragung subjektiver Bestimmungen auf sie fordern*].

5. If there exists such a demand, and if it is not pure arbitrariness that we, for example, name one landscape cheerful and another melancholy, then it must be asked how the objects themselves are given prior to the metaphorical, transferred comprehension and the sympathy of such a mood [*wie denn die Objekte selbst vor der übertragenden Erfassung und Einfühlung solcher Stimmung gegeben sind*]. What is their character as objects such that they demand such a transfer?

6. It is not taken into consideration that, if the objects themselves in accordance with their intrinsic content and their way of being require such a transfer in order to be addressed, for example, as forces and powers [*wenn die Objekte selbst ihrem Sachgehalt und ihrer Seinsart nach eine solche Übertragung verlangen, etwa als Kräfte und Mächte angesprochen zu werden*], then indeed a transfer is not needed in the first place; for in this case we would already find in them what we would attribute to them [*denn dann finden wir in ihnen selbst, was wir ihnen zusprechen*].

7. Recklessly explaining certain objective thing-contents — for example, real forces and efficacious or effective connections and capacities — as subjective transferrals results in even those forces, capacities, and capabilities peculiar to subjects as such being misconstrued in their proper essence [*in ihrem Eigenwesen verkannt werden*].

8. Because of this and on the basis of all the said shortcomings, the way to a decisive question remains closed off, and this question runs thus: In the end, is what we are here calling force, capacity, etc., something which in its essence is neither subjective nor objective? But if neither the one nor the other, where then do these phenomena belong? Do they at all allow themselves to be determined from out of an origin [*aus einem Ursprung bestimmen*]? But then what kind of explanation is such a

determination of origin [*Ursprungsbestimmung*]?¹⁴⁸

This is only one remarkable example of Heidegger's insistent objections to metaphor, one of the lesser known examples of his well-known resistance to the "overall key of all poetics", the irreducibly metaphysical concept of metaphor. We shall not presently discuss these Heideggerian objections in detail — it would require another treatise, on figures and counterfigures, *restricted* and *universal* analogy.¹⁴⁹ However, out of these eight "guiding thoughts", it can be noticed already that Heidegger's 'strategy' is diametrically opposed to the strategy of metaphor: instead of making that which is hitherto unknown to us, or at least relatively unfamiliar and 'abstract', by introducing it through the image of something more familiar and supposedly more concrete, he rather insists that that which we suppose to be more familiar to us already, may actually be far less familiar than we assume, and rather uncanny, *unheimlich*, and that the assumed familiarity itself, the being-at-home so to say, is questionable through and through.

This procedure has been called "inverted metaphoricity" or, with reference to Derrida's reading of Heidegger, quasi-metaphoricity.¹⁵⁰ It is indeed a chiasmatic reversal of the ordinary rule of metaphor. This chiasmus is one that I would call *counter-figure*. It crosses over the trope and thereby forms a palimpsest, giving a wink, releasing a glimpse through the "speech-grille" (*Sprachgitter*), a "distanced comprehension [*entferntes Verstehen*]". But this liberated view is also liberated from seeing (as a vision of images and figures), a veiled or

¹⁴⁸ Trans. Brogan and Warnek (1995), pp. 63-64; I have corrected the word "transferral" several times into "transferral" (*GA* 33:73-74).

¹⁴⁹ Heidegger's lectures on the notion of force [*dunamis*] and being-at-work [*energeia*] deal also with the much debated notion of ontological analogy, *analogia entis* in Aristotle; it is indeed the difference between *restricted* and *universal* analogy in Aristotle that should be clarified, but this cannot be done here; I do intend to deal with these questions elsewhere, though.

¹⁵⁰ See the excellent review article by Axel Schmitt, "Poetik der Beschneidung oder Wie dekonstruktiv kann man Celan lesen? Ein Blick auf neue Celan-Literatur", in *literaturkritik.de*, Nr. 6, Schwerpunkt: Paul Celan (Juni 2003): "Das wesentlich Neue dieser dekonstruktiven Celan-Leküre [sic] besteht in der Herausarbeitung einer Poetik, deren Kernpunkt ein sich wechselseitig potenzierender, nicht zu schlichtender Streit zwischen Materialität und Sinn ist, wobei der Verstehensprozess immer wieder durch die Unzulänglichkeit der Materialität unterbrochen und an seine eigene Grenze geführt wird. Im Mittelpunkt dieses Wechselspiels von Verstehen und Befremden steht das, was Derrida mit dem Begriff der Quasi-Metaphorik beschrieben hat. Gemeint ist damit eine invertierte Metaphorik, der es nicht mehr darum zu tun ist, Unbekanntes durch die Übertragung eines bekannten Begriffs vertrauter zu machen, sondern umgekehrt Vertrautes durch die Umkehrbewegung unheimlicher werden zu lassen. Celans Dichtungskonzeption lässt sich weder auf eine hermeneutisch geleitete Auslegung des Sinns festschreiben noch kann sie auf der reinen Sinn-dissémination verortet werden. Vielmehr hält sich die dichterische Rede für ihn im »Zwischen« von Aussagemöglichkeit und deren Erschütterung, indem sie am begrifflichen Sprechen festhält und dieses gleichzeitig von Innen aufzubrechen sucht." (http://www.literaturkritik.de/public/rezension.php?rez_id=6120; accessed Dec. 7th, 2006.) For the notion of quasimetaphoricity, cf. Derrida, "Le retrait de la métaphore". Schmitt's view of deconstructive reading and its relation to Celan's poetics is very accurate, I think. But it must be noted that Schmitt seems to take the notion of *dissémination* too narrowly here, apparently only with reference to Derrida's reading of Mallarmé in "La double séance" (in *La dissémination*, cop. 1972). Actually Derrida applies this notion also to Celan, without comparing him with Mallarmé in any way, in *Béliers* (2003), and there dissemination is precisely juxtaposed with hermeneutics; not simply opposed to it, but understood as a limit to which the hermeneutic process must be taken, in an "infinite conversation" between these two interlocutors, hermeneutics and deconstruction.

blindfolded wink, towards something yet unheard of. This viewless view, “*halb Bild und halb Schleier*”, phenomenality of the non-phenomenal, is language. We shall return to these paradoxes later, of course.¹⁵¹

For Paul Celan, poetry is not a heuristic redescription of reality, a miniature reflection of the *cosmos*, but a *Gegenkosmos*, “counter-cosmos”, an *inverted* world-view. In this invertedness, in this wish to walk on one’s hands, this poet’s worldly (i.e. sublunary and “‘counter’-supralunary”) counter-world formally resembles the inverted world of philosophy, as has been noted.¹⁵² But it also strives to be an objection to metaphysics, to *all* the metaphysics (perhaps even to Heidegger’s *counter*-metaphysics, after all; namely to his insistence on foundations and fountainheads, sources and origins, paths instead of aporias), and among all these, the metaphysics of language and art.

But should we not ask, paying heed to the proximity of Berggren’s and Heidegger’s arguments against the projectionist theory, for instance, whether Heidegger’s resistance to the allegedly metaphysical concept of metaphor could still be revised to support a new and better kind of metaphor theory, as Jean Greisch and Paul Ricœur have suggested (“*La métaphore est morte, vive la métaphore !*”)?¹⁵³ Against this question, however, another one must be asked: Why keep to the old name, the old philosopheme metaphor, dragging along with it the whole tradition that fosters the insufficient and arbitrary decisions upon poetry and language that for instance Heidegger tries to deconstruct?

METAPHOR’S RESISTANCE TO PARAPHRASE AND LITERATURE’S RESISTANCE TO METAPHOR (CULLER, DAVIDSON, COHEN)

The present dissertation does not wish to contribute to the mainstream of metaphor theories, but rather to explore certain counter-currents running against the all-absorbing enthusiasm over metaphor. (Although it might be fair to give the figure all four legs to swim with, I do not suggest *plunging into* such counter-currents, but *to explore* them. To let them flow, if you will, and not try to confine them at once, for instance, by pretending to adjust the extant con-

¹⁵¹ Cf. Celan, *GW* 1:167; *GW* 3:170; see also the texts by Hugo Huppert and Werner Hamacher in Hamacher et al., eds., *Paul Celan* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1986); Hamacher’s essay, “Die Sekunde der Inversion”, has also been reprinted (in a slightly revised form, to my knowledge) in his book *Entferntes Verstehen. Studien zu Philosophie und Literatur von Kant bis Celan* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1998; I have only had access to the English translation, by Peter Fenves [in *Premises*, 1996]; cf. below) and translated, as far as I know, no less than three times into English.

¹⁵² It is Paul Ricœur who sees the “live” metaphor as a heuristic redescription of reality, in *La métaphore vive* (Paris: Seuil, cop. 1975). Werner Hamacher has pointed out the affinity between Hegel’s talk of philosophy as a world turned upside down and Celan’s poetics, with the reference in the *Meridian* to Büchner’s Lenz who wished, on his twentieth of January, to walk upon his hands (“Die Sekunde der Inversion”, 1988; cf. below). In Celan’s draft material for the *Meridian* speech, we find a note, with a touch of hesitation, self-suspicion of “anthropocentrism”, speaking of *Gegenkosmos*: “Gedicht nicht augenfällige oder geheime Spiegelung des Kosmos, sondern Gegenkosmos. Das Sublunare als »Gegen«-Supralunare (also doch anthropozentrisch??)” (*TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 286; cf. below).

¹⁵³ Cf. Greisch, “Les mots et les roses” (1973); Ricœur, *La métaphore vive* (“Huitième étude”).

cept of metaphor to better suit some difficult cases, or by attempting to introduce a *new* concept of metaphor, which would be always possible, as it seems, by virtue of the natural linguistic capacities of such words as ‘metaphor’, its naturally *metaphoric* capacities.) The aim of the present study is rather to explore the motivation, or the “sense and necessity”¹⁵⁴ of some dissenting voices that have *not* been so enthusiastic about applying the concept of metaphor, more or less without reserve as it seems, to such areas of interest as literary and philosophical language.

There have been, at the same time as the mainstream of metaphor theories seems to have expanded far beyond all traditional margins of rhetoric and poetics, certain counter-currents to the mainstream and even to its backwaters. In a famous and influential article of the same famous “Special Issue on Metaphor” of *Critical Inquiry* with Booth’s extrapolation and Cohen’s salutation to the friends of metaphor, Donald Davidson¹⁵⁵ argues against “the central mistake” of most metaphor theorists, namely “the idea that a metaphor has, in addition to its literal sense or meaning, another sense or meaning”, i.e. a metaphorical meaning, while he still insists that clearing away this mistake “makes metaphor a more, not a less, interesting phenomenon” (“What Metaphors Mean”, p. 32). Davidson’s argument in the article could be summarized by his own sentence: “Metaphor makes us see one thing as another by making some literal statement that inspires or prompts the insight” (p. 47). His view is inspiring, clear and insightful. But we could well ask whether it is always metaphor which prompts the insight, if the figure taken as metaphor does not by itself necessarily carry any more or less hidden message besides the so-called literal meaning, or translate a propositional content, that is, whether the figure taken to be metaphorical is properly metaphorical in the first place. As Davidson says, “we are seldom in doubt that what we have is a metaphor” (p. 35), when what we have seems obviously metaphorical. But there *are* doubtful cases, even such cases in which the obviously metaphorical expression turns out to be something else instead. In cases where ‘metaphor’ is a question of interpretation, are we allowed to attach the label ‘metaphor’ to the figure itself? As “intimation is not meaning” (p. 41), could it sometimes be that we are invited to consider the apparent metaphor otherwise than metaphorically, and even otherwise than in terms of *meaning*?

When Donald Davidson denies the existence of specifically metaphorical meaning (or metaphor’s “having a special meaning, a specific cognitive content”; p. 46), he still denies it *to* metaphor and in favour of a better understanding of this verbal phenomenon. His paradoxical thesis “that metaphors mean what the words, in their most literal interpretation, mean, and nothing more” is meant to make “metaphor a more, not a less, interesting phenomenon” (p. 32). But there are other kinds of dissenting voices, and also such a voice as Jonathan

¹⁵⁴ Jacques Derrida, “Le retrait de la métaphore”, in *Psyché* [1987/1998], pp. 78-79; cf. En. trans. by F. Gasdner [1998], p. 115 (there, “le sens et la nécessité” is rendered as “the meaning and necessity”).

¹⁵⁵ “What Metaphors Mean”, in *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 5 No. 1, Special Issue on Metaphor (Autumn 1978), pp. 31-48.

Culler's who, a couple of years earlier, ventured as far as to suggest that literary critics should "scrap" the notion of metaphor altogether, since "it is a positive hindrance to our understanding of reading because it conceals the complexities of interpretation".¹⁵⁶ I would agree with Culler when he points out, in a later text, "The Turns of Metaphor" (1981), that "there is a certain perversity in an account of metaphor which works well for highly uninteresting and even artificial figures of replacement and which breaks down, or at least becomes relatively useless, in the case of the creative, suggestive literary metaphors which interest us most."¹⁵⁷ Too often, that seems to be the case: many theories of metaphor seem to be quite unable to account for the complexities of literary language; and some theorists, such as Max Black, also affirm this problem. This is a concession which has not often been noted, however.

But perhaps readers and interpreters must keep alive their critical *awareness* of metaphor if it is precisely the *resistance* to metaphor that literature draws its power from? This may be inferred from what Culler claims in the same brief "Commentary" already cited, which concluded another special issue "On Metaphor" (*New Literary History*, Autumn 1974):

Literature's power has been thought to lie in metaphor, but in fact it is precisely literature's resistance to metaphor, resistance to replacement operations, which is the source of this power. ["Commentary", p. 229.]

But where there is resistance, there must be something to be resisted. Therefore it is questionable whether the concept of metaphor could just be "scrapped" by literary criticism.¹⁵⁸ Culler's own talk of this resistance seems to contradict this suggestion. *Know thy enemy*: this would be the battle-cry for poetry, inasmuch as it is "essentially anti-metaphoric", and for poetics that must struggle with its own tradition and the tendencies of criticism as a "metaphor for the act of reading" (Paul de Man).¹⁵⁹ More seriously speaking, there is no counter-figure without figure: without the image of the tobacco pipe above it, the Magrittean inscription, "*Ceci n'est pas une pipe*", would not make much sense, would it?

In the later text, "The Turns of Metaphor", a chapter in *The Pursuit of Signs* (1981), we are no longer invited to simply "scrap" the concept of metaphor, but the literary metaphors are treated in a critical or deconstructive manner, following for instance the readings of Proust by Stephen Ullmann (for whose *Festschrift* the chapter was originally destined), Gérard Genette and Paul de Man, and what has been discovered in these readings or through them: namely that many of Proust's central 'metaphors', especially in *Du côté de chez Swann*, are actually "generated" and "supported" by metonymy (p. 193). In Culler's terms,

¹⁵⁶ "Commentary", in *New Literary History*, Vol. VI, No 1, On Metaphor (Autumn 1974), pp. 219-229, here p. 228.

¹⁵⁷ *The Pursuit of Signs* (London: Routledge, 1981), p. 205.

¹⁵⁸ "Scrapping the term 'metaphor' would not harm such theories [of literature] and would, on the contrary, force them to look more closely at the interpretive processes which produce a tension between unity and disparity and at the various textual indeterminacies which provoke such reading." ("Commentary", p. 228.)

¹⁵⁹ "Criticism is a metaphor for the act of reading, and this act is itself inexhaustible." (*Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism* [1983], p. 107.)

this means in the final analysis that the metaphors which we might take to be “based on the perception of an essential similarity” are actually products crafted by the work of metonymy which is, by definition as it seems, “based on a merely accidental or contingent connexion”. Culler borrows from Ullmann the concise characterizations of metaphors and metonymies as “figures based on essences” and “figure[s] based on accident[s]” and then proceeds to deconstruct this opposition that has led so many critics to prefer metaphor to the allegedly much less interesting figure of metonymy, not to mention the many other figures and tropes of the classical tropologies.¹⁶⁰

Metaphor has become not only the privileged figure, which it was already in Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* and *Poetics*, but often also the metaphor for all other figures of speech and even for the figures of thought. This synecdochic displacement which makes metaphor the figure of all figures, or “a genus of which all the other tropes are species”, is not necessarily due to mere “blindness” or “laziness”,¹⁶¹ but may be motivated by certain preferences and also desires. Metaphor is the figure most readily defensible and justifiable on cognitive grounds, as Culler points out; it entertains a certain relation to the form of proposition, even if it is often very difficult to restate in propositional form; and these figures *par excellence* are those that “are read as artistic inventions grounded in perceptions of relations in the world”, grounded “in the perception of resemblances in experience, in intimations of essential qualities”. To its modern proponents at least, metaphor is not just a “non-referential play of forms” (*The Pursuit of Signs*, p. 191): in metaphor poetry is to find its defence.

The proponents of metaphor, including Proust himself, judging by his statements that are contradicted by the metonymical motivation of his own metaphors, believe that poetry is an essentially metaphorical way of presenting “human experience to us in a new way, giving us not scientific truth but a higher imaginative truth, the perception of fundamental connexions and relationships” (p. 192). In his reading of Proust with regard to Ullmann’s and Genette’s readings, Culler follows de Man in not being satisfied with recognizing the allegedly harmonious interrelation or interpenetration between metaphor and metonymy, in which “the role of metonymy *in metaphor*”¹⁶² seems to be still a relationship in which the former is subjected to the service of the latter: the “interpenetration” (*The Pursuit...*, p. 192) turns out to

¹⁶⁰ *The Pursuit of Signs*, p. 190. — Not to mention “simile or synecdoche, [...] metalepsis or meiosis, or [...] anadiplosis, alloiosis, or anapodosis”, as Culler lists (on p. 188).

¹⁶¹ Cf. Umberto Eco, “The Scandal of Metaphor” (1983), p. 217. Cf. Culler: “[T]oday metaphor is no longer one figure among others but the figure of figures, a figure for figurality; and I mean this not figuratively but quite literally: the reason we can devote journals and conferences to metaphor is that metaphor is not just the literal or proper name for a trope based on resemblance but also and especially a figure for figurality in general.” (*The Pursuit of Signs*, p. 189.)

¹⁶² Genette, “Métonymie chez Proust”, in *Figures III* (Paris: Seuil, cop. 1972), p. 42 (“le rôle de la métonymie dans la métaphore”); cit. Culler, *The Pursuit of Signs*, p. 193. Cf. de Man, *Allegories of Reading* (New Haven: Yale U.P., cop. 1979), pp. 60-61n5 (“beyond Genette’s model of a reconciled system of metaphor and metonymy”, beyond “Genette’s model of happy totalization” we are to find, in Proust’s sentence “the sun having turned its eye elsewhere [*le soleil ayant tourné ailleurs son regard*]” a certain “figure of the unreadability of figures and therefore no longer, strictly speaking, a figure”).

be a hierarchy in which the penetrated metaphor dominates by enclosing the other figure, namely metonymy, *within* its own structure. Otherwise one would be in danger of unsettling the hierarchy of essence over accidents: “For the capture and appreciation of essences, if it is to mean anything or carry any value, must be distinguished from the purely fortuitous or accidental relationships brought about by juxtaposition.” (*The Pursuit...*, p. 193.) Culler cites a passage of *Le Temps retrouvé* in which the narrator celebrates “metaphor as the instrument of artistic truth”, an instrument by which the writer brings together two sensations which may lie far apart in time, and thus, by identifying their common quality and liberating them from the contingencies of time, “reunites” them in their essence by uniting words in a wedlock (“*par le lien indescriptible d’une alliance de mots*”).¹⁶³ But in a chain of readings that takes him from Ullmann through Genette to de Man, Culler argues that the very “distinction between contingent and necessary connexions” actually turns out to be threatened in Proust’s text (cf. *The Pursuit of Signs*, pp. 194-196). We shall return to Proust for a brief moment a little later, but rather through de Man’s reading of him.

But now, how is the alleged higher truth of metaphor related to meaning, message, and cognitive content? In the famous article already quoted, “What Metaphors Mean?” (1978), Donald Davidson argues that “metaphors mean what the words, in their most literal interpretation, mean, and nothing more”, and that “We must give up the idea that a metaphor carries a message, that it has a content or meaning (except, of course, its literal meaning).” Davidson’s insights, the denial of meaning, message and content to metaphor, come close to challenging the very notion of metaphor, “carrying over” as the Greek name suggests. But Davidson still insists that clearing away the mistake about metaphorical meaning “makes metaphor a more, not a less, interesting phenomenon” (“What Metaphors Mean”, pp. 32, 45). As Culler argues, such a shift of emphasis from the poetics of structure to the pragmatics of the effect “would involve treating the notion of metaphor as a description of certain interpretive operations performed by readers when confronted by a textual incongruity, such as the assertion of a patently false identity”.¹⁶⁴ Davidson’s argument in his article could be summa-

¹⁶³ “[L]a vérité ne commencera qu’au moment où l’écrivain prendra deux objets différents, posera leur rapport, analogue dans le monde de l’art à celui qu’est le rapport unique, de la loi causale, dans le monde de la science et les enfermera dans les anneaux nécessaires d’un beau style, ou même, ainsi que la vie, quand en rapprochant une qualité commune à deux sensations, il dégagera leur essence en les réunissant l’une et l’autre pour les soustraire aux contingences du temps, dans une métaphore, et les enchaînera par le lien indescriptible d’une alliance de mots. La nature elle-même, à ce point de vue sur la voie de l’art, n’était elle pas commencement d’art, elle qui souvent ne m’avait permis de connaître la beauté d’une chose que longtemps après dans une autre, [...]” (Proust, *À la Recherche du temps perdu*, VII : *Le Temps retrouvé* [coll. Folio classique n°2203; Paris: Gallimard, 1999], p. 196; partly cited by Culler, *The Pursuit of Signs*, 194. In his citation, Culler omits, possibly by accident, the clause “dans une métaphore” and does not cite the last sentence quoted here, either.)

¹⁶⁴ *The Pursuit of Signs*, p. 208. Toward the end of the chapter, Culler nevertheless contests this view: “Instead of explaining the original production of the metaphor by the author [...] we would be describing the production of a metaphorical reading by the reader. [...] [A] rhetoric focussed on persuasion rather than tropes will be engaged from the outset in an uncertain calculus, trying to account for effects of force which are never wholly predictable.” (p. 209.)

alized by his own sentence that we already quoted: “Metaphor makes us see one thing as another by making some literal statement that inspires or prompts the insight.” But in spite of the fact that the statement itself is literal and does not *contain* any metaphorical meaning (“intimation is not meaning”), “we are seldom in doubt that what we have is a metaphor”.¹⁶⁵ *Should* we sometimes be, perhaps? In the absence of such a horizon that would provide us with a more or less immediate grasp of the metaphor *as* a metaphor (Ted Cohen points out that in this respect, as a “cultivation of intimacy”, metaphors resemble jokes),¹⁶⁶ namely when we come across “difficult metaphors”, it is us, the *readers* who can be held responsible for the metaphoricity of the apparent metaphor. As Culler says, “the figurative is the name we give to effects of language that exceed, deform, or deviate from the code; codifications of previous excesses, deformations, and deviations only create opportunities for new turns” (*The Pursuit of Signs*, p. 209). This may happen even when we actually are unable to ‘figure out’ what a certain poetic turn-of-phrase *means*, and this difficulty may become a pretext for an interpretative metaphor, while it could also have some other effect, such as, first of all, an honest acknowledgement of this difficulty *as* a difficulty, a discovery of the obstacle *as* an obstacle. We shall consider this possibility in more detail in discussing Paul Celan’s poetry and poetics.

Donald Davidson denies that “associated with a metaphor is a cognitive content that its author wishes to convey and that the interpreter must grasp if he is to get the message”, and juxtaposes metaphor with jokes and dreams: “to suppose that [metaphor] can be effective only by conveying a message is like thinking a joke or a dream makes some statement which a clever interpreter can restate in plain prose” (“What Metaphors Mean”, p. 46). This is obviously not the case with jokes and dreams. But it is also obvious that jokes and dreams differ from each other.

Another contributor to the *Critical Inquiry*’s “Special Issue on Metaphor”, Ted Cohen, very successfully associates jokes and metaphors as ways to *achieve intimacy* between the speaker and the hearer. Let us take a long quote, since when we see in what respects metaphors resemble jokes, we may also see in what respects jokes and metaphors may resemble poems, and in what respects poems are radically different from jokes and metaphors. This approximation and differentiation have to do with the Celanian question of *complicity* with the poem: the author abandons, gives up his complicity (*Mitwisserschaft*), and thereby gives the reader the chance for an instantaneous complicity with the poem. This instantaneous, punctual “cultivation of intimacy” (if I may use and abuse Cohen’s expression), might be precisely the *limit*, the borderline to which metaphors are taken, as Celan points out.¹⁶⁷ But well before quoting Celan’s words, let us quote Cohen:

¹⁶⁵ “What Metaphors Mean”, pp. 47, 41, 35.

¹⁶⁶ Cf. Cohen, “Metaphor and the Cultivation of Intimacy”, in *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 5 No. 1, Special Issue on Metaphor (Autumn 1978), pp. 3-12.

¹⁶⁷ *Mikrolithen*, No. 226, p. 126 (see below).

There is a unique way in which the maker and the appreciator of a metaphor are drawn closer to one another. Three aspects are involved: (1) the speaker issues a kind of concealed invitation; (2) the hearer expends a special effort to accept the invitation; and (3) this transaction constitutes the acknowledgement of a community. All three are involved in any communication, but in ordinary literal discourse their involvement is so pervasive and routine that they go unremarked. The use of metaphor throws them into relief, and there is a point in that. [...] Realizing the metaphorical character of an expression is often easy enough; it requires only the assumption that the speaker is not simply speaking absurdly or uttering a patent falsehood. [...] In both tasks — realizing that the expression is intended metaphorically, and seeing what to make of it — the hearer typically employs a number of assumptions about the speaker: what the speaker believes, what the speaker believes about what the hearer believes (which includes beliefs about what the speaker thinks the hearer can be expected to believe about the speaker). [...] [Cohen's example, discussed at some length, is calling someone, the chairman in one's departmental meeting, figuratively a "Bolshevik"; the process of metaphorical interpretation ensuing from this has as its consequence that the speaker and the addressee "become an intimate pair".] The sense of close community results not only from the shared awareness that a special invitation has been given and accepted, but also from the awareness that not everyone could make that offer or take it up. In general, and with some obvious qualifications, it must be true that all literal use of language is accessible to all whose language it is. But a figurative use can be inaccessible to all but those who share information about one another's knowledge, beliefs, intentions, and attitudes. I think the community can be as small as you like, even a solitary pair: perhaps only the chairman knows enough of what you think and feel (along with knowing that you know that he knows this) to take the point of your remark. And the group might even be smaller: surely the self-dialogue of the soul is often figurative. / In these respects metaphors are surprisingly like jokes. With a joke, too, there is first the realization that it *is* a joke and then the understanding — what's called getting the joke. ["Metaphor and the Cultivation of Intimacy", pp. 8-10.]

This model associating metaphors with jokes, whose horizon might extend itself to the most universal of communities (especially since jokes need not always be verbal) and contract itself to the strictest hermeticism of self-dialogue, this paradigm might well account for even the most hermetic, the most idiosyncratic, the most difficult metaphor *as* a metaphor. The best jokes and the best metaphors are radically unparaphrasable, untranslatable into another idiom. Perhaps the hermeticism of a modern poem would resemble the radical esotericism of a private joke? A joke into which *one might have been initiated sooner or later*, but which defies all elucidation and paraphrase or prefacing *even after* such initiation?

But how many times do you laugh at a joke? Even the best of all the jokes you know? Or even if it is extremely funny, even if it always makes you smile at least, would you compare it with a poem? To drop the metaphor, to drop the metaphorical connexion between jokes and metaphors, and to drop the connexion between metaphor and poetry: How many times can you read a poem? Is the intimacy of reading poetry similar to the intimacy of metaphor illustrated by Cohen's jokes (which we did not bother to cite) and by his description of their pragmatic features? How many responses are there to metaphor? Or to a joke? Even though much of what a metaphor or a joke may cause us to notice is not propositional in

character and thus there may be no end to our description of the response it inspires,¹⁶⁸ they still seem to require an intimacy that provides for the *correct* horizon of their elucidation, the correct membership in a linguistic community that can cultivate intimacy amongst itself. Even when this horizon of intimacy (with metaphor) may be endlessly cultivated, it is still a closed familiar horizon.

It seems, as we zigzag from Cohen back to Davidson's theory, that the cultivation of intimacy leads the skilled and educated reader to being cultivated and in a position to instruct others, to initiate, even if the moment of being initiated shows the efforts of elucidation to be of a secondary degree with regard to the original act of reading and understanding:

Not, of course, that interpretation and elucidation of a metaphor are not in order. Many of us need help if we are to see what the author of a metaphor wanted us to see and what a more sensitive or educated reader grasps. The legitimate function of so-called paraphrase is to make the lazy or ignorant reader have a vision like that of the skilled critic. The critic is, so to speak, in benign competition with the metaphor maker. The critic tries to make his own art easier or more transparent in some respects than the original, but at the same time he tries to reproduce in others some of the effects the original had on him. In doing this the critic also, and perhaps by the best method at his command, calls attention to the beauty or aptness, the hidden power, of the metaphor itself. [Davidson, "What Metaphors Mean", p. 47.]

A rather complacent view of reading and pedagogy. A benign competition between the critic and the metaphor maker.

RESISTANCE, NOT IMMUNITY (KARSTEN HARRIES'S COUNTER-ATTACK)

In the "Special Issue on Metaphor" of *Critical Inquiry*, which also contains a contribution by de Man (the famous text on "The Epistemology of Metaphor"), Karsten Harries admits, partly with reference to Culler's "Commentary", that the modern aesthetic and poetic autotelism "implies the demand that [poetry] struggle against metaphor". However, he also insists on the metaphorical nature of poetical language: "Resistance here cannot mean immunity."¹⁶⁹ In the struggle between modern poetry and metaphor, "metaphors become weapons directed against reality, instruments to break the referentiality of language", and "the poet's broken metaphors" are thus used against metaphor, since whereas "the predominant use of poetic metaphor has been to exalt the real object, [...] we have to admit that the aesthetic approach to

¹⁶⁸ Cf. Davidson, "What Metaphors Mean", p. 46. What about dreams then? Davidson conceives of metaphor as "the dreamwork of language and, like all dreamwork, its interpretation reflects as much on the interpreter as on the originator" (p. 31). Dream and metaphor seem to be, in traditional notions of metaphor, incompatible, since metaphor usually implies conscious use; the originator of a metaphor is not supposed to be puzzled about its meaning or interpretation, whereas in the case of dreams, the interpreter might well be the same person as the originator, engaged in a conscious endeavour of interpreting unconscious spontaneity. We leave this question open, however.

¹⁶⁹ Karsten Harries, "Metaphor and Transcendence", in *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 5, No. 1, Special Issue on Metaphor (Autumn 1978), pp. 73-90, here p. 75.

art demands derealization". Harries cites Ortega y Gasset: "The weapon of poetry turns against natural things and wounds or murders them", whereas more traditionally the function of poetic metaphor has been "to embellish and to throw into relief beloved reality".¹⁷⁰ But as Harries points out: "Perhaps we should not speak of *the* modern poet. Poetry continues to be many things, and poets continue to use metaphors in many ways" ("Metaphor and Transcendence", p. 83). Harries associates any poet's refusal to use metaphor with an aspiration for "presentness", and that would imply sheer hubris:

God knows neither transcendence nor metaphor — nor would man, if he were truly godlike. The refusal of metaphor is inseparably connected with the project of pride, the dream of an unmediated vision, a vision that is not marred by lack [implied by metaphor], that does not refer to something beyond itself that would fulfil it. This origin ties the aesthetic approach, in spite of its willingness to surrender all claim to truth, to the Cartesian hope that the search for knowledge can come to rest in the plenitude of clear and distinct perception. It is a vain hope. ["Metaphor and Transcendence", p. 83.]

We include here Harries's counter-attack against the modern anti-metaphoricians, such as, according to him, Paul Valéry (while his notion of Valéry's poetics is quite narrow and one-sided, I'm afraid), in order to show how contrasting and contradictory the presuppositions concerning metaphoricality and anti-metaphoricality can be. While he affirms that poets continue to use metaphors in many ways, he fails to observe that the resistance to metaphor is not as homogeneous as he takes it to be, either. For Paul Celan, as we shall see, the anti-metaphoric essence of poetry (Mandelstam's poetry, for instance) resides in its resistance to all supralunary and supratemporal pretensions, and in its affirmation of worldliness, temporality, humanity and finitude. Even when Celan strongly approves of Valéry's designation of poetry as "*langage à l'état naissant*", it is certainly not "an unmediated vision" he is dreaming of. And if Kafka's despair of writing, as a despair over metaphor ("Metaphor is one thing among many that make me despair of writing"), is motivated by the lack of originality that characterizes literary language, he affirms the poverty of writing with respect to the self-sufficiency and autonomy of practically every other occupation.¹⁷¹ Should the writer just humbly recon-

¹⁷⁰ "Metaphor and Transcendence", pp. 80-81. The citation from Ortega is from *The Dehumanization of Art and Other Writings on Art and Culture* (Garden City, N.J., 1956); cf. Harries, "Metaphor and Transcendence", p. 80n16.

¹⁷¹ Kafka's diary: "6. Dezember [1921]. Aus einem Brief: »Ich wärme mich daran in diesem traurigen Winter.« Die Metaphern sind eines in dem vielen, was mich am Schreiben verzweifeln läßt. Die Unselbstständigkeit des Schreibens, die Abhängigkeit von dem Dienstmädchen, das einheizt, von der Katze, die sich am Ofen wärmt, selbst vom armen alten Menschen, der sich wärmt. Alles dies sind selbständige, eigengesetzliche Verrichtungen, nur das Schreiben ist hilflos, wohnt nicht in sich selbst, ist Spaß und Verzweiflung." (*Gesammelte Werke. Taschenausgabe in acht Bänden*, ed. Max Brod, vol. *Tagebücher 1910-1923* [1998], p. 403.) Derrida writes, citing these words by Kafka: "Tout ce qu'on pourrait appeler la modernité littéraire tient [...] à marquer la spécificité littéraire contre l'assujettissement au poétique, c'est-à-dire au métaphorique, à ce que Rousseau analyse lui-même comme le langage spontané. S'il y a une originalité littéraire, ce qui n'est sans doute pas simplement sûr, elle doit s'émanciper sinon de la métaphore, que la tradition a aussi jugée réductible, du moins de la spontanéité sauvage de la figure telle qu'elle apparaît dans le langage non-littéraire." (*De la grammatologie* [Paris: Minuit, cop. 1967], p. 383.) — Cf. Harries, "Metaphor and Tran-

cile himself and his occupation with the traditional subjection to poetics and rhetoric, or with the condescending view of poetry as a more or less exalted form of ordinary language? And what is ordinary language, anyway? Resistance to metaphor has of course also been understood as belonging to a realist enterprise, in favour of the so-called ordinary language that should do without euphuism. So it is certainly not always a question of some modern auto-apotheosis and autotelism. For Paul de Man, metaphor is essentially anti-poetic precisely when it is conceived in terms of “recuperation” or restoring immediacy: “To the extent that metaphor can be thought of as a language of desire and as a means to recover what is absent, it is essentially anti-poetic.”¹⁷²

DE MAN: “ALLOWING THE TEXT TO DECONSTRUCT ITS OWN METAPHORS”¹⁷³

Paul de Man’s work is of course very rich with respect to our thematics of counter-figures. We shall, however, take only one exemplary passage out of his *Allegories of Reading* (1979). In the chapter on Rilke, de Man cites and comments on one of the interpreters of *Sonette an Orpheus*, Hermann Mörchen, who finds in metaphor “an act of identification” and a means by which the poet can “abandon himself without fear to his language”, the language true and faithful and “the unmediated expression of an unhappy consciousness”. De Man expresses his doubts about Rilke’s willingness to submit to such a conception of language.¹⁷⁴

De Man himself certainly has not “scrapped” the concept of metaphor. He uses the term actually very often also in his own reading of Rilke, for instance in discussing the poem “Am Rande der Nacht”. At first this use appears to be neutral, just the standard way of applying this concept to linguistic or literary specimens. However, at a certain point in his reading, he arrives at certain reservations about this concept. Here is the poem, written 1900, from *Das Buch der Bilder*:

AM RANDE DER NACHT

MEINE Stube und diese Weite,
wach über nachtendem Land, –
ist Eines. Ich bin eine Saite,
über rauschende breite
Resonanzen gespannt.

scendence”, pp. 75, 77.

¹⁷² *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, cop. 1979), p. 47; cf. p. 46. — On the question of metaphor in Valéry and Valéry’s readings of Descartes, we should consult Derrida’s essay “Qual quelle: les sources de Valéry”, in *Marges — de la philosophie* (Paris: Minuit, cop. 1972).

¹⁷³ *Allegories of Reading*, p. 72.

¹⁷⁴ Hermann Mörchen is cited and criticized by Paul de Man in *Allegories of Reading*, pp. 25-26.

Die Dinge sind Geigenleiber,
 von murrendem Dunkel voll;
 drin träumt das Weinen der Weiber,
 drin rührt sich im Schläfe der Groll
 ganzer Geschlechter.....
 Ich soll
 silbern erzittern: dann wird
 Alles unter mir leben,
 und was in den Dingen irrt,
 wird nach dem Lichte streben,
 das von meinem tanzenden Tone,
 um welchen der Himmel wellt,
 durch schmale, schmachtende Spalten
 in die alten
 Abgründe ohne
 Ende fällt...¹⁷⁵

In de Man's detailed reading, from which we here only extract a few lines, "the subject, claiming to be the string of a violin, meets and adapts itself perfectly to objects which, in a metaphor that is truly Rilkean in its seductive audacity, are said to be the 'body' of this same violin". The overall transformation is clear enough: the speaking subject is a string suspended across the space of resonance, and the things are "bodies of violins" (yes, in the plural: "*Geigenleiber*"). And thus: "The poem is an example of the most classical of metaphors, conceived of as a transfer from an inside to an outside space (or vice versa) by means of an analogical representation." However, as de Man argues, we must not stop at this observation: "But if one allows oneself to be guided by the rigorous representational logic of the metaphors, [...], then one should follow their guidance to the end." The end without an end, as we might add: "*ohne / Ende*". De Man observes in the poem "a displacement that distorts the habitual relationship between theme and figure." The theme would be recognizable as the subject's thematic claim as a representative of "all [that] will live under me" ("*wird / Alles unter mir leben*"), the poet who gives, by his own initiative, the voice to all that "errs in things" ("*in den Dingen irrt*"), but the figure by which this theme is stated distorts their relationship:

The pattern we have just schematized does not appear quite in this shape in the text. The inwardness that should belong, per definition, to the subject is located instead within things. Instead of being opaque and full, things are hollow and contain, as in a box, the dark mass of sentiments and of history. The interiority of the speaking subject is not actively engaged; whatever pathos is mentioned refers to the suffering of others: the woes of women, the ire of historical generations. By a curious reversal, this subjectivity is invested from the start, before the figural transfer has taken place,

¹⁷⁵ Rainer Maria Rilke, *Das Buch der Bilder*, repr. in *Die Gedichte* (Frankfurt a.M.: Insel, 1998), pp. 346-347. En. trans. Philipp Kellmeyer: "ON THE EDGE OF THE NIGHT // My room and this vastness, / awake over parroted land, – / are one. I am a string, / strung over rustling wide / resonances. // The things are violin bodies, / full of grumbling dark; / inside the wives' weeping is dreaming, / inside the rancour of whole dynasties / is stirring in the sleep... / I shall / shake silverly: then / everything underneath me will live, / and what errs in the things, / will strive after the light, / which falls from my dancing tone, / around which heaven waves, / through narrow, yearning cracks, / into the old / chasms without / end..." (Electronic text: http://www.philipp.uni-hd.de/rilke_files/nacht.html. Accessed December 7th, 2006.)

in objects and in things. This subjective experience is said to be dark to the extent that it is unable, by itself, to find expression; it exists in a condition of error and of blindness (“was in den Dingen irrt...”) until the subject, the “I” of the poem, confers upon it the clarity of entities that are available to the senses by giving it the attribute of voice. The usual structure has been reversed: the outside of things has been internalized and it is the subject that enables them access to a certain form of exteriority. The “I” of the poem contributes nothing of its own experience, sensations, sufferings, or consciousness. The initial model of the scene is not, as one might think at first, that of an autonomous subject confronting nature or objects, as is the case, for example, in Baudelaire’s poem “l’Homme et la mer”. [*Allegories of Reading*, p. 36.]

At this point, we cut short de Man’s reading and ask, whether Baudelaire’s “L’homme et la mer” consists of such a metaphorical structure as is suggested by de Man. “The initial model of the scene” in Baudelaire’s “L’Homme et la mer” may indeed be “that of an autonomous subject confronting nature or objects”, but perhaps not simply from the perspective of such a subject. Let us have a glimpse into Baudelaire’s poem:

L’HOMME ET LA MER

Homme libre, toujours tu chériras la mer !
La mer est ton miroir, tu contemples ton âme
Dans le déroulement infini de sa lame
Et ton esprit n’est pas un gouffre moins amer.

Tu te plais à plonger au sein de ton image;
Tu l’embrasses des yeux et des bras, et ton cœur
Se distrait quelquefois de sa propre rumeur
Au bruit de cette plainte indomptable et sauvage.

Vous êtes tous les deux ténébreux et discrets;
Homme, nul n’a sondé le fond de tes abîmes;
O mer, nul ne connaît tes richesses intimes,
Tant vous êtes jaloux de garder vos secrets!

Et cependant voilà des siècles innombrables
Que vous vous combattez sans pitié ni remords,
Tellement vous aimez le carnage et la mort,
O lutteurs éternels, O frères implacables !¹⁷⁶

So here, in Baudelaire’s poem, a subjective ‘autonomy’ would be what inspires the comparison between man and sea, “Both [...] gloomy and reticent” (“*tous les deux ténébreux et dis-*

¹⁷⁶ *Les Fleurs du Mal*, ed. Jacques Dupont (Paris: Flammarion, cop. 1991), p. 69. En trans. William Aggeler: “Man and the Sea // Free man, you will always cherish the sea! / The sea is your mirror; you contemplate your soul / In the infinite unrolling of its billows; / Your mind is an abyss that is no less bitter. // You like to plunge into the bosom of your image; / You embrace it with eyes and arms, and your heart / Is distracted at times from its own clamoring / By the sound of this plaint, wild and untamable. // Both of you are gloomy and reticent: / Man, no one has sounded the depths of your being; / O Sea, no person knows your most hidden riches, / So zealously do you keep your secrets! // Yet for countless ages you have fought each other / Without pity, without remorse, / So fiercely do you love carnage and death, / O eternal fighters, implacable brothers!” (William Aggeler, *The Flowers of Evil* [Fresno, CA: Academy Library Guild, 1954]. Reproduced electronically at *Fleursdumal.org*, <http://fleursdumal.org/poem/113>. Accessed Nov. 2006.)

crets”), and both also so jealous of their secrets (“*jaloux de garder vos secrets*”), while the central characteristic attributed to man, within this comparison or simile, is: “Man, no one has sounded the depths of your being” (“*Homme, nul n’a sondé le fond de tes abîmes*”)... A strange “freedom of the will” (Baudelaire indeed apostrophizes the “free man”), inasmuch as the depths of the abyss, the depths of both the sea and the man (“*Et ton esprit n’est pas un gouffre moins amer*”), have not been sounded at will by anyone: the ‘subject’, too, here addressed in the second person, remains inaccessible even to himself. The ‘speaking subject’ of this poem is not the one who compares himself to the sea but the one who speaks *to* the man who sees his own image in the sea and embraces it with his eyes and arms. The poem is variably addressed to man and, by another kind of apostrophe, to the sea, while the last stanza could well be addressed to man alone, the man who slays his brother while he has never “sounded [*sondé*]” the depths of his adversary, either, never shared his secrets with the other man.

The last stanza could be where the simile ceases to be mere simile, since it would seem absurd to attribute the eternal battle to man and sea as if the *carnage* (with its literal allusion to *carne*, ‘meat’) took place between them and not, for instance, upon the ‘battlefield’ of the sea; to cite Corneille’s lines which Baudelaire might have had in mind: “*Et la terre, et le fleuve, et leur flotte, et le port, / Sont des champs de carnage où triomphe la mort*” (*Le Cid*, IV, 3). If we accept that the last stanza could change the variation between an address to man and an apostrophe to the sea into an address solely to mankind — namely “implacable brothers”, the ones whose souls love more their mirror image, the sea, and the metaphors of its unfathomable depth, than the real brother, the human brother who *also* loves the sea — they would not lose anything in figurativity but gain an extra figure, that of irony. Which is indeed a *counter-figure* to the spontaneous metaphor.

METONYMY AS COUNTER-FIGURE FOR METAPHOR (DE MAN, HENRY, GENETTE)

Metonymy can also be a counter-figure to metaphor. But the structure of metonymy, as opposed to metaphor and either distinguished from synecdoche or comprising it, sometimes associated with allegory and other times with symbol, remains a matter of dispute. Let us pick an extract from de Man’s reading of Proust in *Allegories of Reading*:

The synecdoche that substitutes part for whole and whole for part is in fact a metaphor,* powerful enough to transform a temporal contiguity [sic? cf. below] into an infinite duration: “Born of the sunny days, resurrected only upon their return, containing some of their essence, [the buzzing of the flies] not only reawakens their image in our memory but certifies their return, their actual, persistent, unmediated presence.” [*Du côté de chez Swann*.] Compared to this compelling coherence, the contingency of a metonymy based only on the casual encounter of two entities that could very well exist in each other’s absence would be entirely devoid of poetic power. “The tune of human music [as opposed to the ‘natural’ flies] heard perchance during summer-

time...” may be able to stimulate memory in a mechanical way, but fails to lead to the totalizing stability of metaphorical processes. If metonymy is distinguished from metaphor in terms of necessity and contingency (an interpretation of the term that is not illegitimate), then metonymy is per definition unable to create genuine links, whereas no one can doubt, thanks to the butterflies, the resonance of the crates, and especially the “chamber music” of the flies, of the presence of light and of warmth in the room. On the level of sensation, metaphor can reconcile night and day in a *chiaroscuro* that is entirely convincing.

* Classical rhetoric generally classifies synecdoche as metonymy, which leads to difficulties characteristic of all attempts at establishing a taxonomy of tropes; tropes are transformational systems rather than grids. The relationship between part and whole can be understood metaphorically, as is the case, for example, in the organic metaphors dear to Goethe. Synecdoche is one of the borderline figures that create an ambivalent zone between metaphor and metonymy and that, by its spatial nature, creates the illusion of a synthesis by totalization. [*Allegories of Reading*, pp. 63, 63n8.]

De Man attaches the values of totalization and stability and necessity to metaphor and synecdoche, while the latter is for him ambiguously situated between metaphor and metonymy, but closer to metaphor, while for metonymy is reserved the value of chance, contingency, arbitrariness and being “syntagmatically joined by repeated usage and no longer by the constraints of meaning” (p. 66).

This may support the suspicion that the borderlines between tropes or between figures (tropic figures or figurative tropes), not only between synecdoche and metaphor and between synecdoche and metonymy but also between metaphor and metonymy, and between all these figurative tropes and their non-figuration by catachresis (“*non-vraie figure*”), remain, generally speaking, forever disputable; each of these may overlap or intersect the other; there are metonymic metaphors, metaphoric metonymies, not to mention the non-figurative tropes that Fontanier designates as catachreses, which can be either metonymic or synecdochic or metaphoric, and so on and so forth. And each may also function as a counter-figure of the other.

It is indeed to beyond Genette’s view of “happy totalization” or “reconciled system” of “metonymy *within metaphor*” that both de Man and, following him, Culler want to direct our attention: to the subversive, deconstructive or, as I would say, counter-figurative power of metonymy with regard to metaphor. This can be construed in several ways: one is indeed to be found in Proust’s famously erroneous use of the word *métaphore* to designate that which should obviously be designated *métonymie*. A famous example of this is “*faire cattleya*”, the alleged ‘metaphor’ for making love, which is motivated by the incidental fact that Odette wore these orchids fastened into her bodice, and Swann used their sudden disorder as a pretext for a first timid physical contact with her, straightening them for her after their carriage had tilted and they had been thrust off their seats for a moment.¹⁷⁷ “*Faire cattleya*” has of

¹⁷⁷ In *Un amour de Swann*: “[...] les jours suivants il usa du même prétexte. Si elle avait des catleyas à son corsage il disait: « C'est malheureux, ce soir, les catleyas n'ont pas besoin d'être arrangés, ils n'ont pas été déplacés comme l'autre soir; il me semble pourtant que celui ci n'est pas très droit. Je peux voir s'ils ne sentent pas plus que les autres ? » ... Ou bien, si elle n'en avait pas: « Oh ! pas de catleyas ce soir, pas moyen

course no relation of resemblance or analogy with making love (“*la possession physique*”) (if not the famously suggestive visible ‘morphology’ of the orchids, not only the blossom but also the tuberoïds which have their name from the testicle-like shape), rather it is so that this “simple vocable”, as the narrator observes, became part of the private jargon of the lovers, and this happened indeed through the metonymic, contingent *liaison* with the original incident. *Cattleya* and lovemaking *coincided*, incidentally occupied the same space and time, and *coincidence* might well be considered as yet another major designation for metonymy (besides contiguity and/or contingency, “contiguity” as the typo [?] in de Man’s text suggests, and *liaison*, *connexion*, etc.), at least inasmuch as ‘to coincide’ means, among other things, “1. *intr.* To [...] occupy the same area or portion of space”, “2. To occur or happen at the same time; to occupy the same space of time” (*OED*).¹⁷⁸

But despite the certain arbitrariness and contingency that often characterizes the connection by contiguity (or coincidence), the metonymic associations are still relations of ‘dependency’ and ‘inclusion’, since their relation is established within, or in regard of, some specific temporal, spatial, material or conceptual continuum between, for instance, matter and form, form and content, part and whole, cause and effect, and so on.¹⁷⁹ The main difference between metaphor and metonymy may reside in their different relations to reality; the allegedly ‘prosaic’ nature of metonymy may well be due to the fact that it is less prone to “gratuitous fantasy”, as Albert Henry puts it. In his acclaimed study on metonymy and metaphor (1971), Henry accentuates the difference and even opposition of principle between these two types of figure in the following manner:

Dans une certaine mesure, la métaphore fait toujours violence au réel. Par le fait même, elle est plus exposée que la métonymie à la fantaisie gratuite et même à l’élucubration. / La métonymie procède de l’observation objective : elle découvre et traduit un lien qui est dans nos représentations des choses. Elle trouve un garde-fou et une justification dans l’évidence du monde extérieur ou dans des rapports conceptuels

de me livrer à mes petits arrangements. » De sorte que, pendant quelque temps, ne fut pas changé l’ordre qu’il avait suivi le premier soir, en débutant par des attouchements de doigts et de lèvres sur la gorge d’Odette, et que ce fut par eux encore que commençaient chaque fois ses caresses ; et bien plus tard, quand l’arrangement (ou le simulacre rituel d’arrangement) des catleyas fut depuis longtemps tombé en désuétude, la métaphore « faire catleya », devenue un simple vocable qu’ils employaient sans y penser quand ils voulaient signifier l’acte de la possession physique.” *À la recherche du temps perdu* 2. *Du côté de chez Swann. Deuxième partie* (Paris: Gallimard, 1946).

¹⁷⁸ Entry “coincide, v.”, *OED*, 50043544; 11 Jan., 2007.

¹⁷⁹ Cf. e.g. Genette, *Figures III*, pp. 25ff; I disagree with Genette when he distinguishes metonymy and synecdoche, suggesting that dependency and inclusion characterize synecdoche but not metonymy; as for instance Umberto Eco has noted, the traditional distinctions between metonymy and synecdoche are arbitrary and unsatisfying (cf. above). This arbitrariness could be illustrated by comparing two corresponding types of the metonymical and synecdochic catachresis distinguished by Fontanier (“catachrèse de métonymie”, “catachrèse de synecdoque”): “Ces *métonymies du contenant* : La *Cour*, pour Les courtisans ; Le *Barreau*, pour Les gens du barreau, pour Les avocats ; le *Tribunal*, pour les juges qui siègent au tribunal [etc.]”; “Ces *synecdoques d’abstraction* : le *Gouvernement*, pour Les gouvernans ; le *Ministère*, pour Les ministres ; la *Commission*, pour Les commissaires [etc.]” (*Les figures du discours*, pp. 214-215).

acceptés.¹⁸⁰

These features do not prevent Henry from emphasizing the greater demand of inspiration and novelty in metaphor than in the figure of contiguity, which seems to be, in principle at least, more faithful to reality:

La métaphore demande plus d'inspiration et elle ouvre des chemins nouveaux. C'est peut-être la raison pour laquelle les poètes, depuis Baudelaire surtout, n'ont cessé d'exalter la métaphore, ou, comme disent improprement plusieurs d'entre eux, l'image[...]/ Encore serait-il bon de ne pas applaudir trop tôt cette passion aveugle — aveugle au mensonge qu'est la métaphore. L'ironie lucidement extravagante de Lautréamont aurait dû servir de garde-fou : « Et, cependant, quoique je réserve une bonne part au sympathique emploi de la métaphore (cette figure de rhétorique rend beaucoup plus de services aux aspirations humaines vers l'infini que ne s'efforcent de se le figurer ordinairement ceux qui sont imbus de préjugés ou d'idées fausses, ce qui est la même chose), il n'en est pas moins vrai que la bouche risible de ces paysans reste encore assez large pour avaler trois cachalots. » [*Les Chants de Maldoror*; "Chant IV".] [Henry, *Métonymie et métaphore*, p. 64.]¹⁸¹

We might almost replace the word *garde-fou* by the word *contre-figure*, in both of its occurrences here: 1. "*La métonymie [...] trouve un garde-fou et une justification dans l'évidence du monde extérieur ou dans des rapports conceptuels acceptés.*" 2. "*L'ironie lucidement extravagante de Lautréamont aurait dû servir de garde-fou [...]*." Both metonymy and irony can be counter-figures to the "blind passion" and "lie" that metaphor is.

The distinction between metonymy and synecdoche is intricate. Gérard Genette refers this distinction back to a certain history ranging from Dumarsais through Fontanier to such modern authors as Mauss, Freud, and of course, Jakobson. For Dumarsais, metonymy and synecdoche (which is a type of metonymy) are both based on a *liaison* (while 'dependence' applies only to synecdoche) that is neither the relation of *resemblance* pertaining to metaphor, nor the relation of *contrast* that pertains to irony, and by these distinctions all tropes are "subordinated" under the three associative principles of similitude, contiguity and opposition. Fontanier dropped irony from among these principles of tropology, since he considers irony not to be a trope, for it consists of several words (and is therefore a "figure of expression" and not "of words", a "pseudo-trope"). But the notion of *liaison* is less rigorous than the concept of *contiguity*, since the latter term is also better suited to the type of metonymy which is not based on the relation of dependence or, in other words, *inclusion*. So Dumarsais' association of metonymy and synecdoche fits into the characterization of metonymy as a trope of "contiguity and / or inclusion [*les deux relations de contiguïté (et / ou d'inclusion)*]"'. Given that the relation of inclusion falls under the notion of contiguity, namely that it is indeed included among the several acceptations of this term, we may well reduce synecdoche into being a

¹⁸⁰ Albert Henry, *Métonymie et métaphore* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1971), p. 64. The association of metonymy with prose and metaphor with lyric poetry is Roman Jakobson's (cf. "Two Aspects of Language", pp. 91-92, 95-96).

¹⁸¹ Cf. also Michel Deguy, "Citations de Maldoror", in *Figurations* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), pp. 231-268.

type of metonymy. This reduction has often been done, for instance by Roman Jakobson.¹⁸² We do not wish to separate logical connexions from material links, or physical continuity from inclusion in a relational system (for instance a term's belonging to a certain semantic field), and therefore we shall be content with the oppositional pair metonymy-metaphor, the trope or figure of *contiguity* (and *inclusion*) as distinguished from metaphor as a trope or figure of *resemblance* (and *exclusion*).¹⁸³

However, in order not to commit the violence of simplifying things, it must be noted that metonymy is not always conceived in terms of inclusion but, on the contrary, in terms of exclusion. It is Murray Krieger who links metaphor with symbol and metonymy with allegory, referring symbol and allegory to de Man's use of these terms, and he also connects metonymy with "mock-metaphor" and understands allegory as a counter-metaphorical figure.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸² Cf. Jakobson, "Two Types of Aphasia...". Contiguity is a peculiar sort of relation: we might consult the definitions given by the *OED* to confirm this peculiarity. These definitions all apply also to metonymy or *quasi*-metonymy; this *quasi*- is a mark of distinction upon which I would like to insist, in order to emphasize that we are here dealing with a sort of trope, but a *non-figurative trope* in Fontanier's sense, a trope that is not altogether figurative. (However, catachresis, this pseudo-figurative trope, has often the form of metonymy and synecdoche — we reduce the latter to the former — more often than that of metaphor, as it seems; cf. *Les figures du discours*, p. 214: "En traitant de la *métonymie* et de la *synecdoque*, nous avons signalé nombre d'exemples de ces deux Tropes, comme des *catachrèses*, plutôt que comme de vraies *figures*."). Contiguity, in general or in its different acceptations, is a relation which allows *both* for an uninterrupted contact, whether physical or non-physical, *and* a relation without actual contact, touching without touching. Cf. *OED*, entry "contiguity": "1. The condition of touching or being in contact. [...] b. *fig.* Of non-physical contact. [...] c. *Psychol.* Proximity of impressions or ideas in place or time, as a principle of association. [...] 2. *concr.* A thing in contact; a contiguous thing, point, surface, etc. *Obs.* [...] 3. *quasi-concr.* A continuous mass, whereof all the parts are in uninterrupted contact. [...] 4. *loosely.* Close proximity, without actual contact." (*OED*, 5004856. 29 Nov., 2006.)

¹⁸³ Cf. Gérard Genette, "La rhétorique restreinte", in *Figures III* (Paris: Seuil, cop. 1972), p. 26. Genette quotes Freud's *Totem und Tabu*: "[D]ie beiden Prinzipien der Assoziation — Ähnlichkeit und Kontiguität — in der höheren Einheit der Berührung zusammentreffen. Kontiguitätsassoziation ist Berührung im direkten, Ähnlichkeitsassoziation solche im übertragenen Sinne." (*GW* 9:105.) Paying heed to the fact that the verb *übertragen* happens to be a most verbatim translation of the Greek μεταφέρειν, and to the fact that *Übertragung* is often used as an equivalent of the term *Metapher*, we may see that this conforms not only to the general signification of "*sens figuré du mot*" (Genette uses the French translation by Jankélévitch [p. 26n1]), but also to the signification that Aristotle already assigned to the concept of μεταφορά. Metaphor is not just *any* application of a name belonging to something else *whatsoever*, *any* transference from species to genus or from genus to species or from species to species or by analogy *whatsoever*: a certain additional feature of fiction, "pretense", "make-believe" (Turbayne) is required in order that this trope becomes metaphorical (or figurative, as Fontanier would say). — Gérard Genette has his doubts about the legitimacy of including the trope of spatial inclusion in the category of contiguity, and uses the classical example to distinguish the mere physical contact from the properly metonymical feature of contiguity, namely the material relation of *one part to other parts* from the relation *pars pro toto*: "La voile n'est pas contiguë au navire, mais elle est contiguë au mât et à la vergue et, par extension, à tout le reste du navire, à tout ce qui, du navire, n'est pas elle." This splitting of hairs concerning the presence or absence of *physical* contact, to the point of arguing over the absence of contact of the sail with the ship's hull, may seem pettifogging, but it has also an interesting aspect. The metonymic relation of the part *to the rest* characterizes something that we might consider, following Genette's precision of detail but not the vocabulary of his analysis, a *quasi-synecdoche*: any time when a part is detached from an unnamed set that seems to constitute a whole that is in direct contact with itself, we would be dealing with such a quasi-synecdoche. But this also shows that the distinction between metonymy and synecdoche may lead to confusion. As Genette shows, every synecdoche can be converted to metonymy and vice versa. (Cf. *Figures III*, p. 27.)

¹⁸⁴ Cf. *A Reopening of Closure: Organicism Against Itself* (New York: Columbia U.P., 1989), pp. 9, 25, and below. Cf. also de Man's reading of Rousseau in *Allegories of Reading* (p. 210): "With the reintroduction of needs, the relapse into the seductions of metaphor is inevitable and the cycle repeats itself. Needs reenter the

Let us read another passage or two from de Man's reading of Proust, or should we say his *allegory of reading* Proust, in order to grasp these connections: "The superiority of the 'symbolic' metaphor over the 'literal,' prosaic, metonymy is reasserted in terms of chance and necessity." (*Allegories of Reading*, p. 70.) In this scheme "necessity" is on the side of metaphor, and "chance" on the side of metonymy, of course. De Man continues (on p. 70): "Within the confines of the fiction [the passage de Man concentrates upon is the famous reading scene in *Du Côté de chez Swann*, Pléiade edition of 1954, vol. 1:82-88, which was already cited in the passage above], the relation between the figures is indeed governed by the complementarity of the literal and the figural meaning of the metaphor. Yet the passage seems oddly unable to remain sheltered within this intra-textual closure." We skip here to the end of the long paragraph and proceed by quoting the following (on p. 71):

This reversal by which the intra-textual complementarity chooses to submit itself to the test of truth is caused by "the projection of all the forces of life." / Proust's novel leaves no doubt that this test must fail; numberless versions of this failure appear throughout the pages of the *Recherche*. In this section, it is stated without ambiguity: "We try to find again, in things that have thus become dear to us, the reflection that our consciousness [*âme*] has projected upon them; we are disappointed in discovering that, in their natural state, they lack the seduction that, in our imagination, they owed to the proximity of certain ideas ..." (p. 87, ll. 2-7). Banal when taken by itself, the observation acquires considerable negative power in context, when one notices that it occurs at the center of a passage whose thematic and rhetorical strategy it reduces to naught. For if the "proximity" between the thing and the idea of the thing fails to pass the test of truth, then it fails to acquire the complementary and totalizing power of metaphor and remains reduced to "the chance of a mere association of ideas."

In the widely de Manian perspective, metaphor means, among other things, an aspiration to transcend time, to bring two moments together into a supratemporal unity of sorts, a solid "symbolic" unity indeed. The remarks of Murray Krieger (who basically shares de Man's notions of symbolic metaphor and allegoric metonymy) on theological typology (in other terms, prefiguration) are thus, as we shall see in a moment, connected with metaphor, while it is the introduction of both semiotic and temporal distance that introduce the mock-metaphor, the allegory, the metonymy that undermine the typological, prefigurative theologeme associated with metaphor.

But as Paul Celan argues, poetry — "the poem today" — does not seek to transcend time, it seeks to traverse it. The distance is not bridged, it requires a "leap" (*Sprung*). We shall return to this too. Metonymy, or contiguity, implies not only inclusion (as corporeal or spatial connexion, in a logical relation such as causality, or otherwise), but also, on the other hand and seen from another angle, exclusion: the metonymical mock-metaphor or the allegorization of the symbol-metaphor reveals the unbridgeable distance involved between the analogues or elements of juxtaposition.¹⁸⁵ The notion of contiguity allows indeed for both conti-

literary discourse as the aberrant proper meaning of metaphors *against* which the allegory constitutes itself."

¹⁸⁵ On allegory and symbol and their relation to irony and temporality, cf. de Man, "The Rhetoric of Temporal-

nuity and breach of continuity. The metonymic alliance is not the “symbolic” unity but rather the “allegoric” breach of unity, inasmuch as we trust this distinction that connects metaphor with symbol and allegory with metonymy, as in the ring (*sumbolon*) whose halves are separated and remain distinct.

The typographical error in de Man’s text (if it is that), spelling “continguity”, happens to unite these contrasting, if not contradictory tendencies of metonymy and synecdoche: contiguity, continuity, and contingency, all in one “continguity”.

We shall adhere to the *inclusive* notion of metonymy: inclusive *on the one hand*, inasmuch as it comprises both synecdoche and metonymy, or should we say, metonymic synecdoche and synecdochic metonymy, and *on the other*, inclusive since it comprises both material and corporeal, conceptual and linguistic links, such connexions between terms that can be conceived *as included within a more or less solid framework or either material or immaterial relations*; (apparent) metaphors can also often be shown to be motivated by such horizons of contiguity and inclusion.

In his article “The Scandal of Metaphor”, Umberto Eco writes:

As far as synecdoche is concerned, it is spoken of as a ‘substitution of two terms for each other according to a relation of greater or lesser extension’ (part for the whole, whole for the part, species for genus, singular for plural, or vice versa), while metonymy is spoken of as a ‘substitution of two terms for each other according to a relation of contiguity’ (where contiguity is a rather fuzzy concept insofar as it covers the relations cause/effect, container/content, instrument for operation, place of origin for original object, emblem for object emblemized, and so on). And when it is specified that the synecdoche carries out a substitution within the *conceptual content* of a term, while metonymy acts outside of that content [I, for one, cannot quite understand why we should detach, for instance, causality from conceptual content, and it seems that not only *ego* but also Eco finds this problematic, as we see here:], it is hard to see why the part for the whole is a synecdoche and the material for the object a metonymy — as though it were ‘conceptually’ essential for an object to have constituent parts and not to be made of some material.¹⁸⁶

A few pages later Eco points to the metonymic type of relation that supports Aristotle’s examples of the analogical metaphor (the “wineless cup” that stands for Ares’ shield, when we realize that the shield stands for Ares just as the cup stands for Dionysus, and so on): “Cup and Dionysus are commonly associated by *contiguity*, through the relation subject/instrument,

ity”, in *Blindness and Insight* (2nd ed., 1983, *op. cit.*); on poetry’s wish not to transcend but to traverse time, cf. Celan, *GW* 3:186; on the necessity of “leap [*Sprung*]”, cf. *TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 68, *passim*; and below. Murray Krieger’s “Figure in the Renaissance Poem”, in *A Reopening of Closure*, pp. 1-29, will be discussed below. — Gerhard Kurz points out that a symbol is often an *index* and as such contiguous (or more or less continuous: “necessary contiguity [*eine notwendige Kontiguität*]” is Kurz’s term) with what it indicates (take smoke as an index of fire, for example), and also an “immanent element” of a narrative (“*Das Symbol ist ein immanentes Element einer Geschichte*”), while allegory is characterized by an element of discontinuity (*Metapher, Allegorie, Symbol* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988], pp. 76-77).

¹⁸⁶ “The Scandal of Metaphor”, pp. 219-221 (p. 220 contains a large “tree of Porphyry [diagram]”). Cf. p. 246: “As a matter of fact, the traditional rhetoric has never satisfactorily explained why a substitution genus/species (Σ) and a substitution pars/totum (Π) are both synecdoches, while all the other kinds of substitutions (object/purpose, container/content, cause/effect, material/object, and so on) are called metonymies.”

through a cultural habit (without which cup could *stand for* many other objects). [...] And the same goes for the relation shield/Ares.” Yet, the association of metonymy, as a figure of contiguity, with mere contingency (an accidental relation) can be seen through comparing this relationship with the synecdochic relation between species and genus, such as the man/animal relation (in which ‘man’ is a species of the genus ‘animal’, i.e. *Seelenwesen*, a living being): “The case of man/animal presents us with an *analytic* relation, while that of cup/Dionysus presents us with a *synthetic* relation. [...] [W]hile it is not possible to think of a man who is not an animal, it is always possible to think of Dionysus without thinking of cup.” (“The Scandal of Metaphor”, p. 227.) I doubt whether this is that simple, however. Dionysus is not just another fellow who fancies a pint now and then, he is the Wine God. And a writer or poet, *as* a writer or poet, is not thinkable without the pen or other stationery (be it his ‘personal voice’, ‘personal computer’, his ‘lyre’ or whatever); Orpheus would not, *for us at least*, be Orpheus without his lyre or without an essential contiguity *with* his lyre; even when he would be *deprived* of his instrument, he would still be Orpheus the poet, the-one-with-(or without)-the-lyre; Orpheus without the lyre would be a *determined negation*, to use the well-known term of Hegelian logic. Dionysus is unthinkable without his ‘shield’, which is almost a meta-rhetorical trope since it brings this emblematic character into relief. But it is of course true that these associations have nothing to do with a ‘substantial’ truth purified of all conventions, arbitrary performative gestures and accidental attributes. And moreover, all too often perhaps, the fellow next-door who fancies a pint now and then is defined in our eyes by his metonymic emblem, in the non-fictional world as well.

I take three exemplary metaphors from Eco’s article: “She’s a birch”, “She was a rose”, and Malherbe’s “*Et rose elle a vécu ce que vivent les roses, / L’espace d’un matin*”. There are of course several ways to describe these figures. To call her a rose could be, first of all, a catachresis of my vision of her. Or a (synecdochic) metonymy: wholesome complexion instead of the whole complexity. And this metonymy could be analysed into a quasi-literal statement in at least two ways: 1. Her complexion is rose-hued in some very specific manner, albeit this specification is not explicated in this “poem in miniature” (as Ricœur defines metaphor), as it is detached from its possible context. 2. Her complexion resembles the petals of a rose: delicate, semi-transparent, silky, and so on, with reference to both tactile and visual and olfactory sensations; and depending on the context, it might be pertinent to observe that roses also have prickles, and so on. But both of these options show how the metaphor must be metonymically motivated.¹⁸⁷ A girl can be a birch by virtue of her birch-like flexibility, as

¹⁸⁷ Even Max Black’s “man is wolf” is metonymically motivated, since these species stand for a certain common genus or several, not the genus “animal” however, but such “genera” as the supposed ruthlessness towards fellow creatures, and so on. — Why species and genera? One of Aristotle’s most striking examples of metaphor is *old age* seen as *withered stalk*, since these both share *the genus of having lost one’s bloom*. The metaphor instructs our minds through the detour of common genus, says Aristotle. (*Rh.* III, 10, 1410b10–15.) These are not of course ontological species and genera (in the sense of ‘man is an animal’), but rather depend on an abstract logic of invention; and it is also worth noticing that ‘both having lost their bloom’

seems obvious (Eco's subtle analysis will not be commented on here, although we take advantage of some of his insights). But the formality of this explication and of the proportional metaphor in general, in its most abstract formality, could be illustrated by calling a Polynesian girl a birch and a Karelian girl a palm tree. Which is of course possible, depending on the context.

But in a poem, a birch can be something else than a metaphor or symbol; it can even be a landmark on a heart's path:

[...] ein Weg
nach Rußland steigt dir ins Herz,
die karelische Birke
hat
gewartet,
der Name Ossip kommt auf dich zu, [...] ¹⁸⁸

In order to understand this 'image' of the birch tree, or rather the birch tree itself on the way-side of the heart-path, as it were, in order to understand this "Karelian birch", in the context of the poem and these few lines, we should perhaps know that its Latin name is *betula alba*, and thus it corresponds to the last word of this poem: "Alba."

And moreover, this final word and line alludes to a proper name, or actually several: on the site of the ancient town of Alba Fucens there is the small town of Celano, the hometown of Thomas of Celano (Tommaso da Celano, ca. 1200-1255), the probable author of "Dies Irae". Celano's name played a certain role of its own when the young poet Paul Antschel formed the anagram of his name. So it is not only the name Ossip that (one) comes across upon this path. The way to Russia, in this poem, is a path upwards to a heart, or a path that "rises" to a heart. There would be much to say about interiorization ("*Er-innerung*") and "learning by heart", ¹⁸⁹ and about the quasi-metonymic *contiguity* between the heart — the

[ἄμφω γὰρ ἀπηνθηκότα] seems to be just another metaphor that explains the original metaphor. — Moreover, I would argue that even describing one's pain to a doctor by saying metaphorically that "my chest is burning" or that "I feel pins and needles in my arms" is motivated by metonymies, derived from the experience of being pricked by a needle or burning one's skin (these examples are from Eco, "The Scandal of Metaphor", p. 256).

¹⁸⁸ Celan, "Es ist alles anders", in *Die Niemandsrose* (GW 1:284). Trans. John Felstiner: "[...] a path / to Russia rises into your heart, / the Karelian birch / is still / waiting, / the name Ossip comes toward you, [...]" ("It's all different from what you think", in *Selected Poems and Prose of Paul Celan* [New York: Norton, 2001], p. 205.) Cf. Michael Hamburger's translation: "[...] a way / to Russia ascends to your heart, / the Karelian birch tree / has waited, / the name Osip walks up to you, [...]" ("Everything's different from how you conceive it", in *Poems of Paul Celan. Revised & Expanded* [New York: Persea, 2002], p. 195.) Cf. Leonard Moore Olschner, "Es ist alles anders", in Jürgen Lehmann, ed., *Kommentar zu Paul Celans »Die Niemandsrose«* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1997), pp. 340-352, here p. 343; cf. also, on p. 351, the commentary on the final line of the poem, "Alba": "'Alba' sammelt in sich jedoch weitere Bezüge, die sich wohl nicht auf etwas Eindeutiges festlegen lassen." Only a couple of these several interrelations have been mentioned above. Cf. also Barbara Wiedemann's commentary on the poem, in Celan, *Die Gedichte: Kommentierte Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Wiedemann (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 2005), pp. 711-713 (henceforth cited as *DGKG*). — We shall return to some parts of this poem later.

¹⁸⁹ Cf. Heidegger, "Wozu Dichter?", in *Holzwege* (Frankfurt a.M.: Klostermann, 1950) = *GA* 5 [282-285]; cf. Celan, *La bi. phi.*, p. 364, No. 393; cf. Derrida, "Che cos'è la poesia", bilingual (French and English) in

very literal, or at least non-metaphorical name for the invisible interiority of, at least, human beings or living beings in general — the proper name and the path (“*ein Weg*”), and all that travels the path toward the heart, turning inwards. Indeed, it is a question of “contiguity and / or inclusion”, which apply also to the hands and lungs that this poem speaks of. These names and organs and places and things all belong to a quasi-metonymic constellation or configuration of sorts, and it would be misleading to call them metaphors or symbols; even the term metonymy may mislead, insofar as metonymy is understood as a rhetorical figure. We shall return to at least some of the lines of this poem later.

Of the simple beauty of Malherbe’s couplet, “*Et, Rose, elle a vécu ce que vivent les roses, / L’espace d’un matin*”, let us only note that it should be read in its context and saved from being attacked by an army of clichés, *Metapherngestöber*. The context of this piece of Renaissance poetry, the detached lines whose encyclopaedic horizon is always hard to delimit, just as Eco invites us to observe with regard to metaphor, contains also the legendary (and, as such, dubious) anecdote, claiming that “*Rose, elle*” was initially a typographic error replacing the proper name, or rather the nickname given by the poet, Rosette. And “*Rose, elle*” (or “*rose elle*”, or just *Rose*) may thus be read as a metonymy for at least three possible origins: (1) the play of contingency, or chance, materialized in the typo, or (2) the play of the poet, first nicknaming Marguerite du Périer by the name Rosette and then condensing this into just Rose, or (3) the play of the poet with established poetical conventions, for instance a certain pun in a Neo-Latinic poem by Pontano.¹⁹⁰ None of these is simply metaphorical, inasmuch as the intervention of contingency in the form of materiality and chance, as well as the proper name and its metonymies, as well as meta-poetical quotations of established conventions are all liable to undermine the simple, spontaneous or quasi-theological metaphor; on this last, we shall now consult Murray Krieger’s readings of the Renaissance “mock-metaphor”.

METAPHOR RENAISSANCE VS. RENAISSANCE METAPHOR: THE “COUNTER-METAPHORICAL THRUST” (MURRAY KRIEGER)

As an example of the thematization of the resistance to metaphor or a “counter-metaphorical thrust”, in other words “this countermovement that strips and exposes metaphor”,¹⁹¹ a movement that is interior to poetic figuration and metaphor itself, we must consider Murray Krieger’s essays in *A Reopening of Closure: Organicism Against Itself* (1989), a book that

Points... Interviews 1974-1994, ed. Elizabeth Weber (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 289-299, esp. p. 294.

¹⁹⁰ Cf. Eco, *op. cit.*, pp. 250-251, *passim*; cf. e.g. Arpad Steiner, “Et, Rose, elle a vécu ce que vivent les roses...”, in *Modern Language Notes*, Vol. 42, No. 8. (Dec. 1927), pp. 528-529 [JSTOR].

“Metapherngestöber” is from Paul Celans’s poem “Ein Dröhnen”, to which we shall return in detail.

¹⁹¹ Murray Krieger, *A Reopening of Closure: : Organicism Against Itself* (New York: Columbia U.P., 1989), p. 18.

ends with an apology for metaphor (“Stricken by Metaphor”), even though it also problematizes our persistently naïve ways of responding to that figure of resemblance and warns against the “indulgence in metaphor”: “To allow oneself to be stricken by metaphor without recognition, recovery, and retreat is [...] to rest in a state of danger.” He thematizes not only how the metaphor of organicism turns against itself,¹⁹² as the title of his book suggests, but also, taking Renaissance poetry as the source of his examples, the way that literary metaphor turns against itself in a certain way.

The counter-metaphorical movement is, after all, not a matter of some particular decade or era, but may even be inherent to the poetic figure itself. Murray Krieger, who actually considers himself as an apologist for metaphor, uncovers this moment of resistance in Renaissance poetry; it could certainly be shown that this “thrust” is *older* (both historically and logically) than Renaissance and belongs to the very nature, to the very birthright of the trope or figure called metaphor. First of all, the counter-metaphorical thrust realizes itself in a text, in an ironical context of a given poem, for instance in a Renaissance poem that uses the Christian tropes par excellence in an unorthodox manner, in bad faith, so to say.

Krieger, interested in the theological ground for the organicist metaphor (and not the biological, as he says), uncovers a certain radical interpretation of the symbol-oriented notion of metaphor in religious discourse:

This semiotic preference of symbol to allegory carries with it a definition of metaphor as the one figure that captures all originally external things within itself and, having transformed them, identifies them with (and within) itself. Of course, this is to speak of metaphor in the most radical sense (in contrast to simile or analogy or, more currently, metonymy). It requires, in its quest for verbal presence, a total identity of the two elements collapsed into the figure instead of settling for mere similarity, which permits difference as well as similarity to remain as characteristics of the two elements, still grasped as two, with some remainder — large or small — incommensurate and so unabsorbed. [*A Reopening of Closure*, p. 6.]¹⁹³

This “most radical” conception of metaphor implies a “total collapse of semiotic distance in the miraculous transformation that permits an identity of presences”; this identity is indeed like the “presence of God in the historical creature of Christ, like that of His body and His blood in bread and wine” (pp. 6ff). But this radical Christian sacramental metaphor, “metaphor in its original theological form” (p. 7), should be distinguished from its literary, profane counterpart. Inasmuch as the “model” is borrowed from the realm of faith and applied to the

¹⁹² “We must remember [...] that organicism begins and ends as metaphor. It lives and thrives because it takes itself as metaphor seriously — which is to say literally — and it is deprived of its power by those who look into its metaphor and unground it, often because of their own political motives that turn into their own metaphors.” (*A Reopening of Closure*, p. 5.) The expressions “counter-metaphorical thrust” and “this countermovement that strips and exposes metaphor”, corresponding to “mock-metaphor”, appear on pp. 15, 18, 75, and the final chapter, “Stricken by Metaphor”, is on pp. 57-84; the sentences, just quoted, on the “indulgence in metaphor” are on pp. 57, 59.

¹⁹³ Cf. p. 29n6: “I hope it is evident that I use ‘duality’ in opposition to ‘unity’ to signify the divided consciousness we associate with metonym in contrast to metaphor, [...]”

secular literary use, the “distance is in part — even if grudgingly — restored to consciousness once the same principle of metaphor is taken out of the literally Christian sign-system and is applied to an analogous profane structure that the poet uses as if it was the religious one” (p. 8).¹⁹⁴ The failure to distinguish this sacralizing and literalizing of metaphor from the “de-sacralizing” of this model, namely from “the imposition of the metaphorical structure upon unworthy materials — perhaps materials arousing skepticism rather than inspiring faith”, may underlie, according to Krieger, the modern or post-modern anti-organicist critique (p. 8): “I believe that, to some extent, the partly inaccurate grounds for the dismissal of the organic tradition in recent years can be traced to the failure to distinguish between the theological semiotic and the secular borrowing of certain elements from the theological semiotic.” The assumption behind the “charge of the sacralization of poetry” is that “such borrowing must be uncritical and blind”. In the figure of Renaissance poetry, which is the announced subject of Krieger’s chapter, this is not always the case. The metaphor is borrowed from the theological tradition, but this borrowing is “a borrowing with a difference (or with an awareness of difference), a borrowing that often is conscious of — and even exploits — the consequences of a semiotic built out of the loss of theological substance” (p. 8).¹⁹⁵

In defining metaphor “within its theological origins”, Krieger of course relates this originality to Renaissance poetry; the historical origins of the concept of metaphor are pre-Christian and not theological, of course. On the other hand, if the “semiotic distance” is, if only “in part”, “*restored* to consciousness” through secularization, it must have already belonged to the consciousness of distance, presupposed and not precluded by metaphor. Inasmuch as “some semiotic distance has been inserted when the metaphor is borrowed for profane uses” (p. 9), this insertion can only be a re-insertion, a restitution of the property that has been appropriated from the rhetorico-poetical metaphor by the non-profane discourse. A re-appropriation of the inappropriateness that was metaphor’s property in the first place.

But wasn’t the desire for Real Presence and the quasi-religious yearning for an imaginative truth higher than the scientific truth inscribed on the structure of metaphor as its origi-

¹⁹⁴ Cf. on p. 7: “As Christ is literalized in the world and the eternal Christian pattern is actualized in the finitude and temporal sequence of human history, so the metaphor comes literalized in the poem — and, for the critic, the metaphor of the poem as organism itself becomes literalized in organic theory, which uncritically accepts the mystification. [...] The typological habit urges the reader to see every textual event doubly (at least), both as an unrepeatable chunk of world history caught in the stream of time and as an element in a fixed pattern that, though transcendent, is immanently — and thus always — present in history. [...] As with the several figures of the Old Testament fulfilled in the one Christ story of the New, the historical figure, existentially trapped in the unredeemable birth-to-death sequence of the single life, is metaphorically ‘figured’ as part of an ever-redeeming design whose fulfillment is both later and — in the typological scheme — already now. The figure is only an historical cipher and yet it is also *in* the fulfillment that converts mere figure into typological *figura*.” (By “typological *figura*” Krieger means the theological notion of “type”, *typus* [see the entries “type, *n*” and “figura” in the *OED*], i.e. “the several figures of the Old Testament fulfilled in the one Christ story of the New” [p. 7]).

¹⁹⁵ Cf. p. 57: “[E]ven the poets celebrating the possibilities of secular love felt the need to open metaphor up to the skepticism of difference, though only while their typological imagination dwelled on the power of poetic language to produce identity.”

nal possibility? Well before the Christian discourse adopted this form of proportional analogy — the gift of metaphor originally defined and also declined by Aristotle — might not this figure of all figures already have treasured within itself a dream of literality more than literal, a hyper-propriety of sorts?

Whatever the answer might be to these questions, inasmuch as metaphor depends upon a “conviction of identity [and] the elimination of all semiotic distance between two entities, so that they exchange properties and are confounded as one thing”, and this transubstantial model is then carried over to the “analogous profane structure[s]” (pp. 8-9), we must ask with Krieger:

How, then, can we still see it as metaphor? [...] How, then, in the profane adaptation, can the perceived awareness of the borrowings of metaphoric form and its imposition on non-sacred materials in order to bestow a magic upon them — how can this awareness help but sponsor a scepticism that would preclude the metaphoric effect and move us from metaphor to metonym or, as Paul de Man puts it, from symbol to allegory? [*A Reopening of Closure*, p. 9]

Krieger’s own response to this question is this (still on p. 9):

I want to argue for a criticism that, confronted by such profane poems [a Petrarchan sonnet, for example], responds at once to the sense of metaphoric identity *and* to the awareness of semiotic distance that should preclude metaphor. Yet in these cases the two responses, instead of creating a mutual blockage, reinforce one another. In accord with such a criticism, we would feel the power of metaphor even while, with the poem’s encouragement, we would feel the inappropriateness of the application.

Whereas the sacralized metaphor, motivated by the “quest for verbal presence”, would imply a transubstantiation of sorts, word become flesh and flesh become word (“a total identity”), the desacralized literary metaphor implies a “counter-metaphorical thrust”, a resistance to identification. Of course, there are at least as many different views of religious figures of speech as there are those of the Eucharist. Faith in metaphor need not imply reading literally; to the contrary, Saint Augustine warns us of taking the metaphors of Christian literature carnally (*carnaliter*); we must not confuse the spiritual, i.e. figurative meaning with its literal, carnal, mundane counterpart.¹⁹⁶ Yet, even a sort of transubstantialist or consubstantialist notion of the connexion between word and flesh, a metonymical connexion of sorts between the poetic word and not only materiality but even corporeality, can be counter-figurative. We

¹⁹⁶ Cf. *De Doctrina Christiana*, ed. and trans. R. P. H. Green (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 23, 141, 147, 171 (1.24; 3.20; 3.33; 3.87; 3.114), et *passim*. The secular metaphor “permits difference as well as similarity to remain as characteristics of the two elements [brought together or compared], still grasped as two, with some remainder” (Krieger, *loc. cit.*). Even to the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation belong “bread and wine remaining”, but only as “appearances” and “accidents” of the true substance, cf. *OED*, entry “transubstantiation”: “2. The conversion in the Eucharist of the whole substance of the bread into the body and of the wine into the blood of Christ, *only the appearances (and other ‘accidents’)* of bread and wine remaining: according to the doctrine of the Roman Church.” (*OED*, 50256577. Accessed Nov. 2006. Emphases added.)

shall return to this strange quasi-metonymic counter-figure later. But before that, let us continue reading Krieger's remarkable book consisting of his three Wellek Library Lectures of 1988.

Krieger reads, in the first lecture we have been quoting ("Figure in Renaissance Poem as Bound and Unbounded"), sonnets by Edmund Spenser, Sir Phillip Sidney and William Shakespeare. While the Mariolatric Spenser (cf. Krieger, pp. 13ff), "sometimes too soberly and singlemindedly Platonic to mock his metaphor", "yields to his metaphor without resistance, unconcerned about the friction between chastity and desire", and "fails to recognize the mock-metaphor already present in the secular adaptation of Christian metaphor", Sidney's "counter-metaphorical thrust is much keener": his Stella, seen in a "mock-metaphorical perspective, [...] is no more than a projected sign that represents his desire to see her as a star, a desire that is realized as for him in his mystified rapture she becomes this star", while yet, "the invocation of the very name 'Stella' produces a magic nominalism, as into the name the sacred person is incarnated", and thus Sidney writes in a "half-idolatrous, half-comic" fashion of his muse (cf. e.g. this first line: "When Nature made her chief work, Stella's eyes"; or this: "Queen Virtue's court, which some call Stella's face"), and we readers, "we feel, and are meant to feel, the extent to which the metaphor is a mistake, even a silly mistake".¹⁹⁷ The ambivalent metaphor, hyperbole exceeding itself on the verge of irony, is a counter-figure to the excessively single-minded metaphor.

When it comes to Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, Krieger argues that they often follow "the same model of total metaphorical union that we have observed in Spenser and Sidney, and with most serious effects"; he also recognizes a sort of "typological model" in them, "with the beloved functioning as the fulfilment of earlier figures". Sonnet 31 ends with the following couplet: "Their images I lov'd I view in thee, / And thou — all they — hast all the all of me." Yet, the parallel scheme of prefiguration in Sonnet 106, in which "the sequence of individuals in the written history of our culture ('the chronicle of wasted time') similarly culminates and dissolves in the present beloved", as Krieger describes, ends with the following couplet:

For we, which now behold these present days,
Have eyes to wonder, but lack tongues to praise.¹⁹⁸

Krieger comments on this: "Again the poet is locked in the paradox of language as both magical and deficient." A couple of paragraphs later, and after having cited Sonnets 113-114,

¹⁹⁷ *A Reopening of Closure*, pp. 13, 15, 16, 17; Krieger cites Spenser's sonnets 8, 22, and 72, and Sidney's sonnets 28 and 74. We cite *Astrophil and Stella*, poems 7 & 9 (electronic texts in <http://www.luminarium.org/renlit/stella7.htm>, .../stella9.htm. Source of the electronic ed.: J. William Hebel and Hoyt H. Hudson, eds., *Poetry of the English Renaissance 1509-1660* (New York: F. S. Crofts & Co., 1941).

¹⁹⁸ Cf. Paul Celan's translation of this couplet, with a remarkable paronomasia ("Gegenwart [...] gegeben ward" [*GW* 3:347]): "Selbst uns hier heut, den Zeugen deiner Gegenwart: / ein Aug, das staunt, kein Mund, der preist, gegeben ward."

evoking the speaker's eye that shapes to the beloved's "feature" even the "rud'st sight" and "deformèd'st creature", and on the other hand, "flattery in [his] seeing": "Both the metaphor and the collapse of the metaphor are sustained in these poems", and "the newly transformed realities that the metaphor would create are undone in the creating" (pp. 18-21).

The last of Shakespeare's *Sonnets* briefly considered by Krieger, before moving finally to Ben Johnson, in the chapter we have been following, is Sonnet 105. Peter Szondi's great essay on Celan's translation of this poem cannot be ignored; Krieger does not mention this text in his lecture, but I must make a few remarks. Szondi shows how in this sonnet a shift from description to performance takes place: "Celan's language does not speak *about* something, but 'speaks' itself."¹⁹⁹ This means also a radical shift of focus with regard to figuration, too: in the translation, Celan neither describes things through rhetorical figures nor simply renounces them, but directs the attention to the act of figuration, "forging together [*zusammenschmieden*]", instead of composing verse upon some already extra-textually existing compound of virtues. The difference is most aptly displayed by the difference between the closing couplets, first by Shakespeare:

'Fair, kind, and true' have often liv'd alone,
Which three till now never kept seat in one.

And then by Celan:

»Schön, gut und treu« so oft getrennt, geschieden.
In Einem will ich drei zusammenschmieden.

In the original, the "now" refers to the "fair friend" whose constancy Shakespeare praises, by the verse that is *confined* to the friend's constancy, his "wondrous excellence" in being "fair, kind, and true" ("my verse, to constancy confin'd"), but Celan's verse is, instead of such a prescribed bonding to what is being described, "sheltered in constancy": "*In der Beständigkeit, da bleibt mein Vers geborgen.*"²⁰⁰ Perhaps some might say that Celan's translation fails to be fair, kind and true to the original; but it is indeed true in a Celanian way: "*Abtrünnig erst bin ich treu.*" (GW 3:56.)

From Krieger's book we shall only cite a few of his concluding remarks for the first lecture:

As viewed from within the sacralizing figure, there are two elements that must be seen to fuse into the incarnating presence that obliterates the difference and distance between them. But, in stimulating our continuing awareness of that difference between the two, two other elements arise, each seeking to command the action at the

¹⁹⁹ "The Poetry of Constancy: Paul Celan's Translation of Shakespeare's Sonnet 105", trans. Harvey Mendelsohn, in Peter Szondi, *Celan Studies*, trans. Susan Bernofsky and H. Mendelsohn (Stanford: Stanford U.P., 2003), pp. 1-26, here p. 13. Original German version "Poetry of Constancy — Poetik der Beständigkeit: Celans Übertragung von Shakespeares Sonett 105" (1971), in *Schriften* 2, ed. Jean Bollack et al. (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1978), pp. 321-344.

²⁰⁰ Cf. Szondi, *Celan Studies*, p. 26.

expense of the other [...]. Indeed, as in allegory, there is a residue of inappropriateness as we apply the action to either, sensing it to belong exclusively to the other. In this second, de-sacralizing mode the interplay between tenor and vehicle in the metaphor (or mock-metaphor) makes the two both interchangeable and mutually exclusive. [*A Reopening of Closure*, pp. 24-25.]

This other pair of elements, actually a virtual second pair (“I concede”, Krieger writes, “that these are not really four elements but only two that I am asking you to consider in two very different ways”), represents the counter-metaphorical thrust within the structure of the metaphor or mock-metaphor, the allegorico-metonymic resistance to the totalizing tendency of the metaphor understood as a “sacralizing figure”.

As our focus alternates from one to the other and back again, the disjunction between them is not bridged: with the poem’s surreptitious encouragement, we do not stop comparing the two elements, so that we cannot overcome our sense of their incommensurability. [...] So what we have, as we pursue both modes, which continually double back upon one another, is — in effect — four elements, one pair functioning within the urge toward metaphorical fusion and the other pair, as if in mockery of the first, functioning within the urge toward a mutual exclusion that seems metonymic. Yet we do well to sustain both pairs, seeing each as the shadow seeking a reality that would efface the other. [*A Reopening of Closure*, p. 25.]²⁰¹

The mockery of the metaphorical urge, the comparative perspective which refuses to obliterate the literal discrepancy, functions within the dialectical structure of the figure of resemblance. It is the metonymic or allegorical moment, as Krieger conceives them, within metaphor, even within the ‘symbolic’ metaphor. Indeed, resemblance does not preclude difference, to the contrary, resemblance presupposes difference. What is, strictly speaking, identical (A=A), is not similar, the identical are not *just* similar but *the same*. In the profane Renaissance love poem there is an inherent “concession” that “turns the metaphor against itself” (p. 25). The Renaissance poet introduces “a mocking shadow to the metaphor he appears to maintain” (p. 27). In fact, any metaphor, “because of its limits as metaphor, announces its mock-metaphoric counterthrust” (p. 28). Yet, as Krieger still considers himself a spokesman for the force of metaphor, or at least “for the verbal presence of metaphor in poems”, he maintains that even if language can be seen in terms of discrepancy and metaphor as mistake, “Still, there they stand — both language and metaphor — not altogether deserving our disbelief” (p. 27).²⁰² In the third, concluding Wellek Library Lecture, Krieger confesses his desire:

But I desire the verbal absolute of metaphor in the face of metonymy only while acknowledging the need in poems for each to carry the sense of its becoming its other,

²⁰¹ Cf. pp. 52-53: “the notion of metaphor in general [...] must [...] be subject to its own metonymic undoing.”

²⁰² Cf. pp. 61-62: “[T]he thematics of this opposition between sameness and difference, metaphor and metonymy, achieves a climactic self-consciousness in de Man’s work, especially his earlier work, which is all on the side of metonymy and embattled against metaphor. My entire career, on the other hand, may be seen as an attempt to make a credible case for the verbal presence of metaphor in poems, whatever the thematic gaps, the absences, it covers, and by covering manages to reveal.”

continually carrying out the paradox of a polarity in which the poles become identical without yielding up the opposition of their mutual exclusivity. [*A Reopening of Closure*, p. 62.]

Before concluding the present prolegomenon, let us take an excursion to a couple of sonnets not discussed by Krieger, in order to find another kind of typological prefiguration of sorts (“*ein Dich-Vorgestalten*”, as Celan translates “all you prefiguring” in Sonnet 106), and also another kind of metonymy. First, the famous Sonnet 18, in which figurativity or comparability is explicitly thematized, and also temporality as a condition of possibility for a poem’s “eternal summer”, eternity as a type of temporality:

Shall I compare thee to a Summers day?
Thou art more louely and more temperate:
Rough windes do shake the darling buds of Maie,
And Sommers lease hath all too short a date:
Sometime too hot the eye of heauen shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimm’d,
And euery faire from faire some-time declines,
By chance, or natures changing course vntrim’d:
But thy eternall Sommer shall not fade,
Nor loose possession of that faire thou ow’st,
Nor shall death brag thou wandr’st in his shade,
When in eternall lines to time thou grow’st,
So long as men can breath or eyes can see,
So long liues this, and this giues life to thee.²⁰³

The comparison is at once forsaken and relieved (sublated, *aufgehoben*: destroyed, preserved and lifted onto a higher level). This process of relieving the questionable comparison-to-a-summer’s-day onto the metaphor-of-eternal-summer is touched by gentle irony: since Hegel at least, such a gift of life, a survival in the name (“in eternal lines”), would be considered a gift of death (Mallarmé: “*Je dis : une fleur !*”—Blanchot: “*Je dis : cette femme*”, etc.).²⁰⁴ But the eternity of these lines *grows to time*: ever it grows, through time, “to time” — while it also grows back *into* time. This eternity needs breath and sight. It depends on the life of hu-

²⁰³ 1609 First Folio. A facsimile of the page can be consulted in the *Internet Shakespeare Editions*, http://ise.uvic.ca/Library/facsimile/book/UC_Q1_Son/12/. — Paul Celan’s undated, fragmentary draft translation has been published, in Kathrin Volkmann, *Shakespeares Sonette auf deutsch* (diss.) (Heidelberg 1996), p. 152. It does not contain the three last lines, and I cite here only lines 9-11 which have achieved most complete form:

Doch du, dein Sommer – er ist unbegrenzt
Du hältst das Schöne, es bleibt dein Besitz
Der Tod wirft keinen Schatten über dich.

Cf. the information in the electronic publication of the University of Bamberg, by Christa Jahnson, ed., *Datenbank: Shakespeares Sonette in Deutschland*: “Sonett 18 / (ohne die Verse 12-14) wird aus dem korrigierten Typoskript mitgeteilt von Kathrin Volkmann [...]. Ferner wird das 1.Qu. aus Sonett 6 zitiert (a.a.O. S.154). Beide Übersetzungsversuche befinden sich im Nachlaß Dt. Literaturarchiv Marbach D.90.1.335.)” (<http://web.uni-bamberg.de/split/britkult/links/sonettbiblio/sonette/gebib10.htm>.)

²⁰⁴ Cf. Maurice Blanchot, “La littérature et le droit à la mort”, in *La part du feu* (Paris: Gallimard, 1949), pp. 303-344, here pp. 325, 329.

manity, on men's ability to breath and see *also in the days to come* — and what else would you expect from such a *dramatic* poet as Shakespeare? This gift of life does not so much transcend time as it traverses time, it is eternity not so much outside or above time, but in the possibility of repetition, again and again. This eternity is “so long as”, this ever is an ever-and-ever, and it depends on men's ability to see and speak, read and recite. Who is given life in these lines? An uncanny Galatea perhaps? She hovers in the air (“So long as men can breath”), upon the lines (“or eyes can see”). Breath and eyes give life to “this”, namely the lines of the poem, “and this gives life to thee”. This can be seen to reverberate in a remarkable manner in Celan's poetics, and therefore we can only guess why he never completed the translation of this poem.

Let us also read Sonnet 65, speaking of honeyed breath but also of black ink, and Celan's translation of it (dated October 31. 1963) — we reproduce here the division into quatrains used by Celan:

Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea,
But sad mortality o'ersways their power,
How with this rage shall beauty hold a plea,
Whose action is no stronger than a flower?

Oh how shall summer's honey breath hold out,
Against the wrackful siege of battering days,
When rocks impregnable are not so stout,
Nor gates of steel so strong but time decays?

Oh fearful meditation! where, alack,
Shall Time's best jewel from Time's chest lie hid?
Or what strong hand can hold his swift foot back?
Or who his spoil of beauty can forbid?

O, none, unless this miracle have might —
That in black ink my love may still shine bright.

Nicht Erz, nicht Stein, nicht Erde, nicht die See:
sie trotzen nicht der Sterblichkeit Gewalten.
Und sie, die Schönheit, soll dagegenstehen?
Sie, eine Blume, soll hier Kraft entfalten?

Des Sommers Honig-Atem, hält er stand?
Die Tage kommen tobend angeritten.
Zeit-und-Verfall! Du trotzt nicht, Felsenwand.
Und Tore, ehern, ihr steht nicht inmitten.

Der Zeit Juwel – nein, du bewahrsts nicht auf:
mit eigner Truhe kommt die Zeit geschritten.
Und welcher Hand hält ihre Füße auf?
Sie raubt die Schönheit – wer wills ihr verbieten?

Nein, keiner! Nie! Es sei denn, dies trifft zu:
 Aus meiner Tinte Schwarz, draus leuchtest du.²⁰⁵

Let us concentrate on the closing couplet and a few shifts or transformations between the ‘versions’, here arranged into a clumsy list of pairs: (a) “my love” — “*du*”; (b) “in black ink” — “*Aus meiner Tinte Schwarz*”; (c) “my love” — “*meiner Tinte*”; (d) “O, none, unless ...” — “*Nein, keiner! Nie! Es sei denn ...*”; (e) “unless this miracle” — “*Es sei denn, dies trifft zu*”. And a commentary on these pairs: (A) Shakespeare’s text does not address “thee” directly, but speaks of “my love”. (B) The impersonal “black ink” is transformed into “*meiner Tinte Schwarz*”, and the preposition “in” is transformed into “*aus*”, “out of”. (C) The possessive pronoun “my” shifts from “my love” to “my ink”, “*meiner Tinte*”. (D) “O none, unless ...” has turned into the more emphatic, more desperate-sounding expression with three negatives, approximately translatable as “No, none! Never! Be it then that ...”. (E) And the continuation of this “O none, unless ...”, shifts from “unless this miracle” into something like “should it happen, then, that ...”, ending with the colon that yields a certain emphasis to the last line (“*Es sei denn, dies trifft zu: / ...*”).

The blackness of the ink (“*meiner Tinte Schwarz*”), impersonal in the source text, has become the only possession of the “I” in the translation of this couplet, the only remainder of the fleeting possessions named in the original, the only one besides “my love”, while it is “*du*” that the translation addresses, instead of “my love”. And of course, the black ink is “an objectifying metonym for the poet”.²⁰⁶ But what kind of an object, what kind of materiality is that? And what kind of metonymy? These belong to the guiding questions for our reading of Celan’s poetry and poetics.

The improbability of the “miracle” and the affirmation of the “may still” upon the condition of this miracle, while “may still” has no individual counterpart in the translation, have been aggravated by the emphatic, three-times repeated negation, and the miracle itself has rather been transformed into chance: “*Es sei denn, dies trifft zu:*” — Should it so happen, that, in spite of the odds.... The last word of the translation is “*du*”, and unlike the original text in which the second person address does not occur, the previous strophes of the translation also contain several apostrophes. What might shine forth from the text, from this written address, is the realization of this address. It is not so much the sensible and material abundance, the temporal beauty, the jewel bestowed by time and bound to be restored to its chest, all that was lost to time and that would be miraculously resurrected, but the address itself, the strange interpersonal and inter-temporal relationship that comes to shine, when the reading

²⁰⁵ *GW* 5:334-5. We quote Shakespeare’s text, divided into quatrains, as in the cited volume of Celan’s works.

²⁰⁶ Cees Koster, “‘Aus meiner Tinte Schwarz...’: The Case of the Proliferating Pronouns”, [chapter 8] in *From World to World. An Armamentarium for the Study of Poetic Discourse in Translation* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000); reproduced electronically as a “proefschrift” (http://home.planet.nl/~koste327/proefschrift/chapter_8.html). Koster’s chapter contains an excellent linguistic reading of Celan’s translation of Sonnet 65 and a couple of others, furnished with statistical tables comparing the occurrences of different personal pronouns in Shakespeare’s and Celan’s versions.

eye (*pars pro toto*) meets the blackness of the ink (while the ink can be seen as an effect standing for a cause, or perhaps rather in terms of contiguity: contiguous with the hand, with writing as a handicraft, with the handwork [*Handwerk*] of the poet; we shall return to this).²⁰⁷ The black ink is a mirror of sorts for the eye that shines, but a dark mirror that yields no image, directly, but rather the chance that rises out of the darkness (*“Es sei denn, dies trifft zu”*). This chance of “*du*” is the chance of the wink of an eye, *Augenblick* (“instant”) in which the image of the flower and the honeyed breath are reawakened in another time, even for the briefest and most intimate moment.²⁰⁸ If it should happen that the sight of the ink meets the eye of the reader (*zutreffen* means both a coincidence and hitting a target), this ignition of the gaze might also happen. In another time, the other’s time.

Inasmuch as metaphor may be conceived of as containing both the quest for presence and identification as well as the contrary moment, the ‘metonymic’ or ‘allegoric’ awareness of distance, we may say that a certain *reductio ad absurdum* belongs to the structure of metaphor itself, a counter-reduction to the “metaphoric reductions” (Krieger) that “leave out difference” (Shakespeare).²⁰⁹ And Krieger’s insights concerning the counter-metaphorical thrust

²⁰⁷ Cf. below. The reflexive thematization of writing poetry is of course by no means rare in the sonnet genre, on the contrary, with all the pens and paper and ink and song as its metonyms. This self-thematization is rather a constant in the whole Western canon of poetry, in one way or another, from all the Greek apostrophes to Gods and Muses to postmodern digital poetry.

²⁰⁸ *Atemwende*, perhaps — but the relation between speech and images, visibility and invisibility remains to be carefully examined, with respect to Celan’s drafts for a phenomenology of poetry (cf. below). — In a recent study on the “chronography” in Celan’s poetry and poetics, Sandro Zanetti has brilliantly considered the role of “metonymical alteration” and its difference from metaphor: “»Ich schreibe Gedichte – ich schreibe mit der Hand«, vermerkt Celan in einer weiteren Notiz zum Meridian [*TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 604]. Er weist damit auf eine konkrete körperliche Verbindung des Schreibers zum Geschriebenen hin, die als metonymisch in dem Sinne aufgefaßt werden kann, daß Schreiber und Geschriebenes über die Hand und – dies wäre zu ergänzen – über Schreibgerät und Papier eine nachbarschaftliche Relation eingehen, die entscheidend durch Berührung, aber auch durch (technisch mitbestimmte) Prozesse der Ablösung und Stellvertretung charakterisiert sind.” (Sandro Zanetti, »zeitoffen«. *Zur Chronographie Paul Celans* [München: Fink, 2006], p. 124.) A few lines later Zanetti continues: “Tatsächlich lassen sich Celans Überlegungen zu all dem, was er »Gestalt« nennt, jeweils unter dem Gesichtspunkt eines metaphorischen oder aber eines metonymischen Bezugs zu einer jeweils anderen »Gestalt« lesen, gegebenenfalls bis in die Mikrophysik psychologischer Dispositionen hinein. »Kunst« folgt demnach eher dem Schema metaphorischer Identifikation, »Dichtung« eher dem Gebot metonymischer Alteration. Die Art der Relation zweier Gestalten (deren »Sinn«) ist im Bereich der Sprache von solchen Ausrichtungen abhängig. So gesehen läßt sich Celans Ablehnung der Metapher (auch) darauf zurückführen, daß metaphorische Operationen diejenigen metonymischen Relationen leicht vergessen lassen, die – z.B. auf dem Papier, in der Nachbarschaft von Worten, oder, darüber hinaus, im Verhältnis eines körperlich anwesenden Menschen zu einem ihm vorliegenden Schriftstück – sämtliche sprachliche Prozesse in ihrer medialen bzw. materialen oder korporalen *conditio sine qua non* auszeichnen. Tritt im Gedicht »ein Abwesender« an einen »noch Abwesenderen heran«, dann ist damit allerdings auch gesagt, daß die eben genannte *conditio* eine durchaus vergängliche und veränderliche ist. Das gilt zunächst für diejenigen, die dem Gedicht schreibend oder lesend begegnen. Es gilt aber auch für das Gedicht. Als geschriebenes Dokument kann es vernichtet oder durch Überschreibungen, Ergänzungen, Löschungen und Abschriften verändert werden. Spätestens aber bei seiner Vervielfältigung im Druck erfährt ein geschriebenes Dokument noch einmal eine grundsätzliche Wandlung.” (*Ibid.*, pp. 124-125.) On “alteration”, cf. p. 41: “die fortwährende Alteration, der endliche Gegebenheiten gegenüber anderen endlichen Gegebenheiten jeweils ausgesetzt sind, kennzeichnet diesen [dialogischen] Richtungssinn”. Zanetti also discusses Celan’s translation of Sonnet 65 (on pp. 168-170).

²⁰⁹ Krieger, *A Reopening of Closure*, pp. 74-75; Shakespeare, Sonnet 105, ll. 7-8: “Therefore my verse, to constancy confined, / One thing expressing, leaves out difference.” (Cit. Krieger, p. 22.)

may well help us to understand what Paul Celan, perhaps the most anti-metaphoric poet and poetician of modern times, means by the wish of the tropes and metaphors in the poem to be carried *ad absurdum*.²¹⁰ However, there are also irreducible differences between Krieger's view of the Renaissance mock-metaphor and Celan's view of the essentially anti-metaphoric nature of poetry. We can be stricken by poetry without being stricken by metaphor and without quite "feel[ing] ourselves within its enclosing verbal power".²¹¹

²¹⁰ *Der Meridian* (GW 3:199). As an epigraph to one of his texts on Celan, Jacques Derrida cites two distinct works by Murray Krieger. Actually even the original title of that text, published first in German and then in English, contained a quotation from the end of the first of the three Wellek Library Lectures that we have been reading and quoting here (p. 29): "'A Self-Unsealing Poetic Text': Poetics and Politics of Witnessing", trans. Rachel Bowlby (2000) — here is the first of the two epigraphs: "The world becomes its language and its language becomes its world. But it is a world out of control, in flight from ideology, seeking verbal security and finding none beyond that promised by a poetic text, but always a self-unsealing poetic text." (Cit. on p. 180; the other epigraph is from *Ekphrasis: The Illusion of the Natural Sign*.)

²¹¹ Cf. *A Reopening of Closure*, p. 61: "The counter-metaphorical consciousness of language's continuing incompleteness keeps us open to the differential realm beyond metaphor even while we feel ourselves within its enclosing verbal power."

PROLEGOMENON IV

Let me introduce, instead of theories and themes, methods and hypotheses, this time three minor characters. They appear on stage in the first act, third scene of *Twelfth Night*, and we shall quote an episode consisting of seventy lines; our reading revolves around a question by one of these three characters, “Wherefore (sweet-heart?) What’s your metaphor”, and the other’s reply: “It’s dry Sir.” The discussion of that episode constitutes the first section of the present prolegomenon; the second half consists of a reading of a few poems by Emily Dickinson, especially “Because I Could Not Stop for Death”, and a critique of a certain ‘cognitive’ perspective as applied to this poem.

We are still dealing with the ‘naturalness’ of the gift of metaphor, the natural talent for metaphor. Or at least “almost natural” (as Sir Andrew is described by the lady’s maid Maria in the episode we shall quote and discuss below), for as we can see from Aristotle’s discussion of metaphor, this talent is a token of another, perhaps even more natural, more primordial gift-ness: the eye for resemblances, the theoretical aptitude that is common to both the poet and the philosopher; but it is the philosopher who must observe, not only the similarities but the differences, first and foremost, the distinctions without which there would be no resemblance in the first place, but rather a homogeneous identity. So the gift of metaphor, presupposing resemblance but also difference and a pretense that there is no difference, is an almost natural gift.

“Almost natural” is also abigail Maria’s description, addressed to Sir Toby Belch, her future husband, of his comrade Sir Andrew Aguecheek; and these are the three characters we shall now meet.

“ALMOST NATURAL”: UNDERTAKING METAPHOR AND FAILING TO UNDERTAKE (SHAKESPEARE, DICKINSON)

Parler pour ne rien dire, c'est toujours la meilleure technique pour garder un secret.²¹²

* * *

La fraternité : nous les aimons, nous ne pouvons rien faire pour eux, sinon les aider à atteindre le seuil.

Le seuil, comme il y aurait de l'indiscrétion et de la lourdeur à en parler comme si c'était la mort. D'une certaine façon et depuis toujours, nous savons que la mort n'est qu'une métaphore pour nous aider à nous représenter grossièrement l'idée de limite, alors que la limite exclut toute représentation, toute « idée » de limite.²¹³

“WHEREFORE (SWEET-HEART?) WHAT'S YOUR METAPHOR?” (TWELFTH NIGHT, I.III.15-85)

Three so-called minor characters appear on stage, first there are Sir Toby Belch and his niece's chambermaid Maria, who will in the end marry him; then enters Sir Toby's comrade, Sir Andrew Aguecheek. One of these characters asks: “What's your Metaphor?” And another replies: “It's dry sir.” The third is momentarily more passive, stands aside and listens to this exchange that has puzzled many commentators since then. Maria is the first to speak, addressing Sir Toby, whom she will marry in the end:

Ma[ria]. That quaffing and drinking will vndoe you: I heard my Lady talke of it yesterday: and of a foolish knight that you brought in one night here, to be hir woer
To[by]. Who, Sir Andrew Ague-cheeke?
Ma. I he.
To. He's as tall a man as any's in Illyria.
Ma. What's that to th'purpose?
To. Why he ha's three thousand ducates a yeare.
Ma. I, but hee'l haue but a yeare in all these ducates:
 He's a very foole, and a prodigall.
To. Fie, that you'l say so: he playes o'th Viol-de-gam-boys, and speaks three or four languages word for word without booke, & hath all the good gifts of nature.
Ma. He hath indeed, almost naturall: for besides that he's a foole, he's a great quarreller: and but that hee hath the gift of a Coward, to allay the gust he hath in quarrelling, 'tis thought among the prudent, he would quickly haue the gift of a graue.
Tob. By this hand they are scoundrels and substractors that say so of him. Who are they?

²¹² Jacques Derrida, *Donner la mort* (Paris: Galilée, 1999), p. 87.

²¹³ Maurice Blanchot, *Le pas au-delà* (Paris: Gallimard, 2002, first publ. 1973), p. 75. The most fortunate translation of the title is, as far as I know, not *Step Not Beyond*, but the one suggested by Jari Kauppinen: “The Step Beyond Nothing”.

Ma. They that adde moreour, hee's drunke nightly
in your company.

To. With drinking healths to my Neece: Ile drinke
to her as long as there is a passage in my throat, & drinke
in Illyria: he's a Coward and a Coystrell that will not
drinke to my Neece, till his braines turne o'th toe, like a
parish top. What wench? *Castiliano vulgo*: for here coms
Sir Andrew Agueface.

Enter Sir Andrew.

And[rew]. Sir Toby Belch. How now sir Toby Belch?

To. Sweet sir Andrew.

And. Blesse you faire Shrew.

Mar. And you too sir.

Tob. Accost Sir *Andrew*, accost.

And. What's that?

To. My Neeces Chamber-maid.

And. Good Mistris accost, I desire better acquaintance

Ma. My name is *Mary* sir.

And. Good mistris *Mary*, accost.

To. You mistake knight: Accost, is front her, boord
her, woe her, assayle her.

And. By my troth I would not vndertake her in this
company. Is that the meaning of Accost?

Ma. Far you well Gentlemen.

To. And thou let part so Sir Andrew, would thou
mightst neuer draw sword agen.

And. And you part so mistris, I would I might neuer
draw sword agen: Faire Lady, doe you thinke you haue
fooles in hand?

Ma. Sir, I haue not you by'th hand.

An. Marry but you shall haue, and heeres my hand.

Ma. Now sir, thought is free: I pray you bring your
hand to'th Buttry barre, and let it drinke.

An. Wherefore (sweet-heart?) What's your Meta-
phor?

Ma. It's dry sir.

And. Why I thinke so: I am not such an asse, but I
can keepe my hand dry. But what's your iest?

Ma. A dry iest Sir.

And. Are you full of them?

Ma. I Sir, I haue them at my fingers ends: marry now I let go your hand, I am barren.

*Exit Maria*²¹⁴

We shall stop here briefly and proceed with the few remaining lines in a moment. Maria entertains no high opinion of Sir Andrew, and perhaps Sir Toby fears that the “wench” might let her contempt show to “Sir Andrew Agueface” and therefore requests *Castiliano vulgo*, whatever that be (perhaps “common Spanish” as has been suggested, although this is not the only conjecture).²¹⁵ Apparently her countenance does betray her preconception, to the extent that

²¹⁴ Act I, Sc. III, ll. 15-77. *A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare, edited by H.H. Furness. Vol. XIII: Twelfth Night, or, What You Will. 7th Impression* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1901).

²¹⁵ “Common Spanish”, i.e. “familiar language”, is Halliwell’s suggestion; cit. Furness, *op. cit.*, p. 37; but cf.

Sir Andrew greets her as “faire Shrew”, after Sir Toby has replied to his question “What’s that?” that the object of the question is Sir Toby’s niece’s chambermaid. Sir Toby’s reply, as well as Sir Andrew’s question, could in principle be understood to concern either Maria’s person or the word “accost”, and Sir Andrew decides to take it both ways. The seeming brutality of Sir Andrew’s “what” (the first of his three “whats” in this episode, besides the question: “Is that the meaning of Accost?”) and “that”, the interrogation taken to concern Maria’s person, may have been customary of Shakespeare’s day and his plays, but it also adds to the fruitful equivocality of the episode; in any case, Sir Andrew’s straightforward lack of delicacy is well exhibited, if not otherwise, then at least by his “undertaking” of the word “accost”. He “would not undertake her in this company”.²¹⁶ But he would indeed like to undertake, namely understand the meaning, the “what” and the “wherefore” of her metaphor, when she bids him to bring his “hand to the buttery-bar, and let it drink”.

As it is in the case of the ambiguous reference of Sir Andrew’s “What’s that?”, again when he asks, “Wherefore (sweet-heart?) What’s your Metaphor?”, the subject of Maria’s reply, “It’s dry sir”, is ambiguous: it might mean either Sir Andrew’s hand or Mary’s metaphor, and this latter possibility seems to be confirmed by her next reply: “A dry iest Sir.” Sir Andrew’s question “What’s your Metaphor?” seems to presuppose the possibility of translating metaphor into “familiar language” (*Castiliano vulgo*, if you will, “common Spanish”), here the supposed metaphor upon which “thought is free: I pray you bring your hand to’t Buttry barre, and let it drinke”. But the chambermaid seems only to suspend her explanation by referring to his “dry hand”. This “jest of a *dry hand*”²¹⁷ would, according to Kenrick, cited by Furness, be explained by proverbial usage: “The ‘bringing the hand to the buttery-bar, and letting it drink’ is a proverbial phrase among forward Abigails, to ask at once for a kiss and a present.”²¹⁸ But perhaps this abigail Mary is not as forward as that? In any case, Kenrick continues: “Sir Andrew’s slowness of comprehension in this particular, gave her a just suspicion at once of his frigidity and avarice. She, therefore, calls his hand dry; the moistness of the

Leslie Hotson, *The First Night of Twelfth Night* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1954), p. 115.

²¹⁶ The seeming brutality of Sir Andrew’s “what” (the first of the three “whats” of his in this episode, besides the question: “Is that the meaning of Accost?”) and “that”, the interrogation taken to concern Maria’s person, may have been customary in Shakespeare’s day and his plays, but it also adds to the fruitful equivocality of the episode. (Cf. *OED*: “what, *pron.*, *a.*¹, *adv.*, *conj.*, *int.* (*n.*) [A.I.2] Of a person (or persons), in predicative use [...]: formerly generally, in reference to name or identity, and thus equivalent to *who*; in later use only in reference to nature, character, function, or the like. Also in phr. *what for a...* = what kind of: see *FOR prep.* 19c. [...] 1596 SHAKES. *Tam. Shr.* IV. ii. 62 *Tra.* What is he Biondello? *Bion.* Master, a Marcantant, or a pedant, I know not what. 1604 *Oth.* I. i. 94 *Bra...* What are you? *Rod.* My name is Roderigo.” (*OED*, 00284122. Accessed Sept. 2002.)

²¹⁷ “What is the jest of *dry hand*, I know not any better than Sir Andrew,” admits Dr. Johnson (cit. in Furness’ *New Variorum Edition*, *op. cit.*, p. 42n71).

²¹⁸ In his footnote to line 71 (p. 42), Furness cites W. Kenrick, *Review of Johnson’s Shakespeare* (London, 1865) (the “List of Books” is on pp. 421ff, here p. 424).

hand being a sign of liberality, as well in matters of love as money.”²¹⁹ This explains Maria’s jest only partly. Her words obviously do *not* refer *only* to Sir Andrew’s “dry hand”, since the ambiguity of the subject of “It’s dry sir” is echoed by her next reply: “A dry iest Sir.” If “dry” in this second case would now mean “*stupid, tedious*”, as Furness suggests, alongside her last word, “barren”, which would mean here, still according to Furness, “*witless*” — if Maria’s words would mean *only this* and nothing more — it would underestimate the jestress’s power to “put downe” her *tall* jestee.²²⁰ For after Maria’s exit Sir Andrew is indeed put down, no question (ll. 78ff):

To[by]. O knight, thou lack’st a cup of Canarie: when did | I see thee so put downe?
 An[drew]. Neuer in your life I thinke, vnlesse you see Ca-
 narie put me downe: mee thinkes sometimes I haue no
 more wit then a Christian, or an ordinary man ha’s: but I
 am a great eater of beefe, and I beleue that does harme
 to my wit.
 To. No question.

Maria may well feel “barren” in the sense of “witless” after meeting such a dry-handed and “beefe-witted Lord”²²¹ to be a man of chivalry. But it is rather the jestee who seems to be in need of a drink in spite of — or rather, because of — the dryness of the jestress’s jest. The “metaphor” in the sense of a proverbial phrase destined to have an immediate effect may seem to have missed its point but another jest, a *dry* jest, the figure of *irony* has met its target — if not otherwise, then by “confounding the ear” of the jestee. It seems to have escaped Furness’s attention that ‘dry’ is also lexicalized as an equivalent of ‘irony’ (and, in the *OED* as well), even with specific reference to Maria’s use of the word in our episode.²²² By the word “dry” Maria affirms the ironical character of her jest, as she probably never truly expected Sir Andrew to respond to her proverbial “metaphor” with “a kiss and a present”. The metaphor was never meant to result in a present and a kiss, as it was *dry* to begin with: that is, the figure of *dry jest*, namely irony, was attached to it in the first place. There was never such a plain metaphor in Maria’s line, never as plain as Sir Andrew and also Furness and many other commentators after him would have it. If only Sir Andrew’s confusion — real or pre-

²¹⁹ *Loc. cit.*; Kenrick refers to Othello III, iv, 44 (cit. Furness, *loc. cit.*).

²²⁰ As Sir Andrew allegedly is “as tall a man as any’s in Illyria”, i.e. wealthy, Maria’s “bring your hand to the buttery-bar and let it drink” may be taken to jest upon his “tallness”, too, tallness both physical and economic. I am grateful to Jeremy Dallyn for this suggestion.

²²¹ “SHAKES. *Tr. & Cr.* II. i. 14 Thou mungrel *beefe-witted Lord” (cit. *OED*, 00019354). “Beef-eater” is of course generally a well-known and traditional epithet of an Englishman, also used by Saint-Preux in Rousseau’s *Nouvelle Héloïse*: “Vous autres Anglais, grands mangeurs de viande, avez dans vos inflexibles vertus quelque chose de dur et qui tient de la barbarie.” (IV partie, lettre X à Milord Edouard; éd. Michel Lau-nay [Paris: Flammarion, cop. 1967], p. 339.)

²²² “dry, *a. (adv.)* [...] [A.]II. Figurative senses. [...] 14. Said of a jest or sarcasm uttered in a matter-of-fact tone and without show of pleasantry, [...]; in early use, ironical. [...] 1589 PUTTENHAM *Eng. Poesie* III. xviii. (Arb.) 199 The figure Ironia, which we call the drye mock. 1601 SHAKES. *Twel. N. I.* iii. 81[sic? According to Furness’s Variorum edition, quoted above, this should be I.iii.71 & 74], I. v. 45 [Variorum: II. 42-43: “for giue the dry foole drink, then is the foole not dry”].” (*OED*, 00070347, Sept. 2002; cf. the other note below on “dry”).

tense — on the “wherefore” of her proverbial metaphor would first have given “her a just suspicion at once of his frigidity and avarice” she could not call her metaphor or her jest “dry”: only the probability of his “dry hand” in the first place makes it possible that her metaphor-jest is “dry” in another sense.

“Dry” would mean here, ambiguously, at least two things: both avarice, or here rather poverty resulting from the opposite of avarice in certain matters, and irony. Maria does not *only* call *his hand* dry, since her “metaphor” was not a simple metaphor in the first place. The “metaphor” was already *dry* when she expressed it, since she already was suspicious of Sir Andrew’s “dry hand”, its dryness, or what Furness calls his avarice, resulting from his prodigality: he would soon, if he were not a coward — if he had not the “almost natural” gift of cowardice — be killed in a duel and “have the gift of a grave”, since he would, “there being no assets for funeral expenses, be buried as a *pauper*, — at the cost of the *parish*”, due to his dispensation of his patrimony, as one of Furness’ footnotes explains.²²³ Of course, in playing with the proverb (if it is that, or only that) Mary takes the risk that Sir Andrew catches the proverbial meaning and actually courts her by a kiss on the hand and a present, or perhaps returns with some ironic gesture, although this is unlikely from Sir Andrew, who “always enjoys a joke, but never understands it”.²²⁴ Would that be the case, despite the improbability, there would have been the risk that the dry metaphor may be taken *simply* as a metaphor and that Sir Andrew takes action accordingly, or, on the other hand, that he *does* “undertake” (i.e. understand) the irony of her *dry* metaphor and responds to it accordingly — perhaps by *dryly* kissing her hand and giving her some *ironic* present.

But what about Maria’s last word before her exit? Is “barren” not yet almost an extra synonym for “dry”?²²⁵ The strange series of *dry* — *dry* — *barren* should merit our attention in the latter part of this episode. She is by no means short of jest, as we see, she has them at her fingers’ ends — she has the “foole in hand”, the jestee, without whom there would be no jest at all. Why should she say she’s barren now? Obviously because she has run out of jest as soon as she lets go of the jestee’s hand and leaves the company, as she just does: “[...] now I let go your hand, I am barren.” The jestress runs out of jest as soon as she lets go of the “foole in hand”, for she knows that there is no jest without jestee. But what if she meant it more literally — not *quite* but somewhat *more* literally and, if not *less* metaphorically, then metaphorically in another sense, at least so that to replace the word “barren” by some synonym, such as “witless”, would more or less disturb the scene? To give herself as dry and bar-

²²³ *Twelfth Night*, ed. Furness, p. 34, note to line 33.

²²⁴ Cf. Hotson, *The First Night of Twelfth Night*, p. 11.

²²⁵ *OED*: “dry, *a. (adv.)* [...] [A.]II. Figurative senses. [...] 15. a. Yielding no fruit, result, or satisfaction; barren, sterile, unfruitful, jejune. [...] *Obs.* [...] b. Of persons: Miserly, stingy; reserved, uncommunicative. (Cf. 4.) *Obs.* [...] 1611 COTGR. s.v. *Acquests*, He is but a drie fellow, there is nought to be got by dealing with him. [...] [Cf.] 4. a. [...] 1642 FULLER *Holy & Prof. St.* IV. xiii. 304 It must be a dry flower..out of which this bee sucks no honey. [...] b. *spec.* Of cows, sheep, etc.: Not yielding milk.” (*OED*, 00070347. Accessed Sept. 2002.)

ren — to present herself as being that — would have been Maria's way out of the situation, out of the situation with this beef-witted "foole in hand", while all the while retaining the ambiguity of the subject of being "dry" and "barren". To finish by claiming that she is "barren" is to claim, at once, that now she will be short of her dry jest as she lets go of the jestee — the handful of jest in Sir Andrew's character — and, on the other hand, that she wilfully declines to have such an intercourse of meaning that would be expected from such a metaphorical proverb or riddle as "bring your hand to the buttery-bar and let it drink", if this metaphor was not *dry* in the first place and if it corresponded to forwardly asking for a present and a kiss. The *dry* metaphor refuses the performance of such a "wherefore".

Maria plays barren as an animal in danger would play dead, but she plays barren in a disguisedly fruitful way — she will in the end marry Sir Toby. The sense of her metaphor is, to an extent, of secondary importance in the situation. That is, if there is any precise sense to it. But its translatable meaning does not yield its "wherefore", as its purpose lies rather in irony. The metaphor, or the "proverbial phrase among the forward Abigails" as which Kenrick explains it, says very little here, while perhaps articulating something that must be left unsaid "in this company" — it is so ambiguous that it rather protects her person than reveals anything, it is not even *double entente*.

Nevertheless, the episode with its real or pretended *mal-entendu* seems to be supported by a more or less figured bass (*basso continuo*) of *double-* or *sous-entendu*, a horizon of ambiguity: most notably in the play with the word "accost" and in the "jest of a dry hand". Let us suppose that there is a certain unarticulated and even, to an extent and in a certain sense, inarticulatable level of sense — or, if you will, nonsense or absurdity — involved in the figured bass of our *Twelfth Night* episode. Let us imagine the unimaginable, let us dramatize, let us articulate this scene with Sir Andrew Aguecheek, who probably doesn't really articulate, if we are to trust his name. What if Maria would have misheard — or, rather have *pretended* to mishear — the word "metaphor" and the word "jest"?²²⁶ Or if she would jest on the *possibility* of mishearing or misunderstanding them? When Maria replies to Sir Andrew's question, "Wherefore (sweet-heart?) What's your Metaphor?" by "It's dry sir" and then replies to the other question, a variant of the first (since Sir Andrew would only have her jest in the mode of metaphor), "A dry iest Sir" — the previous *double-entente* of the word "accost" and the whole setting taken into account, all the way to the discussion of the "beef" after her exit, and also the assonance of "wherefore — Metaphor" — it might well be that the jestress *pretends* to mishear the jestee's questions as follows, and this is indeed wild speculation: "Wherefore (sweet-heart?) What's your *meat* for? — It's dry sir" and: "But what's²²⁷ your *chest*? — A dry *chest*, sir". The "coarse slang" meaning of the word "meat"

²²⁶ There is no need to suppose that she would not be familiar with the scholarly rhetorical term "metaphor", since a lady's chamber-maid would by no means be uneducated in Elizabethan society (cf. Furness's footnote to I, iii, 51, on pp. 39-40, concerning a chambermaid's social rank).

²²⁷ OED: "what, *pron., a.¹, adv., conj., int. (n.)* [A.II.]17. In predicative use, corresponding to a predicative adj.

was known and used by Shakespeare, as the *OED* tells us (“the human body regarded as an instrument of sexual pleasure”),²²⁸ and “dry” is synonymous both to Maria’s last word before her exit, “barren”, and to “not yielding milk” — therefore our suggestion of the *sous-entendu* “dry chest”. What about the last two lines in the passage, namely “Are you full of them?” — “I Sir, I haue them at my fingers ends”? As we already said, the reply would refer to the “foole in hand”, the jestee who holds her hand and was foolish enough to play with the word “accost” — play with it, deliberately or not. Maria’s affirmative “aye” to Sir Andrew’s question is ironic, too, since “to be full of them” is certainly not the same as “to have them at her fingers’ ends”. She is full of jest only as long as she has the jestee at her fingers’ ends, the fool at hand, so she has “them” not simply *by heart*, as in a treasury always readily at her disposal. Her treasury of jest, the content of her *chest* as it comes to jesting, depends on the commerce with the exterior and on the exposure that necessarily belongs to irony, as irony’s exposure to its own return.

The phonetic variance between “metaphor” and “meat for” is not great, nor that of “jest” and “chest”; these tiny diacritics would perfectly allow for the *mal-entendu* — especially if pronounced by an *Aguecheek*.²²⁹ But to dramatize such a complexity of figures so as to “express”, i.e. “explain the subject”²³⁰ in the very situation would not be the plainest case of *mimesis*. Meat for its master, here “Metaphor” would be: concentrated in this one word, “There is a good deal of meat for the actors.”²³¹ Meat for articulation; meat for the mouth of an *Aguecheek*, the “beefe-witted Lord” to be realized on-stage; meat or rather flesh, body proper, speech organs and gesticulation, not to mention the ear of the listener, the conscious imagination of the spectator and what has been called the subconscious; all these elements must be taken into account in dramatizing the episode. The word “metaphor” as well as the word “jest” would work here somewhat like the eye-rhyme: they would demand a certain looseness of articulation. But even if one were to dramatize the scene with such a silly idea

in direct statement: usually referring to quality (cf. 15) = of what kind, character, or disposition. [...] 1601 SHAKES. *Twel. N.* I. v. 269, I see you what you are, you are too proud. 1605 *Lear* II. ii. 121 What was th’ offence you gaue him? [...] III. *adv.* 19. For what cause or reason? for what end or purpose? why? *Obs.* [...]” (*OED*, 00284122, accessed Sept. 2002.)

²²⁸ *OED*: “meat, *n.* [...] 3] *e. coarse slang.* The penis; the female genital organs; the human body regarded as an instrument of sexual pleasure; a prostitute. / 1595 GOSSON *Pleasant Quippes* sig. B2 That you should couch your meat in dish, And others feele, it is no fish. 1597 SHAKES. *Henry IV: Part Two* (1623) II. iv. 83/1 Away you mouldie Rogue, away; I am meat for your Master.” (*OED*, 00142835, Sept. 2002.) This last quote is spoken by Mistress Doll Tearsheet as she is trying to get rid of the ruffian “Captaine Pistol” in a scene which is much more of an aggressive, offensive scene of harassment than the one between Sir Andrew and Maria: “*Pist.* I will murther your Ruffe, for this. [...] *Dol.* [...] You a Captaine? you slaue, for what? for tearing a poore Whores Ruffe in a Bawdy-house?” (Folio, ll. 1161-9.)

²²⁹ “Elizabethan pronunciation was very little troubled by snobbery”, as William Empson remarks in discussing Nash’s line “Brightness falls from the air”, where “air” may have been misspelled for “hair” (*Seven Types of Ambiguity* [New York: New Directions, 1984], p. 26 [first published 1930]).

²³⁰ Cf. above the excerpt from Boileau and its translation by Soames and Dryden.

²³¹ Cf. *OED*, entry “meat, *n.*”, subentries 6.c. (“*meat for a person’s master*: someone or something intended for a person’s betters, esp. as a source of sexual gratification; someone or something too good to be wasted on a person. *Obs.*.”; cf. above) and 11 (“*colloq.* Matter of importance or substance; the gist or main part [...] 1897 *Westm. Gaz.* 28 Dec. 7/1 There is a good deal of meat for the actors.”) (*OED*, 00304134.)

and yet remain true to the text, one should not overdo it. The moment of sharing Sir Andrew's perplexion, either due to a failure of understanding or to a suspicion of some vague and unmentionable sense, should be left for the audience.

Who would be convinced by such an exposition of the *sous-entendu* in the *double-entendu* yet doubly disguised as a *mal-entendu*, if we based it on the possibility of pronouncing or hearing "metaphor" as "meat for" and "jest" as "chest"? Although no one in the scene said or would say such things aloud, and Shakespeare or anyone else may never have thought that someone could mishear "metaphor" for "meat for" and "jest" for "chest", we might think that "meat" and "chest" do articulate something unarticulated in the whole scene, from Sir Andrew's "What's that?" and all the ado with "accost" and his willingness to "undertake"²³² the meaning of her metaphor in this company without literally "undertaking" her in this company ("Is that the meaning of Accost?"), through the innuendo with "drawing sword" and Maria's reference to the buttery-bar and all her play with "dry" and "barren" to Sir Andrew's affirmation of being a great beef-eater. Such fantastic interpolation of loose articulation would articulate Maria's decline to have such an intercourse of meaning whose code would be set in the key of the former innuendo of "accost" and "drawing sword". And yet, our interpretation may be far-fetched and even ridiculous, as it comes to the words "meat" and "chest": the *dry* jest of irony may always double itself and reflect upon the "Agueface" of the interpreter; we may always find or fail to find ourselves being held at the fingers' ends, as readers and spectators.

Insofar as we ask the text only "what" and "wherefore", as Sir Andrew does, insofar as we focus too exclusively on the meaning and purpose of its metaphor, we may find ourselves being "put down", that is defeated, outwitted, by the more delicate gestures that frame the alleged metaphor and that may render its "what" and "wherefore" dry and barren. We may always find or fail to find ourselves being held at the fingers' ends, as readers and listeners and spectators of such episodes, such "fantasies, more than cool reason ever comprehends", as Hermann Ulrici has reportedly said of *Twelfth Night*.²³³

²³² Cf. *OED*, entry "undertake, v.": "I. *trans.* / 1. a. To take by craft, to entrap; to overtake, seize upon. *Obs.* [...] 3. To understand. *Obs.* [...] [5.]b. To engage with, enter into combat with. [...]" (*OED*, 50265110, last accessed March 2007.)

²³³ "ULRICI, who, in the alternative title [*Twelfth Night, or, What You Will*], verily sees 'fantasies, more than cool reason ever comprehends'. 'This *What You Will*,' says Ulrici (ii, 5), 'refers indeed to the relation between the public and the play, but not, as has been supposed, in the sense quite inadmissible, that the piece was to give and to represent whatever the spectators wished. This is not the case; the play rather creates what *it* wishes, and the better it is the less can that which it gives be different from what it is. [etc.]'" (Furness, p. 6.) It would seem plausible to take the title as a last-minute's tag, perhaps referring to the date of its first performance: "Call it *Twelfth Night*, or what you will."

“[...] MORE THAN COOL REASON EVER COMPREHENDS”

We may extract, for our purposes, two contrasting figures from the above episode of *Twelfth Night*. One is that of Sir Andrew Aguecheek who would “undertake” the other’s figure as metaphor and moreover “undertake” its meaning, its “what” or its “wherefore”, *a.s.a.p.*, in spite of the possible intricacies of the situation, the in-definite irony²³⁴ of the ‘context’ or the possible loss of common code. The other figure is that of Maria who would resist such undertaking while superimposing figure upon figure — the figure of “dry jest” upon the assumed metaphor. Maria’s ambiguous reply would be one way to *decline the gift of metaphor* — the metaphor was already dry, the jest was already dry, since the jestee was already dry. As if it was *his* metaphor in the first place and not *hers* — and precisely this is the case with Maria’s dry jest.

There are metaphors of course. There are dry metaphors and stinking²³⁵ metaphors. There are —

Very General Metaphors
PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS
STATES ARE LOCATIONS
EVENTS ARE ACTIONS

Metaphors for Time
TIME IS A CHANGER
TIME MOVES
TIME IS A PURSUER

Metaphors for Life and Death
LIFE IS A JOURNEY
DEATH IS DEPARTURE
PEOPLE ARE PLANTS
A LIFETIME IS A YEAR
A LIFETIME IS A DAY
DEATH IS SLEEP
DEATH IS REST
LIFE IS A PRECIOUS POSSESSION
LIFE IS A PLAY
LIFE IS A FLAME
LIFE IS A FLUID
LIFE IS BONDAGE
LIFE IS A BURDEN²³⁶

²³⁴ ‘In-definite’: I would call the irony of the situation both definite and indefinite. Definite, because Maria herself declares that her ‘metaphor’ or ‘jest’ is dry, while at the same time holding her jestee at her fingers’ ends by keeping this designation, ‘dry’, ambiguous. Indefinite, because irony may, in principle, always fold back upon itself: Sir Andrew *might* reply wittily, if he only could.

²³⁵ Cf. *All’s Well that Ends Well*, V, II, ll. 4-5 (Folio 2640 ff): “*Clo[wn]*. Truly, Fortune’s displeasure is but sluttish if it smell so strongly as thou speakest of: I will henceforth eat no fish of Fortune’s buttering. Prithee, allow the wind. / *Par[oles]*. Nay, you need not to stop your nose, sir: I spake but by a metaphor. / *Clo*. Indeed, sir, if your metaphor stink, I will stop my nose; or against any man’s metaphor. Prithee, get thee further.” (*The Oxford Shakespeare* [London: Oxford University Press, 1914].)

²³⁶ George Lakoff & Mark Turner, *More than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 52.

This is not some poet's list of clichés that are to be avoided at any cost. George Lakoff and Mark Turner call it “the list of basic conceptual metaphors”; we find these at the beginning of the chapter “Life, Death and Time” of their influential book *More than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor*. Such metaphors cannot be avoided, they are inevitable, as it seems. “Metaphor isn't just for poets”, Lakoff and Turner say. But they also suggest that metaphor is indeed *for* poets, too, and almost all that there is for the poets to use if they wish to be understood: there is a set of such basic conceptual metaphors, and also poets must have recourse to such “basic conceptual resources” that are “available to us all”: “Poets may compose or elaborate or express them in new ways, but they still use the same basic conceptual resources available to us all. If they did not, we would not understand them.” We understand Death the Reaper but we would not understand Death the Baker, which is their example of what “does not seem apt” (p. 26).²³⁷

Lakoff and Turner do allow for “three stances that poets have chosen to take toward [metaphors]”, namely, first their mere automatic versification resulting in trite verse, secondly their masterful combination, extension and crystallization in strong images which would be Shakespeare's and Dylan Thomas's stance, and then there is the third stance, which is to “attempt to step outside the ordinary ways we think metaphorically and either to offer new modes of metaphorical thought or to make the use of our conventional basic metaphors less automatic by employing them in unusual ways, or otherwise to destabilize them and thus reveal their inadequacies for making sense of reality”. This third stance is, according to Lakoff and Turner, “part of what characterizes the avant-garde in any age” (*More than Cool Reason*, pp. 51-52). To *destabilize* the conventional metaphors seems to be the most a poet can do if he or she is not to have recourse to cliché in some way or another. But refusing to fiddle with clichés at all — does this not lead to incomprehensibility? To such figures as Death the Baker?

The figure of Death the Baker is perhaps not as inapt as the authors of “A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor” claim. Actually we can see how this specific figure, this *impossible* “conceptual metaphor” secretly (yet undeniably, I think) supports the following lines of Peter Weiss's play “Die Ermittlung”, inspired by the Frankfurt Auschwitz trials in 1963-1965; yet this figure is not simply a metaphor, and it might be termed allegorical rather than symbolical, inasmuch as the Grim Reaper presumably has a spontaneous symbolical power of persuasion while Death the Baker requires a more complex motivation, a detour across a network of interrelations which is not that of a proportional analogy:

RICHTER

Was sahen Sie vom Lager

²³⁷ The citation has been modified to fit the syntax.

ZEUGE 2 Nichts
 Ich war froh, dass ich wieder wegkam
 RICHTER Sahen Sie die Schornsteine am Ende der Rampe
 und den Rauch und den Feuerschein
 ZEUGE 2 Ja
 Ich sah Rauch
 RICHTER Was dachten Sie sich dabei
 ZEUGE 2 Ich dachte mir
 das sind die Bäckereien
 Ich hatte gehört
 da würde Tag und Nacht Brot gebacken
 Es war ja ein großes Lager.²³⁸

“WITHOUT – THE POWER TO DIE – ”²³⁹
(READING EMILY DICKINSON – A JOURNEY BEYOND METAPHOR)

The first sub-chapter of the chapter “Life, Death and Time” in *More than Cool Reason* borrows its title from the first line of Emily Dickinson’s poem, “Because I could not stop for Death” (No. 712 in Johnson’s standard edition, whose numbering we shall follow):

Because I could not stop for Death —
 He kindly stopped for me —
 The Carriage held but just Ourselves —
 And Immortality.

We slowly drove — He knew no haste
 And I had put away
 My labor and my leisure too,
 For His Civility —

We passed the School, where Children strove
 At Recess — in the Ring —
 We passed the Fields of Gazing Grain —
 We passed the Setting Sun —

Or rather — He passed Us —
 The Dews drew quivering and chill —
 For only Gossamer, my Gown —
 My Tippet — only Tulle —

We paused before a House that seemed
 A Swelling of the Ground —
 The Roof was scarcely visible —
 The Cornice — in the Ground —

²³⁸ Peter Weiss, “Die Ermittlung” [1965], in *Dramen 2* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1968), p. 15.

²³⁹ Emily Dickinson, “My Life had stood — a Loaded Gun”, in *The Poems of Emily Dickinson, Including variant readings critically compared with all known manuscripts*, 3 vols., ed. Thomas H. Johnson (Cambridge, MA: The Harvard U.P., 1955), Vol. II, p. 546; N° 754; henceforth we refer to Dickinson’s poems by their quasi-chronologically ordered standard numbering given by Johnson.

Since then — 'tis Centuries — and yet
 Feels shorter than the Day
 I first surmised the Horses' Heads
 Were toward Eternity.

Lakoff and Turner interpret this poem in their manner. Their manner, to put it short, is to analyse the poem into sequences that refer to a set of what they call “basic conceptual metaphors”. Right after citing the whole poem they interpret it as follows:

In this poem, Death is taking the speaker on a journey, and the first part of the journey reviews the stages of life that one traverses during life's journey. We interpret the children at school as referring to the stage of childhood, the field of ripe crops as referring to full maturity, the setting sun as referring to old age, the dews and chill and the near darkness suggested by the phrase “scarcely visible” as referring to the onset of death, and the swelling of the ground as referring to the final home of the body — the grave, the end of life's journey.

How do we understand so easily and naturally that the sequence of things the speaker mentions refers to the sequence of life-stages, to childhood, maturity, old age, death? The answer, in part, is that we know unconsciously and automatically many basic metaphors for understanding life, and Dickinson relies on our knowledge of these metaphors to lead us to connect the sequence she gives to the sequence of life-stages. As we shall see, we use the basic metaphor PEOPLE ARE PLANTS to understand that the “Fields of Gazing Grain” suggests maturity. We use the basic metaphor A LIFETIME IS A DAY to understand both that the setting sun refers to old age and that the dew and chill and near darkness refer to the onset of death. In understanding the swelling of the ground as referring to the final “home” of the body, we use both what we will call an “image-metaphor” and the basic metaphor DEATH IS GOING TO A FINAL DESTINATION. Let us see how each of these metaphors works in detail. [*More than Cool Reason*, pp. 5-6.]

We shall not follow their argument further in detail now — its main point may already be seen here as they follow Dickinson's poem almost line by line and refer these lines to the few basic conceptual metaphors we so “easily and naturally”, “unconsciously and automatically” are familiar with. Almost line by line, but not quite. Almost naturally, but not quite. To what purpose is it that she “relies on our knowledge of these metaphors”? What is her final purpose besides “to lead us to connect the sequence she gives to the sequence of life-stages”? Why lead us to connect the sequence she gives to the sequence that is already familiar to us through the tradition of “basic conceptual metaphors”? Why this repetition of an age-old sequence?

The poem is at least as strange and as resistant to clichés as *Death the Baker*. First of all, should Death *stop for me*, it would not simply mean that “Death is taking the speaker on a journey” (as Lakoff and Turner would have it), but also that such an event *suspends* both living and dying in an unheard-of way. Immortality — here a ride with Immortality — is suspended between two limits: life and death.²⁴⁰ The next to last ‘metaphor’ in Emily Dickinson-

²⁴⁰ Life and death are also the two limits of literature, as we may gather from Maurice Blanchot's work. Cf. *L'espace littéraire* (Paris: Gallimard, cop. 1955), and “La littérature et le droit à la mort”, in *Part du feu* (Paris: Gallimard, 1949): “La littérature [...] n'est pas la nuit ; elle en est la hantise ; non pas la nuit, mais la

son's "Because I could not stop for Death" is fortunately not filed by Lakoff and Turner under the rubric "A LIFETIME IS A DAY", namely the one on the first two lines of the last stanza:

Since then — 'tis Centuries — and yet
Feels shorter than the day
I first surmised the Horses' Heads
Were toward Eternity.

This seems to *invert* a traditional metaphor rather than to rely upon any cliché. A day does not now feel like a century, as it might do according to a hyperbolic metaphor, but centuries feel shorter than a day — or *the* day ("the day / I first surmised ..."). The turn of speech inverts the cliché, turns it about, or turns it away from the mortal dimension. When can such a 'now', such a 'today' be? The poem is in the past tense all over, except for the "feels" in "Since then [...] and yet / Feels shorter than the day". The structure of the first stanza seems to have certain parallels to the last one:

Because I could not stop for Death —
He kindly stopped for me —
The Carriage held but just Ourselves —
And Immortality.

The inability to stop for Death corresponds to an inability, in everyday life, to "put away / My labor and my leisure too" for such an event.²⁴¹ But is it not remarkable that if I should be taken on a journey the carriage should *stop for* me? And that if I should respond to such civility and accept the invitation, I should "put away / My labor and my leisure too" — that is, also, to stop living the everyday life, which is, also, to stop dying? That not only Death but also *dying* should stop for me?

This figure of Death is kind and civil and not at all hostile. There are other poems which give a certain — ironical yet to an extent obscure — sense to immortality, which seems to correspond to that of *suspense* (No. 705):

conscience de la nuit [...]. Elle n'est pas le jour [...]. Et elle n'est pas non plus la mort, car en elle se montre l'existence sans l'être [*l'existence ... sans l'être*: both of these terms are to be taken in a Hegelian sense], l'existence qui demeure sous l'existence, [...] la mort comme impossibilité de mourir. [...] La littérature est cette expérience par laquelle la conscience découvre son être dans son impuissance à perdre conscience, [...]. L'écrivain se sent la proie d'une puissance impersonnelle qui ne le laisse ni vivre ni mourir : l'irresponsabilité qu'il ne peut surmonter devient la traduction de cette mort sans mort qui l'attend au bord du néant ; l'immortalité littéraire est le mouvement même par lequel, jusque dans le monde, un monde miné par l'existence brute, s'insinue la nausée d'une survie qui n'est pas une." (These extracts are from pp. 330-331, 333, 341.)

²⁴¹ This might bring to mind Heidegger's analysis, in *Sein und Zeit*, of Dasein's "everydayness" and the average inability to face one's own finitude and mortality in the middle of our labour and leisure. But there may be more striking parallels to be found for Dickinson's poetics of immortality in Maurice Blanchot's work. I don't know whether Blanchot ever actually read Emily Dickinson.

Suspense — is Hostiler than Death —
 Death — tho'soever Broad,
 Is Just Death, and cannot increase —
 Suspense — does not conclude —

But perishes — to live anew —
 But just anew to die —
 Annihilation — plated fresh
 With Immortality —

Here Immortality is something with which to “plate fresh” Annihilation, an Annihilation of Suspense, a suspense which *but perishes* — “But perishes — to live anew — / But just anew to die”. This Immortality, or rather what is “plated fresh / with Immortality”, is not a relief from dying but constant suspense of dying and of conclusion.

We might distinguish two kinds of immortality. First, there is the eternal life promised by religion, for which death is just a transition from finite life to another life or an afterlife, a life after death which actually cancels death. Second, there is the impossibility of dying, an impossibility of experiencing death as such, as one's own death; this second kind of immortality is what Dickinson calls “Suspense” and “Annihilation — plated fresh / with Immortality”. Both of these ‘immortalities’ amount to what Maurice Blanchot calls the “impossibility of death”²⁴² — they can both be seen as cancellations of death as such.

There is a very abrupt line which concludes or — rather — *cancels* the conclusion of what Lakoff and Turner would call a metaphorical sequence of life and death (at the very “onset of death”, whatever that may be):

We passed the School, where Children strove
 At Recess — in the Ring —
 We passed the Fields of Gazing Grain —
 We passed the Setting Sun —

Or rather — He passed Us —
 The Dews drew quivering and chill —
 For only Gossamer, my Gown —
 My Tippet — only Tulle —

The strange line “Or rather — He passed Us” is so strange and abrupt (its abruptness is enhanced by the line break, as “The Dews”²⁴³ still belong to the same metrical unit) that the infamous early, heavily conventionalized edition of Dickinson's poems left out the whole stanza that contains it.²⁴⁴ Also Lakoff and Turner pass over it in silence, as their aim is to

²⁴² “De l'impossibilité de la mort, certaines religions ont fait l'immortalité. [...] être homme par delà la mort ne pourrait avoir que se sens étrange : être, malgré la mort, toujours capable de mourir, [...]. C'est ce que d'autres religions ont appelé la malédiction des renaissances : [...]” (Blanchot, “La littérature et le droit à la mort”, in *Part du feu* [1949], p. 339.)

²⁴³ Note the (dead metaphor?) “funeral dew” for “tears” (*OED*, entry “dew”, 3b., 00062774; Sept. 2002).

²⁴⁴ Paul Celan also translated this poem without the fourth stanza, in 1959, from the grossly conventionalized and heavily tampered 1927 edition (*GW* 5:382-3). On this translation and a few others, and Celan's unrealized plans for a book of Dickinson translations on the basis of Johnson's critical edition, cf. Andreas Lohr, “‘Engel in Grau’: Emily Dickinson”, in Axel Gellhaus, ed., *Fremde Nähe: Celan als Übersetzer* (Marbach:

disclose the “basic conceptual metaphors” lying beneath the “image metaphors” of the poem, and because here it seems difficult or unnecessary to make such a move. They had just explained the stanza preceding this scandal as portraying phases of life, and without being bewildered by the *Gazing Grain* (“Wheat that has put forth its grain is mature” [*More Than Cool Reason*, p. 6] — but why does it *gaze*? Wheat has *ears* but does not have eyes, does it?) or by the choice of “metaphors”. Schoolchildren are hardly a *metaphor* to portray a phase of life, at least not in the same sense as the grain and the setting sun would be. Why does the poem stray from such an image of children to those of “the Fields of Gazing Grain” and “the Setting Sun”, which seem to be simply two metaphors of maturity and old age that are almost identical to some examples used by Aristotle (except that in one of Aristotle’s examples, ‘stubble’ stands for old age, and this is therefore a sort of privation with regard to the mature corn and fertility)? Are they metaphors? Are they simply instances of modern usage of ancient metaphors?

Who are the *We* who passed those sights and who are the *Us* that were passed by *Him*? Who is this *He* who passed *Us*? The Setting Sun? This would seem plausible, insofar as the speaker of the poem tells us, in the first stanza, that “The Carriage held but just Ourselves — / And Immortality”, and this ambiguous *Ourselves* seems to refer to the *I* of the poem and to *Death*, the only *He* in the poem until the *He* who passed *Us*. But if “He passed *Us*” refers to the Setting Sun, as it seems, should it not surprise us that the figure of Death, indeed the only ‘He’ the poem has mentioned so far, has now somehow silently dissolved into the background? Into the cooling weather and landscape scarcely visible, the Dews, the quivering, the chill, the grave (“A Swelling of the Ground” — “The Outer Grave — I mean”, as another poem explains [No. 411]) while still, perhaps, sitting silently in the carriage with the speaker?

And why refer the “House that seemed / A Swelling of the Ground” back to “the basic metaphor DEATH IS GOING TO A FINAL DESTINATION” while it is something that “We paused before” and something the speaker precisely remains *without* — *without final* destination, as “the Horses Heads / Were toward Eternity”? The Setting Sun may well be seen as what Lakoff and Turner would call an image metaphor of the nearness of death (since “A LIFETIME IS A DAY”), but *He* (the Sun) passes *Us* and yet no death ensues, but instead, the centuries following the surmise concerning the Horses Heads. Here is Lakoff’s and Turner’s suggestion (that is, to apply a basic conceptual metaphor, something that we usually do “easily and naturally”, “unconsciously and automatically”):

We apply the DEATH IS GOING TO A FINAL DESTINATION metaphor to understand the Dickinson poem as presenting death in terms of a departure from this life and a journey toward a final destination, namely, the grave. The scarcely visible “House” she mentions is her grave, the final residence of the body, in which the body will dwell. The carriage is the hearse, moving slowly, with “no haste”. The gossamer gown is her death shroud. [*More Than Cool Reason*, pp. 7-8.]

The carriage moves with no haste. But it is Lakoff and Turner who move with haste back to the carriage, without facing the scandal itself, the fact that the carriage, with the poem's speaker still in it, the carriage which may well be seen as a hearse, as well as her dress may be a shroud, only *pauses* before the "House" and is therefore *not* moving "toward a final destination, namely, the grave", at least *not any longer*. If the carriage is a hearse, it arrives too late, since the grave is already a mound, piled up with earth.

The authors end their discussion of Dickinson's poem, after enumerating the "five basic metaphors for death that are used naturally, automatically, and largely unconsciously in understanding the Dickinson poem" as "DEATH IS THE END OF LIFE'S JOURNEY, DEATH IS DEPARTURE (an inference from LIFE IS BEING PRESENT HERE), DEATH IS NIGHT (from A LIFETIME IS A DAY), HUMAN DEATH IS THE DEATH OF A PLANT, [...] and DEATH IS GOING TO A FINAL DESTINATION (an instance of CHANGE OF STATE IS CHANGE OF LOCATION)", as follows:

Dickinson extended and composed these metaphors in novel ways. But, though she created the poem, she did not create the basic metaphors on which the poem is based. They were already there for her, widespread throughout Western culture, in the everyday thought of the least literate of people as well as in the greatest poetry in her traditions. [*More Than Cool Reason*, p. 8.]

So this would be Dickinson's stance toward metaphor, namely the stance of extension and composition based upon a few traditional metaphors, and not the stance of "the avant-garde in any age". But what if — what if a poet should give voice to such a question as this one (No. 277, first stanza):

What if I say I shall not wait?
What if I burst the fleshly Gate —
And pass escaped — to thee!

And what if she herself, the poetic voice itself replied, in another poem (No. 1646):

Why should we hurry — why indeed?
When every way we fly
We are molested equally
By immortality.²⁴⁵

What if there were only — what if she surmised for herself only — a survival that is both life and "dying multifold — without / The Respite to be dead"? (No. 1013).²⁴⁶

²⁴⁵ No. 1646, ll. 1-4 of 10. An "unfinished poem", as T.H. Johnson tells us, and: "In the center of the leaf [an unsent draft of a letter] ED wrote 'Tragedy' and underlined it twice." (Vol. III, p. 1127.)

²⁴⁶ It must be said, on the conjectures concerning the inability to die, that I would refrain from claiming that there is no contrary surmise to be found in Dickinson's poetry.

Too scanty 'twas to die for you,
 The merest Greek could that.
 The living, Sweet, is costlier —
 I offer even that —

The Dying, is a trifle, past,
 But living, this include
 The dying multifold — without
 The Respite to be dead.

What if, after the Setting Sun which would be considered the next to last in the sequence of life's and death's metaphors, was not followed by death proper but rather a surmise of eternity in a gown of gossamer, a suspense with no conclusion? What if the *He* who passed *Us* does not *only* refer to the nearest candidate, the Sun, but *at once* — in the very realm of ambiguity in which the poem breathes without breathing, holding its breath as it holds ours, captive, in suspense — *at once* also to the only *He* that was named before the Setting Sun, namely Death? What if Death, while situated in the carriage among the *Ourselves* of the first stanza, and among the *We* who passed the sequence of what Lakoff and Turner would call “image metaphors”, including that of the Setting Sun, was the *He* who passed *Us* in the beginning of the fourth stanza, passed *Us* the mortals and passed what *We* see, and passed also what gazes at *Us*, what *regards Us*, and passed all the personifications and figures of Life and Death, including the Setting Sun who, in the unconscious and automatic, easy and almost natural sequence would precede the black night, “death's second self” (as in Shakespeare's Sonnet 73, which Lakoff and Turner also interpret in terms of cognitive metaphor; cf. *More Than Cool Reason*, pp. 27f)? And what if He (Death) passed even *His* own personification whom we imagine still silently sitting among *Us* in the carriage, among the *Ourselves* and Immortality? What if *He* passed beyond metaphor? What if Life — or at least Survival — just passed the life and death of metaphor?

Dickinson's extraordinary poetics of Immortality or Suspense, a poetics of survival, cannot be understood by recourse to “basic metaphors”; if her poetry resembles, by metrical elements, the simplicity of religious hymns, this does not justify reducing these absolutely unorthodox songs to such clichés as “DEATH IS GOING TO A FINAL DESTINATION”, “LIFE IS A BURDEN”, and so on and so forth. Of course, it must be said in favour of Lakoff and Turner, that they do concede the limitedness of their approach, at least in their consideration of Shakespeare's sonnets.²⁴⁷ However, this does not change the fact that their reading of Dickinson's poem is scandalously simplistic.

²⁴⁷ “But we are not suggesting that to understand the metaphors is to understand the poem. Sonnet seventy-three is a striking example of this fact. Though the metaphors in the poem suggest that the speaker is near death, there are other aspects of the poem that can be taken as suggesting that he is not. For example, take the phrases ‘thou mayst in me behold’, ‘in me thou seest’, and ‘this thou perceiv'st’. It is strange to tell someone you are talking to what it is that they see.” (*More Than Cool Reason*, p. 33.) Is it really that strange? If so, we should perhaps ask ourselves how we conceive of seeing and perceiving in the first place.

I think the appropriate direction for seeking dialogue between this poetic ‘practice’ and a philosophical or post-philosophical ‘theory’, a conversation between texts to support our understanding of Dickinson’s uncanny vision, would be Maurice Blanchot’s and Jacques Derrida’s reflections on *survivre*. Dickinson is astonishingly close to their work on survival, even though neither Blanchot nor Derrida ever mentions having read her, as far as I know.

However, reading Emily Dickinson in conjunction with Blanchot and Derrida shall not be undertaken here. Let it suffice to note that Derrida has often pointed out the obvious fact that being friends or lovers means also submitting (or rather being submitted, because this is not a conscious *choice* made by the subject) to the necessity that one must survive the other and endure the death of the other. As he points out in his essay “Aphorisme contre-temps”, only Romeo and Juliet have *both* been forced to experience this inevitable fate of lovers and friends, to attest to the other’s death, one after the other. Love and friendship, no doubt also the fraternity to which Blanchot’s ‘fragment’ testifies, as well as being mothers and fathers and sons and daughters, requires the impossible: to take the mortality of the other upon oneself. “*Die Welt ist fort, ich muß dich tragen*”: this is the oath that must be confirmed, the death sentence that must be countersigned by every survivor, and that is, every friend and lover and sister and brother and son and daughter, the promise to survive even the end of the world, your world as my world after the end of the world.²⁴⁸

And to this unbearable, impossible situation of survival Emily Dickinson’s poetry also testifies:

I could not Die — with You —
For One must wait
To shut the Other’s Gaze down —
You — could not —

And I — could I stand by
And see You — freeze —
Without my Right of Frost —
Death’s privilege?²⁴⁹

And here is the other side of the coin, a faithful antitype to the two stanzas just quoted, telling us the surviving lover’s “privilege”:

Promise This — When You be Dying —
Some shall summon Me —
Mine belong Your latest Sighing —
Mine — to Belt Your Eye —

²⁴⁸ The verse ends Paul Celan’s poem “Grosse, glühende Wölbung” (*GW* 2:97) and has a central role in Derrida’s memorial speech for Gadamer: *Béliers. Le dialogue ininterrompu : entre deux infinies, le poème* (Paris: Galilée, 2003). On Romeo and Juliet, cf. “Aphorisme contretemps”, in *Psyché — inventions de l’autre* (Paris: Galilée, 1987), pp. 519-533. This thematic has been many times touched on by Derrida also elsewhere.

²⁴⁹ No. 640, stanzas four and five of twelve.

Not with Coins — though they be Minted
 From an Emperor's Hand —
 Be my lips — the only Buckle
 Your low Eyes — demand — ²⁵⁰

Nothing could be further away from mere metaphor than this “only Buckle” — coin and engagement ring both at once, both engaged in this single image or non-image, the “only Buckle”, the token of mortality that one must accept when accepting to be engaged to the other — this “realism of the soul” (*Seelenrealismus*: for Paul Celan, this is one of the antitheses to metaphor, as we shall see). And yet an extra exhibit of the sharpest irony — true irony, the only irony worthy of the name, is the one of which we do not really know whether it is irony or not — the uncanniest, un-homeliest irony (or perhaps not irony but the most biting, frostiest sincerity?), naming “The Beads upon the Forehead / By homely Anguish strung”:

I like a look of Agony,
 Because I know it's true —
 Men do not sham Convulsion,
 Nor simulate, a Throe —

The Eyes glaze once — and that is Death —
 Impossible to feign
 The Beads upon the Forehead
 By homely Anguish strung. ²⁵¹

One more thing must be said, before concluding this prolegomenon. To anyone who would like to quibble that the “Beads” upon the forehead are indeed ‘metaphorical’ beads, I would point out that the *OED* lists among the transferred acceptations of the word “bead” also “the great beads of exhausted toil [upon the] forehead”, and that in principle, “bead” applies to anything that has the shape of beads, anything “bead-like”, and last but not least, that the noun has been metonymically transferred from the noun or verb meaning “prayer” or “to pray”: “The name was transferred from ‘prayer’ [ME *bede* etc.; cf. the Modern German *bitte*, *beten*, and *Gebet*] to the small globular bodies used for ‘telling beads,’ *i.e.* counting prayers said, from which the other senses naturally followed.”²⁵² This “naturally follow[ing]”, or this *almost* natural string of beads, or rosary of meanings, belongs to the originary poetics of all language, and it would be an abuse of the traditional Aristotelian or post-Aristotelian notion of metaphor to reduce all such “language *in statu nascendi*” (Celan) to metaphoricity, even

²⁵⁰ No. 648, first two stanzas (of eight).

²⁵¹ No. 241. This poem is cited by Archibald MacLeish in his remarkable *Poetry and Experience* (Cambridge, MA: The Riverside Press, 1960): “And I mean precisely courage”, he says, in introducing the poem and with continuous reference to “universal analogy”, courage “not only to seize upon experience but to hold it long enough to turn it true” (p. 113). MacLeish is one of the poets and poeticsians who retain a critical distance from the concept of metaphor, and distinguishes his notion of universal analogy from its metaphorical effects.

²⁵² *OED*, 50018735, 12 Dec. 2006.

though this reduction, too, is quite traditional. Instead of reducing affirmations of human finitude and mortality — even the ‘allegorical’ affirmations — and the ‘worldliness’ of language to “sets of accepted commonplaces” (as constituent elements of metaphor or as “basic metaphors” upon which also the poetic metaphor is constructed), and, on the other hand, instead of detaching language from these conditions by quasi-religious aestheticism that aspires to transcend time and worldliness (by metaphor), we should perhaps try to understand being-in-the-world in other terms.

PROLEGOMENON V

This final prolegomenon concerns “being away as a way of being there” (“*Wegsein [als] eine ausgezeichnete Weise des Daseins*”), namely Heidegger’s reduction of an Aristotelian “metaphor”, which turns out to be, in Heidegger’s own consideration, anything but metaphorical: the apparently figurative talk of death as an “end [*telos*]” or as “completion [*teleion*]” rather delimits the human being-there (*Dasein*) in its ownmost, most proper authenticity (*Eigentlichkeit*). This is a restricted discussion of Heidegger’s famously paradoxical relation to the concept of metaphor and its less famous aspects, and serves as a final introduction to Paul Celan’s parallel, albeit different, resistance to this “overall key of all poetics”.²⁵³

BEING AWAY AS A WAY OF BEING THERE

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE HEIDEGGERIAN “GARDEN OF WILDERNESS”

Martin Heidegger’s “attack against metaphor” is fairly well known. Fairly well, at least when it comes to the two best known “adages”,²⁵⁴ one from *Der Satz vom Grund* and the other from “Das Wesen der Sprache”, in *Unterwegs zur Sprache*:

²⁵³ An early version of this chapter was presented in Finnish in a colloquium on Heidegger’s thought in January 2004 and appeared in 2006 in a slightly modified form, as “Tiessäänolo paikallaolon tapana: ‘Kielikuvan’ täällä puolen”, in Jussi Backman and Miika Luoto, eds., *Heidegger: Ajattelun aiheita* (Tampere: Eurooppalaisen filosofian seura, 2006), pp. 81-97.

²⁵⁴ Cf. Paul Ricœur, “Huitième étude”, in *La métaphore vive* (Paris: Seuil, 1975), p. 357 (“adage” is Ricœur’s word): “Chez Heidegger lui-même, le contexte limite considérablement la portée de cette attaque contre la métaphore, au point qu’on peut penser que l’usage constant que Heidegger fait de la métaphore a finalement plus d’importance que ce qu’il dit incidemment contre la métaphore.” To Ricœur’s discussion of this “attack” a couple of things must be noted here, but only briefly. Many of the relevant texts in Heidegger’s œuvre had not yet been published before the eighties, at the time when for instance Ricœur, Greisch and Derrida discussed Heidegger’s paradoxical denouncement of the *concept* of metaphor (Derrida emphasizes that in the “attack” it is a question of the metaphysical *concept* of metaphor — and it is questionable whether there is any other concept of metaphor than this “classical philosopheme”; Heidegger’s attempt to overcome this concept must not be confused with, for instance, Nietzsche’s “empiricist” solicitation of the metaphoricity of metaphysical concepts). When we say that the “attack” is *fairly well* known, it must be noted that until Derrida’s “Le retrait de la métaphore” (1978) and until the lectures on Hölderlin’s hymns were published (and discussed, with respect to this issue, for instance in Joseph Kockelman’s article mentioned below), the discussion revolved around two sentences, one from *Der Satz vom Grund* (p. 89: “Das metaphorische gibt es nur innerhalb der Metaphysik.”) and the other from “Das Wesen der Sprache”, in *Unterwegs zur Sprache* (p. 207: “Wir blieben in der Metaphysik hängen, wollten wir dieses Nennen Hölderlins in der Wendung »Worte wie Blumen« für eine Metapher halten.”). Heidegger’s remarks have actually turned out to be anything but mere side remarks, after the publication of the three volumes of lecture courses on Hölderlin’s hymns which Heidegger gave in the thirties and forties (*Gesamtausgabe* volumes 39, 52 and 53); and as we shall see, Heidegger’s readings of Aristotle should also be consulted with respect to this problematic (cf. e.g. *GA* 33:§§ 8-9). Besides the final chapter of Ricœur’s book, and among other studies, cf. the following: Jean Greisch, “Les mots et les roses : la métaphore chez Martin Heidegger”, in *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques*, Tome 57 (1973), pp. 433-455; Ronald Bruzina, “Heidegger on the Metaphor and Philosophy”, in *Cultural Hermeneutics* 1 (1973), pp. 305-324; Joseph Kockelmans, “Heidegger on Metaphor and Metaphysics”, in Christopher Macann, ed., *Martin Heidegger: Critical Assessments, Volume III: Language* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 293-320; Françoise Dastur, “Réflexions sur l’espace, la métaphore et l’extériorité autour de la topologie heideggérienne”, in *Alter*, no 4 (1996), pp. 161-178; Jacques Derrida, “Le retrait de la métaphore”, in *Psyché — inventions de l’autre* (Paris: Galilée, 1998 [1st ed. 1987]), pp. 63-93. I would consider Derrida’s, Kockelman’s and Dastur’s readings to be the most comprehensive and accurate with respect to Heidegger’s remarks on metaphor *in their context*.

[1.] Das metaphorische gibt es nur innerhalb der Metaphysik. [2.] Wir blieben in der Metaphysik hängen, wollten wir dieses Nennen Hölderlins in der Wendung »Worte wie Blumen« für eine Metapher halten.²⁵⁵

Contrary to the received opinion,²⁵⁶ these two brief remarks and their immediate contexts are very far from being the only passages we should discuss with regard to Heidegger's anti-metaphoric view of language and poetry. Also a third paradoxical anti-metaphoric statement has sometimes been cited, from the "Letter on 'Humanism'":

Das Denken baut am Haus des Seins, als welches die Fuge des Seins je geschickhaft das Wesen des Menschen in das Wohnen in der Wahrheit des Seins verfügt. Dieses Wohnen ist das Wesen des »In-der-Welt-seins« (vgl. »S. u. Z.«, S. 54). Der dortige Hinweis auf das »In-Sein« als »Wohnen« ist keine etymologische Spielerei. Der Hinweis in dem Vortrag von 1936 auf Hölderlins Wort »Voll verdient, doch dichterisch wohnt / der Mensch auf dieser Erde« ist keine Ausschmückung eines Denkens, das sich aus der Wissenschaft in die Poesie rettet. Die Rede vom Haus des Seins ist keine Übertragung des Bildes vom »Haus« auf das Sein, sondern aus dem sachgemäß gedachten Wesen des Seins werden wir eines Tages eher denken können, was »Haus« und »wohnen« sind.²⁵⁷

The fact that Heidegger refuses to explain in more detail the extravagant claim upon the non-metaphoricity of his talk of "the house of being" (which is language, but not a metaphor for language) by referring to the "one day" in the future and to his own texts, does not mean simply that he evades the question, let alone that he judges it unimportant, but rather that he points to its importance and difficulty, as if hoping that someone would, "some day [*eines Tages*]", pick up these leads and grapple the question of metaphoricity and non-metaphoricity (which cannot be sufficiently done here, either).

These three examples are so far from being the only relevant passages, so far from being the "only places" where the concept of metaphor (*Metapher*, *Übertragung*) and some

²⁵⁵ Quote 1: *Der Satz vom Grund* ([2nd ed.] Pfullingen: Neske, 1958), p. 89 (also: *Gesamtausgabe*, Bd. 10 [GA 10]). Trans. Reginald Lilly: "The metaphorical exists only within metaphysics." (*The Principle of Reason*, trans. Lilly [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991].) Quote 2: *Unterwegs zur Sprache* ([11th ed.] Stuttgart: Neske, 1997), p. 207. Trans. Peter D. Hertz: "It would mean that we stay bogged down in metaphysics if we were to take the name Hölderlin gives here to 'words, like flowers' as being a metaphor." (*On the Way to Language*, trans. Hertz [San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1982].)

²⁵⁶ As recently as 2001, it was still claimed in a treatise on Paul Celan's anti-metaphoric poetics that there are "only two places in Heidegger's work where he expressly speaks of metaphor [*Allerdings finden sich in Heideggers Werk überhaupt nur zwei Stellen, an denen er ausdrücklich von der Metapher spricht*]" (Astrid Poppenhusen, *Durchkreuzung der Tropen. Paul Celan's Die Niemandsrose im Lichte der traditionellen Metaphorologie und ihrer Dekonstruktion* [Heidelberg: Winter, 2001], p. 79.)

²⁵⁷ "Brief über den »Humanismus«", in *Wegmarken*, GA 9:358. En. trans. Frank A. Capuzzi: "Thinking builds upon the house of being [upon language, that is; it builds upon the home of being while it already dwells there], the house in which the jointure of being, in its destinal unfolding, enjoins the essence of the human being in each case to dwell in the truth of being. This dwelling is the essence of 'being-in-the-world.' The reference in *Being and Time* (p. 54) to 'being-in' as 'dwelling' is not some etymological play. The same reference in the 1936 essay on Hölderlin's word, 'Full of merit, yet poetically, man dwells upon this earth,' is not the adornment of a thinking that rescues itself from science by means of poetry. The talk about the house of being is no the transfer of the image 'house' onto being. But one day we will, by thinking the essence of being in a way appropriate to its matter, more readily be able to think what 'house' and 'dwelling' are." (In *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill [Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1998], p. 272.)

more or less closely related concepts (*Sinnbild*, which is for Heidegger a general term for the aesthetic or poetic categories of figurativity, comprising also *Symbol*, *Allegorie*, *Gleichnis*, *Vergleich*) have been discussed by Heidegger, that we might almost apply the following lines, concerning Hölderlin's hymn "Wie wenn am Feiertage...", to Heidegger's own insistent debate over figures and tropes:

Nicht einmal ein Vergleich ist das Gesagte, etwa ein ›Bild‹, eine ›Metapher‹, obwohl das Gedicht beginnt mit: »Wie wenn...« und Strophe II fortfährt: »So steht ihr...« [...] ›Dichterischer Vergleich‹ — was ist das am Ende für ein undichterischer Begriff! Aber man ist mit dem Bücherschreiben, der Neugründung von Zeitschriften, der Organisation von Sammelwerken der Literatur, mit dem Nicht-zu-spät-kommen so beschäftigt, daß man für solche Fragen keine Zeit findet. Es könnte ja darüber ein ganzes Leben hingehen, sogar die Arbeit einer ganzen Generation. Allerdings! Solange wir es nicht an solche Fragen setzen, ist das Wort von der ›heroischen Wissenschaft‹, die jetzt angeblich kommen soll, ein Gerede. [GA 39:254-255.]²⁵⁸

These lecture texts from 1934-35, and those on the hymns "Andenken" (GA 52) and "Der Is-ter" (GA 53) of the war years 1941-42, had not yet been published in the seventies when Jean Greisch, Paul Ricœur and Jacques Derrida wrote on Heidegger's paradoxical resistance to metaphor; they appeared only between 1980 and 1984. It seems that before these publications, only Derrida took Heidegger's words seriously enough to enquire into their "sense and necessity" in the overall context of his work; his conference paper "Le retrait de la métaphore" was first presented in 1978, and the texts by Greisch and Ricœur had appeared in 1973 and 1975.²⁵⁹ Later, perhaps most notably, Françoise Dastur and Joseph Kockelmans have taken Heidegger's corpus very well into account in discussing his anti-metaphoric attitude. But it must also be noted that Maurice Merleau-Ponty was undoubtedly among the very first who took seriously Heidegger's anti-metaphoric argument and profoundly understood its purport. For him, there is "no metaphor between the visible and the invisible", and he summarizes Heidegger's argument in *Der Satz vom Grund* concerning thinking as a way of see-

²⁵⁸ It is impossible to disregard the historical context of this statement. The sarcastic (or ambivalent, if you will) remark on the "heroic science" is directed at Alfred Rosenberg, a central theorist of race and culture in the National Socialist movement (cf. Rosenberg, *Der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts* [München: Hoheneichen, cop. 1930 (2. p. 1935)], p. 151; the header of the page reads "heroische Wissenschaft"). — On these lectures, mainly concerned with the hymns "Der Rhein" and "Germanien", Heidegger unequivocally distances himself from the all-pervading ideology of *Blut und Boden* and the "biologist-organicist world view" more generally, but also from the previous fad of psychoanalytic interpretation of art and literature; these are all for him only reiterations of old metaphysical schemes, even if, after Nietzsche, the Platonic schemes and hierarchies have been inverted (cf. GA 39, *passim*). Also against this backdrop, Heidegger's attempt to 'deconstruct' the traditional aesthetic paradigm of art interpretation, which he more or less condenses into his vehement critique of the concept of *Sinnbild* (literally, and at the same time equivocally, 'sense-image'; this ordinary German term is the general label that Heidegger uses for metaphor, symbol, allegory, and parable as 'sensible images' portraying 'non-sensible meaning'), shows itself in its larger context. It is of course not only an attempt to influence contemporary ideology ('from within' the 'movement', as Heidegger has later conceded), but also — perhaps just as desperately — an invitation to problematize the traditional metaphysical received models of thought concerning for instance art, culture, language and nationality.

²⁵⁹ Cf. above, and the bibliography.

ing and hearing and the one in “Brief über den Humanismus” concerning the “house of being” by saying that “the visible is pregnant with the invisible”.²⁶⁰ The argument remains valid even for this “pregnancy” itself.

On the hymn lectures, Heidegger insistently objects to the “doctrine of metaphor” as an “overall key of all ‘poetics’”, which nevertheless “opens no doors for us”, for instance in the realm of Hölderlin’s hymn poetry.²⁶¹ On several occasions, and not only in the relatively well-known passages of *Der Satz vom Grund*, “Das Wesen der Sprache” (in *Unterwegs zur Sprache*) and “Brief über den ‘Humanismus’”, Heidegger argues that the concept of metaphor, as well as related poetical, rhetorical and aesthetical concepts (symbol, allegory — *Sinnbild* in general), are altogether inadequate for understanding both poetry and philosophical concepts.²⁶² One of the surprising things is that in the numerous passages of this deconstructive critique of this originally Aristotelian concept, Heidegger does not usually refer the concept of metaphor back to Aristotle — who was after all the first theorist of metaphor, as far as we know, and of course, Heidegger must also have been aware of this — but rather to what would seem to be the common origin of the whole metaphysical tradition of aesthetics, Plato’s philosophy and Platonism: for Heidegger, even Nietzsche’s inversion of Platonism is still a Platonism of sorts, an inverted Platonism perhaps, but not any less Platonic. No doubt Heidegger might be thinking of certain texts by the young Nietzsche in saying this, such as *Wahrheit und Lüge im außermoralischen Sinne* and *Die Philosophie im tragischen Zeitalter der Griechen* (both from 1873).²⁶³

However, Heidegger also discusses metaphor, the concept of metaphor as an insufficient instrument for understanding language and poetry and the structure of understanding itself, in some of his texts on Aristotle. As we have noticed, the relatively famous 1931 lec-

²⁶⁰ “Notes de Travail”, in *Le visible et l’invisible* (Paris: Gallimard, cop. 1964, repr. 2006), pp. 265-266, 271. In a manner analogous to Greisch’s and Ricœur’s quest for such elements in Heidegger’s work that would contribute positively to giving new life to metaphor, Luca Vanzago finds in Merleau-Ponty’s later work, which for him is obviously “highly metaphorical in character” (this has of course many times been said of Heidegger’s work, too), suggestions for a “right account of metaphor” alongside the “wrong account” that is pointed at by Merleau-Ponty’s disqualification of the concept of metaphor, in spite of the fact that Merleau-Ponty never in *Le visible et l’invisible* calls “metaphor” what Vanzago makes him call by that name; Vanzago does not mention Merleau-Ponty’s agreement with Heidegger in his article (“The Visible and the Unrepresentable. The Role of Metaphor in Merleau-Ponty’s Last Writings”, in Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, ed., *Analecta Husserliana. The Yearbook of Phenomenological Research, Vol. LXXXVIII: Logos of Phenomenology and Phenomenology of the Logos. Book One: Phenomenology as the Critique of Reason in Contemporary Criticism and Interpretation* [Dordrecht: Springer, 2005], pp. 429-440).

²⁶¹ “[...] der Hauptschlüssel aller ›Poetik‹, [...] die Lehre [...] von der ›Metapher‹, im Bereich der Hölderlin’schen Hymnendichtung keine einzige Tür öffnet und uns nirgends ins Freie bringt.” (*GA* 52:40.)

²⁶² *Der Satz vom Grund* (1958), pp. 86-90; “Das Wesen der Sprache”, in *Unterwegs zur Sprache* (1997), p. 207; “Brief über den »Humanismus«”, in *Wegmarken* (*GA* 9:358); “Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes”, in *Holzwege* (1972), pp. 9-10; *GA* 5:4; *Hölderlin’s Hymnen »Germanien« und »Der Rhein«* (*GA* 39, *passim*); *Hölderlin’s Hymne »Andenken«* (*GA* 52, *passim*); *Hölderlin’s Hymne »Der Ister«* (*GA* 53, *passim*); et *passim*; cf. below.

²⁶³ “Über Wahrheit und Lüge im außermoralischen Sinn”, in *Werke in drei Bänden*: 3. Band, ed. Karl Schlechta (München: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1956), pp. 309-322; *Die Philosophie im tragischen Zeitalter der Griechen*, ed. Manfred Riedel (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1994). Cf. Sarah Kofman, *Nietzsche et la métaphore* (op. cit., 1983).

tures on *Aristotle's Metaphysics Θ 1-3: On the Essence and Actuality of Force* [*Von Wesen und Wirklichkeit der Kraft*], published for the first time in 1981 (the excellent English translation appeared in 1995), and that are also important with regard to the notion of analogy in Aristotle, contain two chapters (§§ 8, 9) where, among other things that are relevant with respect to the metaphor problem, Heidegger laconically lists no less than eight points that should problematize our tendency to understand “forces of nature” in terms of transferring subjective capabilities to the inanimate natural objects and phenomena (GA 33:75-76).²⁶⁴ There is also another very important, more recently published text on Aristotle that we shall direct our attention to.

We shall first restrict our discussion of Heidegger's vehemently anti-metaphoric attitude to the three most well-known statements. These three texts were also well known to Paul Celan, to whose phenomenology of poetry we shall proceed after this final prolegomenon. After the brief remarks on those statements and some related passages that Celan had marked in his personal copies of Heidegger's works, we shall move to the recently published transcript of Heidegger's early lectures on Aristotle, which contain a very remarkable and important discussion of metaphors, one that is related to the discussion of “being-towards-the-end” or “being-towards-death” in *Sein und Zeit* (1927). These lectures were of course not known to Celan, but he did read the passages concerning these issues in *Sein und Zeit* with great interest, judging by the markings and notes he made in his personal copy of the book.

WORDS, LIKE FLOWERS

Now we shall discuss very briefly the passages in *Der Satz vom Grund* (lectures of 1955-56), “Das Wesen der Sprache” (1957-58) and the 1946 “Letter”.²⁶⁵

In the apparent “digression [*eine Abschweifung*]” of some four pages in *Der Satz vom Grund*, leading to the assertion that “the metaphorical exists only within the metaphysics”, Heidegger reflects upon his own talk of thinking and understanding in terms of seeing and hearing, *Erhören und Erblicken*, and mentions also Plato's and Heraclitus' parallel ways of speaking of *idea* and *logos* as if these were something visible or audible; this has sometimes been misunderstood to mean that Heidegger considered these terms of philosophical discourse as ‘metaphysical metaphors’, but this is not at all what Heidegger claims. To the contrary: the concept of metaphor is not any better suited for understanding philosophical con-

²⁶⁴ *Gesamtausgabe, Bd. 33: Aristoteles, Metaphysik Θ 1-3. Von Wesen und Wirklichkeit der Kraft*, 2. durchgesehene Auflage, ed. Heinrich Hüni (Frankfurt a.M.: Klostermann, 1990 [1st ed. 1981]). En. trans. Walter Brogan and Peter Warnek, *Aristotle's Metaphysics Θ 1-3: On the Essence and Actuality of Force* (Bloomington: Indiana U.P., 1995).

²⁶⁵ I would like to urge the reader to read the relatively brief discussions in those texts him/herself, preferably in their contexts of course, and then perhaps turn to the discussions by for instance Derrida, Kockelmans and Dastur.

cepts than it is for reading poetry. The point is, rather, that when we grasp the irreducibility of the allegedly purely intelligible *idea* and *logos* in the allegedly sensible perception, the metaphysical dichotomy of the sensible and the intelligible shows itself to be altogether insufficient. If we only heard “with our ears [*mit dem Ohr*]”, in a purely sensible manner, we would never hear a Bach fugue, for example.²⁶⁶ Sensible hearing or seeing would be only an abstraction from the concrete phenomenon, and never to be experienced as such. This argument is quite often repeated by Heidegger, not elsewhere so explicitly linked with the question of metaphor, I think, but also in contexts where aesthetic presuppositions are being questioned, such as *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes* (1935/37).²⁶⁷ Sensible and non-sensible perception can be separated only artificially, by abstraction.

Because our final aim is to discuss Paul Celan’s antimetaphoric poetics, I point out that he knew this argument very well from Heidegger’s works.²⁶⁸ For instance, in his per-

²⁶⁶ *Der Satz vom Grund*, p. 89; trans. R. Lilly (1991), p. 48. Cf. pp. 86-87: “Wir sind jedoch schnell bei der Hand zu erklären: Ein Hören und Sehen kann das Denken nur in einem übertragenen Sinne heißen. In der Tat. Das im Denken Erhörte und Erblickte läßt sich nicht mit unseren Ohren hören, nicht mit unseren Augen sehen. Es ist nicht durch unsere Sinnesorgane wahrnehmbar. Fassen wir das Denken als eine Art Hören und Sehen, dann wird das sinnliche Hören und Sehen übernommen und hinübergenommen in den Bereich des nicht-sinnlichen Vernehmens, d.h. des Denkens. Solches Hinübertragen heißt griechisch μεταφέρειν. Die Gelehrtensprache nennt eine solche Übertragung Metapher. Das Denken darf somit nur im metaphorischen, übertragenen Sinne ein Hören und Erhören, ein Blicken und Erblicken genannt werden. Wer sagt hier »darf«? Derjenige, der behauptet, das Hören mit dem Ohr und das Sehen mit dem Auge sei das eigentliche Hören und Sehen. / Die Weise, wie wir im Hören und Sehen etwas wahrnehmen, geschieht durch die Sinne, ist sinnlich. Diese Feststellungen sind richtig. Sie bleiben dennoch unwahr, weil sie Wesentliches auslassen. Wir hören zwar eine Bachsche Fuge durch die Ohren, allein wenn hier nur dies das Gehörte bliebe, was als Schallwelle das Trommelfell beklopft, dann könnten wir niemals eine Bachsche Fuge hören. Wir hören, nicht das Ohr. Wir hören allerdings durch das Ohr, aber nicht mit dem Ohr, wenn »mit« hier sagt, das Ohr sei das, was uns das Gehörte ermittelt.”

²⁶⁷ “Much closer to us than all sensations are the things themselves. [*Viel näher als alle Empfindungen sind uns die Dinge selbst.*] [...] In order to hear pure noise, we must turn our hearing away from the things, withhold our ear from them, i.e. hear abstractly. [*Um ein reines Geräusch zu hören, müssen wir von den Dingen weghören, unser Ohr davon abziehen, d. h. abstrakt hören.*]” (GA 5:10, 11.) Trans. A. Hofstadter.

²⁶⁸ Reportedly, he also carefully read *Der Satz vom Grund* and marked the passages concerning metaphor. This is not, however, reported in the recently published catalogue of Celan’s “philosophical library”, *La bibliothèque philosophique* (2004), cf. pp. 338-339. Nevertheless, James K. Lyon, the author of *Paul Celan and Martin Heidegger: An Unresolved Conversation, 1951-1970* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U.P., 2006), reports that there are indeed markings more or less throughout Celan’s personal copy of the book (pp. 68ff). By his permission, I quote Professor Lyon’s reply to my inquiry concerning this puzzling matter: “In 1993 at the Deutsches Literaturarchiv in Marbach I was allowed to copy every page of Heidegger’s works that Celan had marked. That is no longer allowed, but at that time it was, and since I have the copies of the marked pages in *Der Satz vom Grund* in front of me that I obtained legally at the time, I can say unequivocally that what I have does not correspond with what you read in B.P. [i.e. *La bibliothèque philosophique*.] The claim that there are ‘keine Annotationen’ from pp. 11-188 is simply not accurate. The copy Celan owned and that I copied (or at least the marked pages) was published by Guenther Neske, Pfullingen, 1957. It shows markings by Celan on pp. 46; 86-87; 90-91; 96; 106; 108-109; 113; 114; 133; 141; 146; 161-162; 164; 178-179; and 187. I find no markings from p. 188 until 202-203, where they again occur; also on p. 205; 207; 208; 209; and 210. On p. 211, the last page in this edition, he records the reading date of 10.5.57. I have no idea where the editor of B.P. got his information, but I have the copied pages in front of me, so what I say is accurate. / On the matter of *Unterwegs zur Sprache*, [...]. It is surprising that there are no annotations or dates in the volume owned by the Dt. Literaturarchiv in Marbach, which is the one containing the handwritten dedication by Heidegger in the front. I pursued this question and learned that there was probably another copy of this work. My guess is that Celan purchased it on his own when it first appeared and probably read it, and that the Heideggerian inscribed copy was a second one he received somewhat

sonal copy of *Sein und Zeit*, he has marked sentences reminding us that we never, “in the first instance” (»zunächst«; the quotation marks are added by Heidegger), hear just noises and sound-complexes, but a “creaking wagon, a motorcycle”, “marching troops, the north wind, a woodpecker tapping, a crackling fire [*Man hört die Kolonne auf dem Marsch, den Nordwind, den klopfenden Specht, das knisternde Feuer*]”, and in the margin he has written the word ‘phenomenology’; on the next page there is a double stroke in the margin, marking the following sentence: “*Es bedarf schon einer sehr künstlichen und komplizierten Einstellung, um ein »reines Geräusch« zu »hören«.*” And on the same page he has marked some of the corresponding ‘linguistic’ implications:

Sogar dort, wo das Sprechen undeutlich oder gar die Sprache fremd ist, hören wir zunächst *unverständliche* Worte und nicht reiche Mannigfaltigkeit von Tondaten. / Im »natürlichen Hören« des Worüber der Rede können wir allerdings zugleich auf die Weise des Gesagtseins, die »Diktion« hören, [...].²⁶⁹

These ‘reading traces’ (*Lesespuren*, an established term among the Celanists), probably dating from 1953, still echo in his Büchner Prize speech of 1960.

The second “famous adage”, as Paul Ricœur calls it (*La métaphore vive*, p. 357), concerning Hölderlin’s “words, like flowers”, is not as directly explained by Heidegger in its context as the one in *Der Satz vom Grund*. The paradoxical denial concerns a strophe in the elegy “Brot und Wein”:

So ist der Mensch; wenn da ist das Gut, und es sorget mit Gaben
Selber ein Gott für ihn, kennet und sieht er es nicht.

later. I inquired repeatedly about what might have happened to it, since there’s strong evidence that this and one or two other works by Heidegger in Celan’s original library had disappeared when they were moved to or from Paris or to and from his country home in Normandy, or perhaps even when they were transported to Marbach. We know they disappeared because, as I was told, (I believe Dietlind Meinecke was one of the persons) [the Marbach archive personnel?] made [*sic*] a complete index of the books moved to and from these various locations. That index apparently was entered in the card catalogue in Marbach, but the original index has disappeared. In Marbach they assured me that several of the works by Heidegger in Celan’s library that they had listed there in fact originated with that original index, but they had no idea where they were now. As I said, I suspect that *Unterwegs zur Sprache* existed in another edition that Celan read and marked, and that somehow it disappeared as his library was dispersed or moved around. But he certainly did read it.” (James K. Lyon, electronic mail, November 12th, 2006; I have corrected a few minor clerical errors.) As I made further enquiries about this and asked the editors of the catalogue, Bertrand Badiou forwarded to me the following message from Nicolai Riedel (Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach): “Vor mir liegt Heideggers Buch *Der Satz vom Grund* (Pfullingen 1957), mit den Lese-Datierungen Celans. / Ich habe den Band Seite für Seite langsam durchgeblättert und bis Seite 204 keine sichtbaren Lesespuren gefunden, d.h. keine An- oder Unterstreichungen. Die erste Anstreichung findet sich auf Seite 205, Zeile 25 bis 27 (Winkelklammer rechts); weitere Anstreichungen auf Seite 207 (‘weil’) bis zum Schluss (S. 210), also insgesamt gar nicht so viel.” (Cit. Bertrand Badiou, electronic mail, December 8th, 2006.)

²⁶⁹ Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (7th ed.) (Tübingen: Neomarius, 1949), pp. 163, 164; cit. Celan, *La bi. phi.*, p. 378, nos. 596-600. Heidegger’s italics, Celan’s underlining. Celan has added to his underlining of the sentence concerning the *simultaneous* hearing of the content and the “diction” the following marginal remark: “wichtig für die Dichtung”. — Cf. also James K. Lyon, *Paul Celan and Martin Heidegger* (2006), pp. 12-14.

Tragen muß er, zuvor; nun aber nennt er sein Liebstes,
Nun, nun müssen dafür Worte, wie Blumen, entstehn.²⁷⁰

We shall not try to penetrate deeper into the context of Heidegger's citation of this strophe at the moment; it is actually hard to determine the exact limits of that context, since the difficult thematic of the fourfold mirror-play (*Spiegelspiel des Gevierts*) of gods and mortals, earth and sky, or *Ereignis* as *enteignende Vereignen* that is here evoked, pervades all of Heidegger's discourse of that period.²⁷¹ We shall return to this expanding context near the end of our discussion of Celan's poetry and poetics and his relationship to Heidegger, however. Let us instead take a look at another passage where these "words, like flowers" are mentioned, the open letter of 1955 to Ernst Jünger:

Die Mehrdeutigkeit jener Worte, die »wie Blumen entstehen« (Hölderlin, Brod und Wein), ist der Garten der Wildnis, worin Wachstum und Pflege aus einer unbegreiflichen Innigkeit zueinander gestimmt sind. ["Zur Seinsfrage", *GA* 9:423-4.]

The non-metaphoricity of these "flowers of the mouth" (*Blumen des Mundes*) is actually 'the same as' their equivocality (*Mehrdeutigkeit*) or, as I would say, following Derrida, their *dis-seminality*. For Heidegger, the "like" of "likeness" (*Gleichnis*) is precisely a sign of the multifaceted unity of the foursome mirror-play of the world: gods, mortals, earth, and sky. The "earthy" materiality of language, of which it is spoken also in the context of the second "adage",²⁷² does not reside only in the sonorous idiomaticity of a dialect, for instance (*"Die Mundart ist nicht nur die Sprache der Mutter, sondern zugleich und zuvor die Mutter der Sprache"*), but also in the "naming power" (*Nennkraft*) that is not different from the essential equivocality of "primordial speaking" (*ursprüngliches Sprechen*).²⁷³

The equivocality of the primordial words is not reducible to the binary logic of either-figurative-or-literal, and it is not some wordplay that brings the figurative and literal together in one fell swoop;²⁷⁴ rather, it clears the way for both 'figurative' and 'proper'. An example

²⁷⁰ "Brot und Wein", ll. 87-90; cit. Heidegger, *Unterwegs zur Sprache*, p. 206. "Man's nature is such: when the good is there and a god / Himself is the giver, the gifts are out of sight and out of mind. / First he must learn to endure [*tragen*: to bear]; but now he names what he loves, / Now, now must the words come into being, like flowers." (Translated by Christopher Middleton.)

²⁷¹ Cf. e.g. "Das Ding", in *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1959 [1st ed. 1954]), p. 172.

²⁷² "Wird das Wort die Blume des Mundes und Blüte genannt, dann hören wir das Lauten der Sprache erdhaft aufgehen. Von woher? Aus dem Sagen, worin sich das Erscheinenlassen von Welt begibt." *Unterwegs zur Sprache*, p. 208.

²⁷³ Cf. "Sprache und Heimat" (*GA* 13:155-180). *Nennkraft* is a word that appears at least in *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes* (*GA* 5:32) and in *Einführung in die Metaphysik* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1953), p. 38; cit. in Celan, *La bi. phi.*, p. 351, No. 153. The expression *ursprüngliches Sprechen* is from *Was heißt Denken?* (*GA* 8:189); cf. Lyon, *Paul Celan and Martin Heidegger*, p. 45.

²⁷⁴ Cf. Poppenhusen, *Durchkreuzen der Tropen*, pp. 82ff. We find in "Wozu Dichter?" a remarkable 'correspondent' to the "adage" of *Der Satz vom Grund*, underlined by Celan: "Nur innerhalb der Metaphysik gibt es die Logik." (*Holzwege*, *GA* 5:[287]; cit. Celan, *La bi. phi.*, p. 364, No. 395; cf. also No. 394.) Cf. also "Sprache und Heimat" (1960): "Von altersher, seit dem Aufkommen der griechischen Logik und Grammatik bestimmt man das Sagen der Sprache aus dem Hinblick auf die feststellende Aussage. Demzufolge gilt alles, was sprachlich über den logischen Satzinhalt hinausgeht, als bloßer Redeschmuck, als nachgetragene Umschreibung, als Übertragung (Metapher)." (*GA* 13:179.) "Sprache und Heimat" is a remark-

of this is the word *Nachbarschaft*, denoting the “neighbourhood” or “neighbourliness” of poetry and thinking, *Dichten und Denken*:

Die Rede von der Nachbarschaft des Dichtens und Denkens meint [...], daß beide einander gegenüber wohnen, eines gegenüber dem anderen sich angesiedelt hat, eines in die Nähe des Anderen gezogen ist. Dieser Hinweis auf das Kennzeichnende der Nachbarschaft bewegt sich in einer bildlichen Redeweise. Oder sagen wir schon etwas von der Sache? Was heißt denn »bildliche Redeweise«? Wir sind mit dieser Auskunft schnell bei der Hand, ohne daran zu denken, daß wir uns auf sie solange nicht in einer verlässlichen Form berufen dürfen, als unbestimmt bleibt, was Rede ist und was Bild und inwiefern die Sprache in Bildern spricht, ob sie überhaupt so spricht. Darum lassen wir hier alles weit offen. Halten wir uns an das Nötigste, nämlich daran, die Nachbarschaft von Dichten und Denken aufzusuchen, d.h. jetzt: das Gegen-einander-über der beiden. [*Unterwegs zur Sprache*, p. 187.]²⁷⁵

The figurative way of speaking is here juxtaposed with “saying something to the point”. Once again, this positing of the question concerning figurativity may seem an evasion of the question, since it is not really clearly elaborated in the text, at least not immediately. On the other hand, what Heidegger means by “neighbourhood” can only be clarified by reading what he says later in the same text and elsewhere says about *Nachbar*, with the characteristic recourse to etymology (cf. e.g. “Bauen Wohnen Denken” [1951], in *Vorträge und Aufsätze*), but we shall not dwell upon that now. Instead, let us take a shortcut to another extravagant claim, already cited, the denial of the metaphoricity of the expression “house of being”. And let us ask, instead of taking the laborious excursion to determine what the “neighbourhood” of poetry and thinking could be, if not a metaphor or metaphor for metaphor, a simple question: What if everything depends, after all, upon leaving everything wide open? Leaving open the door that is not opened with the overall key of all poetics?

This is to say, the question whether the outrageous caveats, according to which we might not know yet what neighbourhood means, what figurativity means, what house or dwelling mean, are the most important signposts on the way to understanding why we are not dealing with metaphors here. That is, whether this openness, this vacancy *as an absence of determined content* is not essential to the primordial equivocality of poetic language, language as poetic language. Perhaps we are dealing with neither lack nor plenitude, but rather a hospitality offered within the four corners of the home of being, *Haus des Seins*? A certain

able text on Johann Peter Hebel, offering actually a positive discussion of the poetic image, or even ‘parable’ (*Bild, Gebild, Gleichnis*), but we shall not discuss it in detail.

²⁷⁵ En. trans. Peter D. Hertz, in *On the Way to Language* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1982 [1st ed. 1971]), p. 82: “[...] the phrase of the neighborhood of poetry and thinking means that the two dwell face to face with each other, that the one has settled facing the other, has drawn into the other’s nearness. This remark about what makes a neighborhood is by way of figurative talk. Or are we already saying something to the point? What, really, does ‘figurative talk’ mean? We are quick to give the answer, never giving it a thought that we cannot claim to have a reliable formulation so long as it remains unclear what is talk and what is imagery, and in what way language speaks in images, if indeed language does speak so at all. Therefore we will leave here everything wide open. Let us stay with the most urgent issue, which is, to seek out the neighborhood of poetry and thinking — which now means the encounter of the two facing each other.”

vacancy, occupiability, as Celan says, and an exposure that means also giving a chance within the limits of the poetic form — we shall return to this. Heidegger and Celan are actually quite close in the way they understand the gift that the poem is. Or the poetic image (*Gebild*) that is no metaphor:

Das dichtende Sagen, das zeigendere Zeigen bringt solches zum Scheinen, was im schon Vorliegenden und sonst Vorkommenden nirgends auffindbar, was nicht vorgegeben ist, vielmehr im dichtenden Sagen allererst gegeben, her-vor-gebracht, gebildet wird. Das im dichtenden Sagen Gesagte hat keinen Inhalt, sondern ist Gebild. [GA 13:171-172.]²⁷⁶

We must understand, in view of the following, that for Heidegger, already for the so-called early Heidegger, poetry is originary language, and the so-called ordinary language is originally poetic, and that, on the other hand, the poetic saying overpowers — ‘over-dicts’, so to say (*überdichtet*) — the poet and his particular intention.²⁷⁷ Poetry is *preter-intentional*, so to speak. With certain reservations and differentiations, this also applies to Celan’s poetics. Yet, to add an extra counter-signature to these two, we must also think of the primordial equivocality in Derridean terms of dissemination or disseminality.²⁷⁸ We shall leave all of these questions wide open here, for the moment at least, and proceed to the remarkable early text on Aristotle, which may well indicate something to us about the primordial equivocality that we are dealing with here.

‘COMPLETION’ AND ITS METAPHORS: HEIDEGGER’S READING OF ARISTOTLE’S *METAPHYSICS*, V, 16, AND ITS RELATION TO THE THEME OF “BEING-TOWARDS-THE-END” IN *SEIN UND ZEIT*

With regard to Heidegger’s vehement objections to the concept of metaphor and to the paradoxical fact that he almost never quite directly links Aristotle to this concept, a certain chapter in the transcript of the 1924 Marburg lectures with the title *Grundbegriffe der Aristotelischen Philosophie* (GA 18; published in 2002) contains a great surprise. Heidegger shows, in a positive fashion, that the verb *metapherein* [μεταφέρειν] has a certain methodological

²⁷⁶ Heidegger’s emphasis by letterspacing.

²⁷⁷ “*Das Wort des Dichters und das in ihm Gedichtete überdichten den Dichter und sein Sagen*. Wenn wir dies von ›der Dichtung‹ behaupten, meinen wir überall nur die *wesentliche* Dichtung. Sie allein dichtet Anfängliches; sie allein entbindet Ursprüngliches zu seiner eigenen Ankunft.” (GA 52:7.) Celan marked, in his copy of *Holzwege*, for instance in “Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes”, among many other markings, a passage which begins: “Die Sprache selbst ist Dichtung im wesentlichen Sinne.” (*Holzwege* [Frankfurt a.M.: Klostermann, 1950], p.61; cit. Celan, *La bi. phi.*, p. 359, No. 237.)

²⁷⁸ “Disseminality” is, unlike the earlier “dissemination” that also reappears for instance in the late text on Gadamer and Celan (*Béliers. Le dialogue ininterrompu : entre deux infinis, le poème* [Paris: Galilée, 2003]), a word used by Derrida precisely in at least one of his readings of early Heidegger: “Différence sexuelle, différence ontologique (Geschlecht I)” (1983), in *Heidegger et la question. De l’esprit et autres essais* (Paris: Flammarion, 1990), pp. 145-172 (also included in the first edition of *Psyché — inventions de l’autre*, 1987). We shall return to this.

function in the fifth book of the *Metaphysics* and especially in section 16, dealing with the fundamental concept of ‘complete’ or ‘completeness’, *teleion* [τέλειον].

The fifth book as a whole has been seen as composing an independent treatise concerning the several meanings of certain fundamental concepts. It consists of thirty sections, each discussing some particular concept in its several meanings or manners of address.²⁷⁹ These thirty are not, of course, *all* the fundamental concepts of Greek or Aristotelian philosophy. The verb *metapherein* [μεταφέρειν] and its derivatives occur here and there in the book, and quite a few times actually. This does of course not make metaphor [μεταφορά] one of the basic concepts, but it turns out to have a very remarkable role in the discussion of the thirty concepts. The sixteenth of these thirty fundamental concepts is *teleion*, “complete”, and we shall concentrate on this concept and its metaphorical and non-metaphorical derivatives.

The brief section on τέλειον also has an important role in Heidegger’s lecture course.²⁸⁰ The role is obviously important and emphatic, since the lecture transcript contains Heidegger’s own interpretative translation and commentary of almost the entire, albeit relatively short, section 16 of book Delta (*GA* 18:§ 11, pp. 80-91), even though these lectures only occasionally deal with the *Metaphysics* and concentrate rather on other works, especially the *Rhetoric*, *Nicomachean Ethics* and *De anima*. This special status granted to the section already anticipates the discussion on *entelecheia* at the end of the book (§ 26) where this fundamental concept of Aristotle’s doctrine of being is rendered as *Sich-im-Fertigsein-Halten* (Joe Sachs translates this concept as “being-at-work-staying-itself”,²⁸¹ while Heidegger’s rendering could be approximated by something like “staying-in-being-complete”); this final aim is the reason that Heidegger himself gives for this specific discussion of ‘completeness’ in the earlier part of the lecture course (cf. pp. 84-85). But what is to be suggested here is that only three years later the interest in *teleion* and a certain specific metaphorical application of this term will be explained otherwise, albeit altogether indirectly, with regard to one of the central concepts or themes of *Sein und Zeit*, namely *Sein zum Ende*, being-towards-the-end that is a way to speak of being-towards-death, *Sein zum Tode*.

In what follows, we will concentrate on section 11 of Heidegger’s 1924 lectures, inasmuch as the problematics of metaphor seem to be concerned, although it is actually not *metaphor* itself that is at the centre of the discussion. I will bring into relief only the passages

²⁷⁹ Diogenes Laertius has referred to the book, in his catalogue of Aristotle’s works, under the heading περὶ τῶν ποσυχῶς λεγομένων. The procedure of the whole book V (Δ) is such that each one of the 30 chapters begins with the fundamental concept to be discussed and in what sense or senses it is being spoken of, and the *incipits* range from “ἀρχὴ λέγεται ...” (1), “αἴτιον λέγεται ...” (2), through “φύσις λέγεται ...” (4) and “τὸ ὄν λέγεται ...” (7), all the way to “συμβεβηκὸς λέγεται ...” (30); chapter 16 begins with “τέλειον λέγεται ...”. And like τὸ ὄν, many of these are “said in many ways [πολλαχῶς λέγεται]”, spoken of as according to several meanings or usages.

²⁸⁰ This volume (*GA* 18) was published in 2002 on the basis of students’ transcripts, most notably Fritz Schalk’s. It was first, in 1991, announced to bear the title “Aristoteles: Rhetorik”.

²⁸¹ “Glossary”, in Aristotle’s *Physics: A Guided Study* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), p. 245.

that deserve the most specific attention with regard to the issue at hand. We should indeed pay detailed attention to these extracts divided over a few pages, in order that the apparent digressions concerning *metapherein* can be seen in the right perspective, whose whole extension is nevertheless not yet revealed in the context of these lectures on Aristotle. Book Delta, section 16, receiving special treatment in Heidegger's text, concerns the different meanings of the term *teleion*, which can be translated as "complete" or "completeness", and the term means both something completed and the way of being that pertains to this being that is brought into completion, as Heidegger points out. *Teleion* is something that has reached its own limit, a complete being in its completion.

The first meaning of *teleion* that is mentioned here by Aristotle is a temporal meaning: completion or being-carried-out of something as *having had its time*. The time for something is full or complete when no such moment can be found outside it that would still contribute to its constitution. The famous term *telos* itself is, according to Heidegger, an end as a *limit* rather than an end in a teleological sense, as a final cause. When something is complete, *teleion*, it has reached its limit.

The verb *metapherein* occurs for the first time, but not the last, in this section, in the next passage that concerns the second acceptation of *teleion* (the order is the order of presentation and not the logical or ontological order, or any other order of hierarchical primacy):

καὶ τὸ κατ' ἀρετὴν καὶ τὸ εὖ μὴ ἔχον ὑπερβολὴν πρὸς τὸ γένος, οἷον τέλειος ἱατρός καὶ τέλειος αὐλητής, ὅταν κατὰ τὸ εἶδος τῆς οἰκείας ἀρετῆς μὴθεν ἐλλείπωσιν. οὕτω δὲ μεταφέροντες καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν κακῶν λέγομεν συκοφάντην τέλειον καὶ κλέπτην τέλειον, ἐπειδὴ καὶ ἀγαθοὺς λέγομεν αὐτούς, οἷον κλέπτην ἀγαθὸν καὶ συκοφάντην ἀγαθόν. καὶ ἡ ἀρετὴ τελείωσις τις. [Met. Δ 16, 1021b15ff.] »Weiter wird als fertig angesprochen das, was im Umkreis des Verfügens über eine eigene Seinsmöglichkeit in ihrer Herkunftigkeit kein Darüberhinaus mehr hat. Wir sprechen von einem vollendeten Arzt und von einem vollendeten Flötenspieler. Ein Arzt, ein Flötenspieler ist vollendet, wenn im Hinblick darauf, wie das ihnen eigene Verfügen über ihr Sein da ist, sie in nichts zurückbleiben [wenn also der Flötenspieler in seiner ἀρετῇ in nichts zurückbleibt hinter seiner Möglichkeit]. [GA 18:80-81.]²⁸²

So there is no *hyperbolical* opportunity for further perfection hovering somewhere above the essential possibilities of completion belonging to the 'provenance' (*Herkunftigkeit*, *genos*) of the *human* flautist or the *human* physician. But with reference to this original meaning, there are also metaphorical, transferred variants:

In diesem Sinne aber [wie er in dieser Bestimmung gegeben war] sprechen wir auch einen Sykophanten (Angeber) oder einen Dieb als vollendet an, in der Weise, daß wir das Wie der Gemeinheit [von τέλειον], μεταφέροντες, übertragen auch auf das Schlechte, da wir sie ja offenbar auch gut nennen, z.B. nennen wir einen guten Dieb und einen guten Angeber. Und das Verfügen über eine Seinsmöglichkeit ist ja eine

²⁸² Square brackets, as to indicate Heidegger's addition to the text he is translating, are in the original text, except the one indicating the passage in the *Metaphysics*.

gewisse Weise des Die-Fertigkeit-des-betreffenden-Seienden-Ausmachens [dieses bestimmten Seienden, das in der ἀρετῇ ist].« [GA 18:81.]²⁸³

“And thus by an extension of the meaning”, as the translation by Tredennick says, *metapherontes*, “we use the term in a bad connection”. So it would seem that by this *metapherein* the meaning of *teleion* is transferred from the good to the bad, from the proper or predominant meaning (good, *agathon*) to the metaphorically extended meaning (bad, *kakōn*). To say that someone is a *complete* bastard would seem to be more figurative than to call someone a *perfect* saint, taken that these things are said more or less earnestly. This is what the standard translations, such as by Bonitz, let us believe. The translation by Joe Sachs comes much closer to how Heidegger understands this passage, even though the punctuation of the original text is read differently:

Complete means, in one sense, that of which it is impossible to find even one of its parts in any way outside it (as the complete time of each thing is that outside of which it is not possible to find any time which is part of that one), and also means that which has nothing of its kind exceeding it in excellence appropriate to their kinds (and by transferring this meaning to bad things, we speak of a perfect slanderer or a complete

²⁸³ Square brackets as in the original text. Cf. Tredennick’s translation, whose interpretation of the text differs in some crucial respects from that of Heidegger’s, as we shall see: “That which, in respect of goodness or excellence, cannot be surpassed in its kind; e.g., a doctor and a musician are ‘perfect’ when they have no deficiency in respect of the form of their peculiar excellence. And thus by an extension of the meaning we use the term in a bad connection, and speak of a ‘perfect’ humbug and a ‘perfect’ thief; since indeed we call them ‘good’ — e.g. a ‘good’ thief and a ‘good’ humbug. And goodness is a kind of perfection.” (PDLP. Source according to the editors: *Aristotle in 23 Volumes, Vols. 17, 18*, translated by Hugh Tredennick. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1933, 1989.) Let us note Heidegger’s translation of the last sentence of the passage [καὶ ἡ ἀρετὴ τελείωσις τις]: “Und das Verfügen über eine Seinsmöglichkeit ist ja eine gewisse Weise des Die-Fertigkeit-des-betreffenden-Seienden-Ausmachens [dieses bestimmten Seienden, das in der ἀρετῇ ist].” It differs radically from the English translation by Tredennick: “And goodness is a kind of perfection.” The latter makes indeed perfect sense in English, it is easily understood, but, first of all, it would indeed seem odd if Aristotle should use both *agathon* and *arete* to denote simply and synonymously “goodness” in subsequent phrases. Heidegger, who seldom lets such distinctions slip and seldom trusts the comfortable “standard” translations, is quite consistent in his interpretation of *arete* here as “das Verfügen über eine Seinsmöglichkeit”, “taking [one’s] feasibility of Being in [one’s] disposition”. The “virtue” is not simply a property (*Eigenschaft*) attached to some subject (in the basic sense with reference to *substratum*) or a constant quality or a disposition in another, static sense; in Heidegger’s very concrete interpretation of Aristotle, ἀρετὴ is there only to-be-put-to-practice, a *presence* of “virtue” to be put to practice at a given moment. Ἀρετὴ bears several references to temporality, most emphatically to the given moment, καίρως (cf. esp. GA 18:179-191). Such seizing of the moment as grasping a given possibility pertaining to one’s being, not as a natural property but as a capability gained by practice, practice understood as repetition, is this “certain way of completing-the-perfection-of-the-being-that-is-being-concerned”. Ἀρετὴ is not completion or perfection itself, but “an active condition that makes one apt at choosing”, as Joe Sachs translates Aristotle (*Eth. Nic.* B 6, 1106b36; trans. Sachs, 2002, p. 29; cf. Heidegger, GA 18:188). — It is remarkable that while Tredennick, for instance, divides the text so that the phrase “and goodness is a kind of perfection” belongs already to the next section (as follows: “[...] and a ‘good’ humbug. (c) And goodness is a kind of perfection. For each thing, and every substance, is perfect when, and only when, in respect of the form of its peculiar excellence, it lacks no particle of its natural magnitude. (d) [etc.]”), Heidegger attaches it to the passage concerning the metaphorical extension of “good” to the “slanderer”, and punctuates it accordingly (with a full stop at the end instead of a colon), although the edition of the Greek text he is using is W. Christ’s 1886 edition which seems to attach the phrase, by a colon, to the next part of the discussion, the one concerning the third meaning of τέλειον (“[...] καὶ συκοφάντην ἀγαθόν. καὶ ἡ ἀρετὴ τελείωσις τις· ἕκαστον [etc.]”), while the punctuation in W.D. Ross’s edition (used by Tredennick) would ambiguously allow for both readings (“[...] καὶ συκοφάντην ἀγαθόν· καὶ ἡ ἀρετὴ τελείωσις τις· ἕκαστον [etc.]”; ed. W.D. Ross; PDLP).

thief and therefore even call them good, a good thief and good slanderer). And excellence is a certain completeness, for each thing is complete and every sort of thinghood is complete at the time when the form of its proper excellence lacks no part of the fullness it has by nature. [καὶ ἡ ἀρετὴ τελείωσις τις· ἕκαστον γὰρ τότε τέλειον καὶ οὐσία πᾶσα τότε τελεία, ὅταν κατὰ τὸ εἶδος τῆς οἰκείας ἀρετῆς μηδὲν ἑλλείπη μῶριον τοῦ κατὰ φύσιν μεγέθους.] [*Met.* 1021b12-23, trans. Sachs; ed. Christ.]

In Heidegger's reading, it is "the *how* of the intendedness [*das Wie der Gemeinheit*]"²⁸⁴ that is thus transferred, when we call someone a perfect thief or a complete slanderer, and further, a *good* thief or a *good* sycophant; it is because the thief and the sycophant *excel* in their art that we use such 'metaphors'. It is not because completeness would be essentially connected with goodness in a *moral* sense that these are 'metaphors', even though we may make that connection by force of habit.

So it seems that if we speak of the virtue of thieving or of slandering by such an "extension of meaning",²⁸⁵ we detach the primary meaning of *arete* ("an active condition that makes one apt at choosing") from the conventional moral attachment to *agathon*. And now we can see that the *metapherein* is here not only a detachment of *arete* from *agathon*, but also a revelation of a more primordial attachment of *arete* to *kairos* and *energeia* (cf. *GA* 18, §§10, 12).²⁸⁶ When we speak of a good thief, we do not mean that he is a good man, but a good thief is someone who has developed his skill to the utmost, to its limit.²⁸⁷

First, there is completeness in the temporal sense [χρόνος τέλειος], which characterizes completion [τέλειον] as the limit beyond which nothing remains to be completed, as the temporal limit *after* which *there is* nothing more that would belong to the completion of a being whose characteristic is completion.²⁸⁸ Secondly, completeness means also that there is no "hyperbolic"²⁸⁹ possibility above or beyond reaching the ownmost possibility of being, the ownmost authenticity; for instance, the completion of being a flautist or a thief or a sycophant.

²⁸⁴ This term *Gemeinheit* is also used by Husserl.

²⁸⁵ "Extension of meaning" is Tredennick's translation of μεταφορά and for the derivatives of the verb μεταφέρειν in Aristotle's text (e.g. 1021b, *passim*; *PDLP*).

²⁸⁶ Actually it seems that "virtue" is not a bad translation of ἀρετή at all, since Joe Sachs argues as follows: "When applied to human beings, the word has no necessary moral implications, though it carries them conventionally. [...] The English word 'virtue' is an apt translation, just because of its own fruitful ambiguity, combining durable moral connotations with amoral uses such as 'the virtue of this tax-avoidance scheme...' Aristotle distinguishes virtue of intellect from virtue of character, but uses the word primarily for the latter, which he defines as a stable active condition of the soul, by which one consistently chooses the mean [τὸ μέσον] in matters of feeling and action knowingly and for its own sake [...]. This human mean does not, in Aristotle's view, require the sacrifice or holding back of any of our powers, but sets free the full being-at-work of them all." (Sachs, "Glossary" to the *Nicomachean Ethics* [2002], p. 212.) So the moral implications of the word ἀρετή are carried by the word only conventionally.

²⁸⁷ Or as Heidegger says: "Ein »guter Dieb«[...] ein vollendeter Dieb besagt einen solchen, der in seinem Sein zu seiner rechten Seinsmöglichkeit gekommen ist, diese Möglichkeit zu ihrem Ende gebracht hat." (*GA* 18:83.)

²⁸⁸ "[...] das, *worüber hinaus nichts da ist*, worüber es nichts gibt, nichts, das das Sein des Seienden, dessen Charakter τέλειον ist, mit ausmacht." (*GA* 18:83.)

²⁸⁹ "τὸ εὐ μὴ ἔχον ὑπερβολὴν πρὸς τὸ γένος" (1021b15; ed. Christ).

In the following passage the possibility of our speaking μεταφέροντες is still, or again, from a third angle, under consideration:

ἔτι οἷς ὑπάρχει τὸ τέλος σπουδαῖον, ταῦτα λέγεται τέλεια· κατὰ γὰρ τὸ ἔχειν τὸ τέλος τέλεια. ὥστ' ἐπεὶ τὸ τέλος τῶν ἐσχάτων τί ἐστι, καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ φαῦλα μεταφέροντες λέγομεν τελείως ἀπολωλέναι καὶ τελείως ἐφθάρθαι, ὅταν μηδὲν ἑλλείπη τῆς φθορᾶς καὶ τοῦ κακοῦ ἀλλ' ἐπὶ τοῦ ἐσχάτου ᾗ. [Met V, 16, 1021b23-28.]²⁹⁰ »Ferner ist τέλειον Sein im Wie des Fertigseins, das Seiende, in dem als solchem seine Fertigkeit ernsthaft vorhanden ist. Und zwar wird ein solches Seiendes als τέλειον angesprochen im Hinblick auf das Haben des Endes im Sinne der Fertigkeit. Daher wir denn, da ja τέλος zu den Äußersten gehört, auch auf das Schlechte dieses Wie der Gemeinheit übertragen. Wir sprechen von einem völligen Vernichtetwordensein, wenn nichts mehr fehlt beim Untergang, sondern es beim Äußersten steht, ganz, völlig untergegangen ist.« [GA 18:81-82.]

This passage introduces a further distinction among the meanings of *teleion*, namely the having of “an end” (*telos*) in an “earnest” or “serious” manner [σπουδαίως].²⁹¹ Let us try to approximate Heidegger’s rendering: “Furthermore, *teleion* is [means] Being in the ‘how’ of being-completed, the being in which, as such [*als solchem*: in this ‘how’ of being-completed], its completedness is seriously present-at-hand. And such a being is indeed addressed as *teleion* with regard to the having of the end in the sense of being completed. Hence it is that we, as *telos* does indeed belong to the extremes [among ‘the utmost’, ‘the last things’], then transfer this ‘how’ of the meantness [i.e. intendedness] also upon the bad. We speak of complete annihilation [complete having-become-annihilated], when nothing anymore lacks from the destruction but it has been taken to the utmost [*beim Äußersten steht* seems quite loyal to the genitive in W. Christ’s edition: ἐπὶ τοῦ ἐσχάτου ᾗ], [something] being wholly, totally destroyed.”²⁹² Heidegger explains the term *spoudaios* and his translation by *ernsthaft* a few

²⁹⁰ Here the edition by W. Christ, used by Heidegger, somewhat differs from the W. D. Ross edition (ἐπὶ τῷ ἐσχάτῳ i. e. dative in stead of ἐπὶ τοῦ ἐσχάτου i.e. genitive). Cf. Tredennick’s translation, based on Ross’s edition: “(d) [i.e. this is the fourth distinction of the meaning of τέλειον according to Tredennick:] Things which have attained their end, if their end is good, are called ‘perfect’; for they are perfect in virtue of having attained the end. Hence, since the end is an ultimate thing, we extend the meaning of the term to bad senses, and speak of perishing ‘perfectly’ or being ‘perfectly’ destroyed, when the destruction or calamity falls short in no respect but reaches its extremity.” (PDLP.)

²⁹¹ In Sachs’s translation, this is rendered in a very different manner: “And further, those things are said to be complete to which a good end belongs, since it is by having the end that they are complete, and so, since the end is one of the extremes, transferring the meaning, we speak of the degenerate things as completely ruined or completely decayed, when they lack nothing of ruin and evil but are at the extreme point of them.” (1021b23-28, Sachs, trans., *Aristotle’s Metaphysics* [2002], p. 98.)

²⁹² Aristotle takes seriousness seriously and plays with it, as we may gather from the following passage from the tenth book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*: “[...] we choose everything, so to speak, for the sake of something else, except happiness, since this is the end. But to be earnest and to labor for the sake of play seems foolish and too childish. But to play in order that one might be serious, as Anacharsis says, seems to be right, since play seems like relaxation, [...] [but] relaxation is not the end, since it comes about for the sake of being-at-work. [ἅπαντα γὰρ ὥς εἰπεῖν ἑτέρου ἕνεκα αἰρούμεθα πλὴν τῆς εὐδαιμονίας· τέλος γὰρ αὕτη. σπουδάζειν δὲ καὶ πονεῖν παιδιᾶς χάριν ἡλίθιον φαίνεται καὶ λίαν παιδικόν. παίζειν δ’ ὅπως σπουδάζη, κατ’ Ἀνάχαρσιν, ὁρθῶς ἔχειν δοκεῖ· ἀναπαύσει γὰρ ἔοικεν ἢ παιδιᾷ... οὐ δὴ τέλος ἢ ἀνάπαυσις· γίνεται γὰρ ἕνεκα τῆς ἐνεργείας.]” (1176b30-1177a1; trans. Joe Sachs [Met., 2002], p. 191.) Moreover, “a great-souled person seems to have a slow way of moving, a deep voice, and a steady way of speaking, since a person who takes few things seriously is not anxious, [καὶ κίνησις δὲ

pages later: “*Es muß ernst gemacht werden mit einer Möglichkeit seines eigenen Seins.*” (GA 18:87.)

Heidegger does not add any immediate comments to this passage, but continues to follow the text and to translate it, only to comment on this *metapherein* later, and we will, accordingly, follow him to the citation and translation of the next passage:

διὸ καὶ ἡ τελευτὴ κατὰ μεταφορὰν λέγεται τέλος, ὅτι ἄμφω ἔσχατα. [Met. V, 16, 1021b28f.] »Daher wird auch das Lebensende, der Tod, im Hinblick auf eine Übertragung Vollendung genannt, ein Fertigsein des Lebens ausmachend.« Die Übertragung gründet darin, daß das Lebensende den Charakter des Äußersten hat, τελευτὴ ist τέλος.

τέλος δὲ καὶ τὸ οὐ ἔνεκα ἔσχατον. [Met. V, 16, 1021b29f.] »Τέλος, Ende als Fertigsein ausmachend heißt auch das, worum willen etwas ist, das Worumwillen als das Äußerste.« [GA 18:82.]²⁹³

This is where Heidegger ends his translation of the section, paraphrasing in a few words the rest of its content, namely Aristotle’s summary, and promising to return to it later.²⁹⁴

The verb μεταφέρειν and the noun μεταφορά occur here, in the sixteenth section of book Delta, on three different occasions, and each time the transference of meaning seems to amount to a certain change for the worse: first, the metaphor of the complete slanderer (or a good thief, etc.), then the metaphor of the complete ruin or annihilation, and third, the metaphor of calling death an “end”, a “completion” of life. The editors have included in the title of the next subchapter, namely the passage following the actual translation and the few comments, the expression “*Die Methode der Übertragung*”, and Heidegger indeed ends this specific subchapter of a couple of pages by saying: “*Es ist kein Zufall, daß Aristoteles nicht nur hier, sondern in einer ganzen Reihe von Analysen immer in dieser Weise des μεταφέρειν die Betrachtungen vollzieht.*” (GA 18:84.) We can already see that this does not by any means amount to saying that Aristotle would himself *use* metaphor, he rather *mentions* metaphorical

βραδεῖα τοῦ μεγαλοψύχου δοκεῖ εἶναι, καὶ φωνὴ βαρεῖα, καὶ λέξις στάσιμος· οὐ γὰρ σπευστικὸς ὁ περὶ ὀλίγα σπουδάζων, [...] (IV, 1125a12-15; trans. Sachs.) Here we should pay attention to the fact that σπουδάζειν means not only “to be earnest” and “to be anxious” but also “to hurry”, “to make haste” (LSJ)! So Aristotle certainly plays here — perhaps in order to be serious?

²⁹³ Cf. Sachs: “And for this reason even death is by a transference of meaning called an end, because both are extremes, and the end for the sake of which something *is* is an extreme.” (1021b28-30. Emphasis by Sachs. The punctuation here makes an odd impression, and it seems to make more sense to read this as Heidegger does, so that the last part, “[A]nd the end for the sake of which something *is* is an extreme”, is separated by full stop from the preceding sentence.)

²⁹⁴ “Zum Schluß folgt eine zusammenfassende Gliederung der genannten Bedeutungen, eine Einteilung unter dem Gesichtspunkt der Kategorien, auf die wir zurückkommen werden, um zu sehen, wie gerade τέλος Grundkategorie des Seienden ist.” (GA 18:82.) Heidegger maintains that the term τέλος here has nothing to do with teleology and that Aristotle has no “teleological world-view” as many would have it; even a superficial reading shows that τέλειον and τέλος here have nothing to do with final causes, while τέλος is explicitly stated to be τῶν ἐσχάτων τί, “one of the extremes”, and while it is so that *also* “the end for the sake of which” is *an* end, *a* completion, *one of* the extremes: “Ziel und Zweck sind bestimmte Weisen, in denen τέλος als »Ende« ist, aber sie sind nicht primäre Bestimmungen, sondern Zweck und Ziel sind im τέλος als »Ende« als der ursprünglichen Bedeutung fundiert.” (GA 18:85.) The end as a final cause is not what founds the other meanings of “end”, but the “end” in a more comprehensive and original sense is what also founds the end understood in the specific sense of aim or purpose.

uses of a term, and what still remains to be seen even more clearly, he also utilizes these usages for quite specific purposes of analysis. What we can see already, even without further specifications of this “method”, is also that for instance ‘metaphorising’ would not be an apt translation for this methodical μεταφέρειν. Aristotle invents neither the metaphors nor the proper meanings of the terms or basic concepts he examines, but he indeed aims to discover, in each case, a certain guiding meaning through examining the usual acceptations of a given term, a unity of meaning which governs these several ways of using a word. And this examination happens also through the transferred meanings, the metaphors.

Here is the description of Aristotle’s specific method of μεταφέρειν, which is not only carrying-over as when something is carried over by metaphor, but a carrying-over-along-with:

Aristoteles erwähnt ausdrücklich das μεταφέρειν, er führt die *Übertragung* selbst an, zu einem bestimmten Zweck. In einem Übertragen des Sprechens nehmen wir aus dem nächsten und ursprünglichen Ansprechen, aus der nächsten und ursprünglichen Bedeutung von τέλειον eine Bedeutung noch mit (μετά) und tragen sie über auf ein neues Angesprochenes. Bei diesem Übertrag, wo wir eine Bedeutung mitnehmen, wird gerade das, was wir mitnehmen, sichtbar. Und darin wird sichtbar, was wir in der Grundbedeutung, von woher wir mitnehmen, schon gemeint haben. Beim vollendeten Arzt: es kommt nicht auf moralische Güte an, sondern in diesem τέλειος liegt das Zu-Ende-Bringen. Das μεταφέρειν macht sichtbar, was mit τέλειον eigentlich gemeint ist, wobei der Arzt ἀγαθός ist und der Dieb auch ἀγαθός qua Dieb, in einem anderen Sinne κακός. Es ist kein Zufall, daß Aristoteles nicht nur hier, sondern in einer ganzen Reihe von Analysen immer in dieser Weise des μεταφέρειν die Betrachtungen vollzieht. [GA 18:84.]

We should notice the two tiny words here, ‘with’ (*mit*) and ‘already’ (*schon*). In the μεταφέρειν, in the *Übertragen* of the term τέλειον to designate a perfect thief or a complete slanderer or, further, a *good* thief or *good* slanderer, we bring into view what we *already* meant when we spoke of a perfect doctor, and that we did not mean him to be a good doctor by virtue of his moral excellence, in his being a good man. The *co-intended* meaning that was meant *along with* the original expression ‘good doctor’, which was *not* the moral meaning at all, becomes clear through the metaphor, or at least through this thematization of metaphor. We may see that it is not necessarily the simple *use* of metaphor that brings this co-intended meaning to light, thematically, although only this co-intended meaning makes the so-called metaphor possible in the first place. Moreover, the thematization of the preposition *meta* [μετά] as *mit*, ‘with’, or ‘along with’, ‘among’, is highly significant here. In an earlier stage of the lecture course (§ 7), when Heidegger dealt with the ‘genealogy’ of the term οὐσία, the verb *mitmeinen* (co-signify, co-intend) played an important role, and as we can read from the famous method paragraph (§ 7) of *Sein und Zeit*, for Heidegger, *phenomenology* means *thematizing the unthematized but implicitly co-intended levels of experience*.

So what does the method of *metapherein* reveal to us here? First of all, it reveals indirectly what we actually meant when we spoke of a perfect, good doctor, namely what we

meant *as if by definition*, even though we probably did not expressly represent this co-signification to ourselves, and were not constantly aware of it.²⁹⁵ In this co-intended completeness it was not a question of moral values at all, in the first place, but instead of that, a certain bringing-to-completion was meant, the achieving of an end in the sense of reaching essential limits (“*in diesem τέλειος liegt das Zu-Ende-Bringen*”; GA 18:84).

In dieser Bestimmung des Zu-Ende-Gekommenseins eines Seienden liegt die Möglichkeit der *Übertragung* des τέλειον. Sofern wir sprechen von einem »guten Dieb«, wird in dieser Übertragung sichtbar, was mit τέλειον eigentlich gemeint ist, wenn wir von einem »guten Arzt« sprechen. Das Prädikat »gut« hat die Nebenbedeutung von ausgezeichnet, wertvoll. Τέλειον meint dies nicht, sofern wir eben auch von einem »vollkommenen Dieb« sprechen, so daß die Bedeutung von τέλειον einen Seinscharakter ausmacht, der nicht gebunden ist an die spezifische Bedeutung von ἀγαθόν, wofern eine bestimmte Eigenschaft eines Seienden ausgedrückt zu werden pflegt. [GA 18:85-86]

So it is by way of *metapherein* that we see what is *properly* meant by *teleion*!²⁹⁶

Heidegger makes an eight-point division among the various meanings of *teleion*:

- 1) The completion of something in time. 2) The completion which, in addition to the first point, designates the being of a being such that it has reached the limit with regard to its own possibilities of being. 3) The second point makes the third possible, namely the transferred uses of *teleion* in ‘complete slanderer’ and ‘perfect thief’.²⁹⁷ 4) The completion towards which virtue is always directed without having necessarily always fully attained its end. 5) This fifth point is again essentially linked to the preceding one: the completion which

²⁹⁵ To be sure, we speak here of the ordinary standard case which Aristotle and Heidegger refer to and exclude all the further possibilities of figuration, such as irony.

²⁹⁶ The ‘proper’ meaning of the terms that we would translate as complete or perfect and good is, for Aristotle, undoubtedly other than their *moral* meaning, which is a specific usage derived from this basic, guiding meaning. Aristotle calls the speaking of a “perfect (or good) thief” and a “complete (or good) sycophant” metaphorical, even though the relation of these expressions to the guiding meaning of ‘complete’ and ‘good’ seems to be quite different from the case of the geometrical usage of the term ‘power’, for instance, which is not reducible to the basic guiding meaning of δύναμις which is to be the source of movement (or change) *in* another or *as* another (*Met.* V, 12). The meaning of ‘the good’ as *completion* in Aristotle’s analogy should perhaps in the final analysis be understood in the *analogical* relation of relations that ‘the good’ on the whole (as well as ‘beautiful’, τὸ φαινόμενον κάλον) entertains with “the highest good in nature” or with “the best” and the highest “for-the sake-of-which” (τὸ οὐ ἕνεκα) (cf. *Met.* XII, 7; cf. also I, 2, 982b2ff). On the other hand, it should perhaps be noted that the speaking of a “good thief” or a “perfect slanderer” is not a simple *metaphor* even in the sense that such expressions are rather characterized by *irony*, which can either affirm the usual ‘proper’ connection of these attributes ‘good’ and ‘perfect’ to moral values, or make this connection questionable. And such figures may also suggest something of the relation that these predicates entertain with the notion of ἐνέργεια or ἐντελεχεία (“actuality” or “being-at-work” and “complete-being-at-work”, *Wirklichkeit, Im-Werke-sein* and *Sich-in-seinem-Ende-halten*; cf. GA 18 [§ 10]:70-71; § 27), while ‘completeness’ is always related to a determined ontological ability or possibility (*Seinkönnen, Seinsmöglichkeit*), such as the ‘art’ of the doctor, the flautist, the thief or the slanderer.

²⁹⁷ These ‘metaphors’ that reveal the ‘proper’ meaning are indeed metaphors in the sense that they are *paradoxical*, i.e. they are *beside* the δόξα that attaches the predicates ‘perfect’, ‘complete’ and ‘good’ to moral values; they represent a “deviant predication” with regard to this current opinion or predisposition. They are extra-ordinary ways of speaking, in that respect. But the basic or guiding meaning that Aristotle seeks is not always the prevailing, current, ordinary way of using the term; it is rather something upon which the different acceptations are based, their common source.

properly (*im eigentlichen Sinne*) belongs to a being, such that it belongs to it in an ‘earnest’ manner. 7) The seventh point — let us hop over the sixth for the moment — the seventh meaning of *teleion* is “that for the sake of which [τὸ οὐ ἔνεκα]”. 8) The eighth point is related by Aristotle to the categories: something can be called complete *either* as an independent thing *or* in relation to some independent thing. Now it is time for the sixth point, last but not least: 6) This point combines the second and third metaphor in Aristotle’s text in the following way:

In der weiteren Bestimmung des τέλειον wird nun erst eigentlich deutlich, in welchem Sinne τέλειον ein Seinscharakter ist. Es wird gesprochen von einem τελείως ἐφθάρθαι [1021b27]. Ferner wird die τελευτή, der »Tod«, als τέλος bezeichnet. Was wird in dieser Übertragung sichtbar? Wir sagen von einem Menschen: »Er ist ganz fertig, erledigt, verbraucht.« Das besagt hier: Er ist nicht mehr der, der er früher war, er ist als der, der er früher eigentlich gewesen ist, nicht mehr da. Fertigsein ist *Aus-dem-Dasein-Wegsein*. Was ist der Sinn der Übertragung, wenn τελευτή als τέλος bezeichnet wird? Mit dem Tod ist das Leben zu Ende, der Tod macht das Leben fertig dadurch, daß er das Sein aus dem Da wegnimmt, das Leben verschwindet. Mit dieser Übertragung zeigt sich τέλειον, τέλος als ein Daseinscharakter, sofern τὸ τέλος, τέλειον dasjenige Dasein bezeichnet, das wir als Nicht-mehr-Dasein, als Wegsein bezeichnen. *Wegsein ist eine ausgezeichnete Weise des Daseins*. Gerade in dieser Übertragung von τέλος und τέλειον auf den Tod zeigt sich die ausgezeichnete Funktion von τέλειον, der Charakter des Daseins zu sein in der ausgezeichneten Möglichkeit des Verschwindens. [GA 18:87-88.]

The reader familiar with *Sein und Zeit* might raise an eyebrow here. Does this not forestall the theme of being towards death (*Sein zum Tode*), or being towards the end (*Sein zum Ende*) in that major work of Heidegger’s? And the reader familiar with Heidegger’s insistent critique of the concept of metaphor may raise another eyebrow. Could this not be seen as a possible opening towards a more positive critique of that concept, and precisely as an Aristotelian concept this time? The relation between these two questions must now be examined.

Let us paraphrase the last sentence of the passage just quoted. By this *metapherein* in which *telos* (end) and *teleion* (completion) are ‘transferred’ to signify death, life’s end, a remarkable function of *teleion* is revealed: as a characteristic of being-there,²⁹⁸ a characteristic of being-there in the singular possibility of *disappearing*. The *disappearance of beings* was the Greeks’ greatest fear, as Heidegger has elsewhere claimed. We might imagine that this fear was the prime motivator for the birth of philosophy and for the Greek conception of being as permanent presence, *ständige Anwesenheit* [οὐσία].

In the metaphor in question, a certain determination of being and of being-there becomes visible:

²⁹⁸ In these 1924 lectures, the term *Dasein* is used in a strikingly broader fashion than in *Sein und Zeit*: it is often used, for instance, as a translation of οὐσία, and here it must be taken in the broad sense of existence, not only as human existence, but existence understood as presence, the ‘there-being’ of anything.

Tod eine Weise des Daseins, das Nicht-mehr-Dasein, das Wegsein, die ἀπουσία. Das Nicht-mehr-da ist ein Character des Da, sofern τελευτή als τέλος angesprochen wird, wobei es sich aber um eine Übertragung handelt. [GA 18:89.]

Let us pay attention to the tiny adverb *aber* here. The no-longer-there is a characteristic of ‘the there’, insofar as *teleute* is addressed as *telos*, *but* in this case, in the case addressing the matter in such a manner, *however*, we are dealing with a metaphor. When we speak of death as an end, we do not speak literally, but we are using metaphor. This is at least what Aristotle seems to be saying. Heidegger continues:

Damit ist gemeint, daß bei diesem Ansprechen des Todes als τέλος die eigentliche Bedeutung von τέλος und τέλειον in gewissem Sinne verloren gegangen ist, insofern mit τέλος gemeint ist ein solches Ende, daß dieses Ende das Betreffende nicht einfach verschwinden läßt, es nicht aus dem Da wegnimmt, sondern im Da hält, es in seinem eigentliche Da bestimmt. Τέλος besagt also ursprünglich: *zu Ende sein so, daß dieses Ende das eigentliche Da ausmacht, ein Seiendes in seiner Gegenwärtigkeit eigentlich bestimmen*. Weil das die Grundbedeutung von τέλος ist, kann man übertragender Weise von τέλος im Sinne des Todes sprechen. [GA 18:89-90.]

Heidegger maintains emphatically that non-being or not-being-there can only be interpreted *after* being-there (*Dasein*) has already been positively expounded. And yet, it is the thrust of absence, of the not-there or the being-away as the most extreme way of being-there that throws the interpretation back toward this necessary construal of the ‘there’: “*Wegsein ist die extremste Weise des Daseins, so daß die Interpretation des Seins zurückgeworfen wird auf die Auslegung des Da.*” *Telos* and *teleion* mean limit (*Grenze*), and an essential limit indeed (*und zwar der Grenze im Sinne des Seins*) in the sense that such a limit of something determines the ‘there’ of what it limits (*diese Grenze das Seiende in seinem Da bestimmt*):

Ende etwa in dem Sinne, daß dieses τέλος zurückgreift auf das, dessen Ende es ist, und dieses in seinem Da bestimmt — Character des rückgreifenden Umfassens. Ein vollendeter Geiger ist durch sein Vollendetsein in seinem eigentlichen Sein. [GA 18:90.]

For instance, with regard to this talk of the complete violinist, to speak of death as completion seems strange. Strange and metaphorical. Death as being away (*Wegsein*) does not maintain and determine anything or anyone, any being-there in its being and its there (*Da*), or in its here and now. It does not establish the character of being complete or being an end, if we mean by ‘end’ what Aristotle means by *telos*. To speak of death as an end, a limit or a completion is, from an Aristotelian perspective, merely metaphorical.

It would seem that it is precisely this metaphor, *and the question of whether it is merely a metaphor*, that Heidegger tackles in a certain important part of *Sein und Zeit*. The metaphor mentioned by Aristotle or cited by him, according to which death is the limit, the end or the completion of life, while ‘end’ or ‘limit’ is understood in the very specific sense that Aristotle defines for the word *telos* on the basis of the usage of this term, is insufficient,

but perhaps it thrusts, precisely in all its insufficiency and alleged metaphoricity, Heidegger back toward the explanation that the ‘there’ calls for (*zurückgeworfen ... auf die Auslegung des Da*), insofar as this *Da* belongs to the human *Dasein*. Thus death as the limit of being-there gains a new place *within* the structure of *Dasein* and is no longer excluded, and the metaphor turns into a sort of *inclusive* figure, a metonymy of sorts. Quasi-metonymy. Heidegger speaks of the way by which death enters into the sphere of human being-there: “*seine Weise, in das Dasein hereinzustehen*” (*Sein und Zeit*, p. 258). The finite and singular being to which the name *Dasein* in each case belongs, a name that is in *Sein und Zeit* reserved for the *human* way of being-there, turns out to be mortal in a fundamental way.

BEING-TOWARDS-THE-END – ON THE HITHER SIDE OF ‘METAPHOR’

Sein-zum-Ende, *Sein-zum-Tode*: these are precisely the turns of speech in the name of which Heidegger will, in *Sein und Zeit* (1927), only a couple of years after the lectures on Aristotle, deconstruct the allegedly metaphorical talk of death as the end, the final limit, the completion of human life.

The human finitude is thematized in the context of *Being and Time* precisely as a relation to death, but within the limits of life (as being-there) it can be thematized only ‘from within’. It is actually astonishing to see how patiently Heidegger in the lectures of 1924 restricts himself to the close reading of Aristotle’s text and restrains himself from commenting upon the ‘metaphor’ that ceases to be metaphorical in the major work that was to be published so soon. In *Sein und Zeit*, being-toward-the-end, death as the end of being there, as the completion of human life, is the very opposite of metaphor: it gives to *Dasein* its most authentic, most proper meaning in a thoroughly analysed manner.

In the summer of 1924 the term *Dasein* is indeed still used in a much broader sense than in *Sein und Zeit*, namely as an equivalent of οὐσία, except in such cases when it is specified: *Dasein des Menschen*, *das menschliche Dasein*. In these lectures οὐσία is characterized by what Heidegger calls *Verfügbarsein* (disposability, availability, having at one’s command). But this having-at-one’s-disposal as the characterization of ‘thinghood’ in general is of course sharply distinguished from the human *Dasein*, and this is done precisely in the context of the analysis of *Sein zum Ende*, being-towards-the-end, which is a certain, quite adequate way of naming being-towards-death. In section 48 this distinction is made very clearly, word for word: “*Im Tod ist das Dasein weder vollendet, noch einfach verschwunden, noch gar fertig geworden oder als Zuhandenes ganz verfügbar.*” (*SuZ*, 245.) Heidegger also proceeds to state the distinction between *Zu-Ende-Sein* (being-ended, being-finished) and *Sein zum Ende*:

So wie das Dasein vielmehr ständig, solange es ist, schon sein Noch-nicht *ist*, so *ist* es auch schon immer sein Ende. Das mit dem Tod gemeinte Enden bedeutet kein Zu-

Ende-Sein des Daseins, sondern ein *Sein zum Ende* dieses Seienden. Der Tod ist eine Weise zu sein, die das Dasein übernimmt, sobald es ist. [SuZ, 245.]

On the one hand, Heidegger seems to take Aristotle's 'metaphor' just about in the same manner as Aristotle takes it, as mere metaphor, but on the other, everything in the analysis of *Sein zum Tode* suggests the insufficiency of such metaphor *as* metaphor, and also the fact that Aristotle disregards the possibility of another, more profound and more important sense that could be *co-intended* by the said metaphor.

Dasein does not reach its end in the way a fruit ripens or in the way a road ends (these are the counter-examples in the already quoted section 48 of *Sein und Zeit*), but it *is* always already its own end. Death is a way of being that *Dasein* assumes as soon as it *is*. Death belongs to the very being of the human being-there. And: "*Enden als Sein zum Ende verlangt seine ontologische Aufklärung aus der Seinsart des Daseins.*" (SuZ, 245.) Already in the 1924 lectures Heidegger bids us to proceed carefully:

Wenn wir zusammenfassen, so ist primär festzuhalten: Τέλος hat die Bestimmung von *Grenze*. Dieser *Grenzcharakter* ist so aufzufassen: das, worüber hinaus nichts weiter da ist, Ende, das, wobei etwas aufhört. Hier müssen wir aber vorsichtig sein. Ein Pfad durch eine Wiese hört auf bei einem Gartenzaun. Der Gartenzaun ist aber nicht τέλειον. Das Pfad-Sein als solches ist nicht bestimmt durch den Gartenzaun. Das, wobei der Pfad aufhört, ist selbst ein Seiendes, das in derselben Weise ist wie das, was bei ihm aufhört. Vermutlich ist τέλειον nicht ein Seiendes, ein Stück des Seienden, dessen Ende es ausmacht, sondern τέλειον ist ein *Sein*, eine *Weise des Seins selbst*. Τέλειον ist Grenze nicht als ein Seiendes zu einem Seienden, dessen Grenze es ist. In diesem Sinne ist der Dieb fertig, wobei die Grenze nicht außerhalb seiner liegt. Das Wie seines Seins, das Stehlen selbst, ist zu seiner bestimmten Möglichkeit gekommen. Er ist nicht deshalb ein Guter Dieb, weil er auf eine große Menge Gelder stößt. Das τέλειον ist eine *Bestimmung des Seins des Seienden* und nicht irgendeine Eigenschaft wie etwa weiß oder schwarz. Das Worüber-hinaus-nichts hat den Charakter der Grenze im Sinne einer Bestimmung des Seins.

Dieser Grenzcharakter des τέλειον als Seinsbestimmung wird deutlich in der weiteren Übertragung: Tod eine Weise des Daseins, [...] wobei es sich aber um eine Übertragung handelt. [GA 18:89.]

The whole analysis of being-towards-death and being-towards-the-end (at least the first chapter of the second section of *Sein und Zeit*, namely §§ 46-53 and further § 62) can be read against the metaphor mentioned by Aristotle. In this analysis it is a question of *Dasein's being complete* and of its *ability to be complete* (*Ganzsein, Ganzseinkönnen*) (cf. pp. 235ff; § 62, p. 309; § 72, p. 372, and *passim*). From this perspective, we may see that a certain sort of *reductio ad absurdum* of the said metaphor, resembling Aristotle's corresponding method, belongs essentially to this analysis. As was already mentioned, in the section 48 of *Sein und Zeit* Heidegger takes a detour through the various meanings that it *cannot* be a question of when we speak of the *end* of *Dasein* and its being-towards-the-end, or when we say that the human being-there, *Dasein*, *is* always already its own end; the not-yet (*das Noch-nicht*) that characterizes *Dasein* cannot be like that of the moon that is not yet full, and the end toward

which *Dasein* always is cannot be like the ripening of a fruit, for example, although there are some significant similarities between the not-yet belonging to the structure of *Dasein* and the not-yet of the fruit:

Die Unreife Frucht zum Beispiel geht ihrer Reife entgegen. Dabei wird ihr im Reifen das, was sie noch nicht ist, keineswegs als Noch-nicht-vorhandenes angestückt. Sie selbst bringt sich zur Reife, und solches Sichbringen charakterisiert ihr Sein als Frucht. [...] Das Noch-nicht der Unreife meint nicht ein außenstehendes Anderes, das gleichgültig gegen die Frucht an und mit ihr vorhanden sein könnte. [...] Die reifende Frucht jedoch ist nicht nur nicht gleichgültig gegen die Unreife als ein Anderes ihrer selbst, sondern reifend *ist* sie die Unreife. Das Noch-nicht ist schon in ihr eigenes Sein einbezogen und das keineswegs als beliebige Bestimmung, sondern als Konstitutivum. Entsprechend *ist* auch das Dasein, solange es ist, *je schon sein Noch-nicht*. / Was am Dasein die »Unganzheit« ausmacht, das ständige Sichvorweg, ist weder ein Ausstand eines summativen Zusammen, noch gar ein Noch-nicht-zugänglich-geworden-sein, sondern ein Noch-nicht, das je ein Dasein als das Seiende, das es ist, zu sein hat. Gleichwohl zeigt der Vergleich mit der Unreife der Frucht, bei einer gewissen Übereinstimmung, doch wesentliche Unterschiede. Sie beachten heißt, die bisherige Rede von Ende und Enden in ihrer Unbestimmtheit erkennen. [SuZ, § 48, pp. 243-244.]²⁹⁹

We shall not follow the further distinctions and examples with which Heidegger continues; let it now suffice to add what he asserts after introducing the few counter-examples to *Dasein*'s end or ownmost completion, whose counterpart is its essential not-yet (*Noch-nicht*), namely the incompleteness (*die »Unganzheit«*) that characterizes it from the empirical birth to the empirical death, from beginning to end: "*Durch keinen dieser Modi des Endens läßt sich der Tod als Ende des Daseins angemessen charakterisieren.*" (SuZ, 245.) What makes such adequation impossible is the difference of the modes of being between *Dasein* and *Vorhandensein* and *Zuhandensein* (cf. *ibid.*). Neither shall we follow the positive analysis of *Dasein*'s ownmost finitude further, except for the remark that might perfectly well allude to the lectures given two or three years earlier and Aristotle's use of the term 'metaphor' in the book Delta:

Wie soll die ontologische Möglichkeit eines *eigentlichen* Seins zum Tode »objektiv« charakterisiert werden, wenn das Dasein sich nie eigentlich zu seinem Ende verhält oder aber dieses eigentliche Sein seinem Sinne nach den Anderen verborgen bleiben muß? Ist der Entwurf der existenzialen Möglichkeit eines so fragwürdigen existenziellen Seinkönnens nicht ein phantastisches Unterfangen? Wessen bedarf es, damit ein solcher Entwurf über eine nur dichtende, willkürliche Konstruktion hinauskommt? [SuZ, § 53, p. 260.]

It is precisely as if these questions concerning the suspicions of a *merely poetic, arbitrary construction* were forwarded in the dialogue with Aristotle, who more or less disregards, after all, the thought of death as a completion of life (which is to say, at the same time: end and

²⁹⁹ Cf. Derrida, *Apories. Mourir — s'attendre aux « limites de la vérité »* (Paris: Galilée, 1996), pp. 55ff.

limit of life) as a mere metaphor, without engaging himself in a positive analysis of what we could perhaps call the co-intended fundamental meaning of this figure.

No doubt, Heidegger conceives of his own “philology”³⁰⁰ and phenomenology, as well as Aristotle’s (in a certain sense and to a certain extent) ‘doxographical’ philosophy or phenomenology, as thematization of the co-intended but unthematized, of the pre-comprehended or the pre-predicative, and on the other hand, of the unthought in the history of Western thought. This is possible, in the first place, only insofar as the historicity and the multiplicity of what has been articulated in this history, as well as concept-formation which is a central theme of the 1924 lectures on Aristotle, are understood in ways other than through the concept of metaphor. In an early stage of the lectures Heidegger distinguishes two of the possible ways in which a term may become a term (*Terminus*): first, there is what we may call neologism, in which “the word is *coined together with the thing*”, and second, a term may be generated so that an already extant word is used in a new relationship, in a new terminological sense, meaning that the terminological function is attached, so to say, to an existing word. This does not have to happen altogether arbitrarily, but rather *so that a certain moment of meaning*, which was already implied by and *co-intended* in the colloquial usage, becomes thematized in the terminological employment (cf. *GA* 18:23, already cited above). In such a case, the meaning of an existing word is *not extended* as in metaphor, but rather something is brought into relief that was already ‘meant along with’ in the current colloquial usage; something *already* co-signified, co-intended (*mitgemeint*) becomes clear for the first time. Such is the case for instance with the term οὐσία, which is perhaps the most fundamental of all the fundamental concepts of Greek philosophy. Aristotle does not coin neologisms for the needs of a philosophical system, but rather reveals meanings that in a peculiar way already belong to the horizon of the Greek being-in-the-world, as something co-intended and even essentially inherent but at the same time implicit, not fully thematized.

The term οὐσία is of course a privileged example in this respect. Aristotle himself uses it occasionally in the economic sense of real property, the immovables. But we should not try to ‘somehow deduce’ the terminological sense from the colloquial, as Heidegger warns us, while this colloquial meaning can indeed give us some indications in the direction of the terminological meaning. Οὐσία in the colloquial sense, as for instance household commodities, is something that is in a quite specific way *there* for me, at my disposal and indeed *on a daily basis* (*tagtäglich*), more or less constantly. In this colloquial meaning already resides, as co-intended, the way of being that characterizes the philosophical concept of οὐσία, namely being as *permanent presence* (*ständige Anwesenheit*) or “being there in the sense of being at one’s disposal [*Dasein in der Weise des Verfügbarseins*]”.³⁰¹ So here it is

³⁰⁰ Heidegger designates his 1924 lectures on Aristotle as *Philologie* rather than philosophy, insofar as philology means “passion for the knowledge concerning the articulated [*die Leidenschaft der Erkenntnis des Ausgesprochenen*]” (*GA* 18:3-7, 333-334).

³⁰¹ “Οὐσία ist ein solches Seiendes, das *in einer betonten Weise für mich da ist*, so daß ich es brauchen kann,

not a question of the metaphysical grinding stone that wears off the concrete and real property first by metaphor and then by abstraction, then forgets this genealogy of its concepts and pretends to have drawn its currency, whose finite value has been lost but also replaced by an alleged infinity of value, out of the heavens of ideas (as in Anatole France's *mythologie blanche*),³⁰² but of revealing what was already co-signified in the current market, namely in the colloquial usage. It is the *ways of being* that already accompany, as co-intended, the everyday discourse on beings, the thinghood of the things in question.

Thus when analysing being-towards-death and further, in connection to this, ontological guilt (*Schuldigsein*) in *Sein und Zeit* (§ 62), Heidegger can distinguish his terminology from the theological themes that undoubtedly sound similar to these ontological questions of guilt and many other themes of his *Fundamentalontologie*, by referring to the fact that this ontology of *Dasein* as a properly philosophical questioning principally 'knows' nothing of sin ("sofern sie als philosophisches Fragen grundsätzlich nichts von der Sünde »weiß«") or of the theologically understood *status corruptionis*, whereas theology may, in return, find for the fact of fallenness its condition of possibility in the existentially determined guilt provided by the ontological analysis.³⁰³ The disclosure of the co-intended meanings as an ontology of *Dasein* may reveal the conditions of possibility for the *nearest and most original ways of meaning* (cf. *GA* 18:84), of which it does not itself 'know' anything, by virtue of its principal status as philosophical questioning (though these specific meanings certainly belong historically to the hermeneutic situation of which the ontologist must begin his analysis); this enterprise of disclosure aims to reach what is on the *principal level* (*grundsätzlich*) *nearer and more original* than the more immediate near and original out of which it is possible to carry-over-along-with [μεταφέρειν] the "how of the intendedness". This is indeed an Aristotelian method: from that which is better known and clearer *for us* [ἡμῖν] we proceed toward what is better known and clearer *by nature* [τῇ φύσει], that is, the *governing sources* [ἀρχαί] (see for instance the very beginning of the *Physics*). But on the ontic level, the level better known and clearer to us, the *thematization of the ontological meaning, which is in a certain way al-*

daß es mir zu Verfügung steht, mit dem ich tagtäglich zu tun habe, dasjenige Seiende, das in meinem tagtäglichen Umgang mit der Welt da ist, auch wenn ich Wissenschaft treibe, ein bevorzugtes, fundamentales Seiendes als in seinem Sein Seiendes, im Wie seines Seins. Auch in der geläufigen Bedeutung ist das Wie des Seins mitgemeint." (*GA* 18:25. On "ständige Anwesenheit", cf. e.g. *GA* 31:52.) On *Verfügbarsein* as distinguished from mere *Vorhandenheit*, cf. the much later text "Protokoll zu einem Seminar über den Vortrag »Zeit und Sein«" (1962), with examples from the poets Trakl and Rimbaud to confirm that the expressions *es gibt* and *ist* are often meant in ways altogether other than that of the pure and simple "presence-at-hand" of objects (in *Zur Sache des Denkens* [1976], pp. 42-43). *Verfügbarsein* (availability, being at one's disposal) stands in relation to human beings but it does not characterize the way of being that is proper to the human *Dasein*; as was already noticed, even a corpse is not quite *verfügbar* (disposable) in Heidegger's analysis.

³⁰² Cf. the "Exergue" of Derrida's "La mythologie blanche" (in *Marges*, 1972), and Ricœur's objection to what he takes to be Derrida's thesis on the "white mythology" and its *usure* (*La métaphore vive* [1975], esp. p. 371).

³⁰³ "Die Theologie kann in dem existentielle bestimmten Schuldigsein eine ontologische Bedingung seiner [i.e. de statu corruptionis] faktische Möglichkeit finden." (*SuZ*, 306n1.)

ways *already co-intended*, is by no means a carrying over and lifting above, or a bridge from the sensible to the suprasensible realm. The transparency of one's own possibility of being, *Seinsmöglichkeit*, is not some purification from worldliness, but is established only when the *priority of being-guilty* ("vorgängige und ständige Schuldigsein ... in seiner Vorgängigkeit") "has been enlisted in [*hineingestellt*] that possibility which is simply *not to be outstripped*".³⁰⁴

wenn diese [Vorgängigkeit] hineingestellt wird in die Möglichkeit, die für das Dasein schlechthin *unüberholbar* ist. Wenn die Entschlossenheit vorlaufend die Möglichkeit des Todes in ihr Seinkönnen *eingeholt* hat, kann die eigentliche Existenz des Daseins durch nichts mehr *überholt* werden. [SuZ, § 62, p. 307.]³⁰⁵

The ownmost possibility of *Dasein*, death as the possibility of the impossibility to be there anymore ("Sein Tod ist die Möglichkeit des Nicht-mehr-dasein-könnens"), which *fully* assigns *Dasein* to its ownmost ability to be ("Wenn das Dasein als diese Möglichkeit seiner selbst sich bevorsteht, ist es völlig auf sein eigenstes Seinkönnen verwiesen"), cannot be outstripped, overtaken, or surpassed by anything else and not by *Dasein* itself either:

Als Seinkönnen vermag das Dasein die Möglichkeit des Todes nicht zu überholen. Der Tod ist die Möglichkeit der schlechthinigen Daseinsunmöglichkeit. So enthüllt sich der Tod als die *eigenste, unbezügliche, unüberholbare Möglichkeit*. [SuZ, § 50, p. 250.]

Dasein cannot *overtake* or *surpass* its ownmost possibility of being: its 'completeness' resides in its constant incompleteness, in its "anticipatory resoluteness [*vorlaufende Entschlossenheit*]". Unlike the beings whose way of being is either presence-at-hand (*Vorhandenheit*) or readiness-to-hand (*Zuhandenheit*), *Dasein* has no such end "at which it just stops, but it *exists finitely*".³⁰⁶ Speaking of the *end* that is proper to the human being-there is indeed a struggle at the frontiers of 'language', the 'standard' language and what is sayable in it,³⁰⁷ because this end is radically different from all the other ends. And it is a struggle against metaphor too, an attempt to reduce the alleged metaphoricity of this way of speaking *ad absurdum*: being-towards-the-end is not a *metaphor* for the human way of being, but the

³⁰⁴ En. trans. Macquarrie & Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1978), p. 355 [307]. Emphasis and the addition in square brackets are as in the original text of the translators.

³⁰⁵ The rest of this passage is translated by Macquarrie and Robinson as follows: "When, in anticipation, resoluteness has *caught up* the possibility of death into its potentiality-for-Being, *Dasein*'s authentic existence can no longer be *outstripped* by anything." (P. 355. I leave off the translators' additions in brackets, since the original German text is cited above. Because the translation also adds the pagination of the original text in its margins, I shall not hereafter add the page numbers of the English version.)

³⁰⁶ "Es hat nicht ein Ende, an dem es nur aufhört, sondern existiert endlich." (SuZ, 329-330, trans. Macquarrie & Robinson.)

³⁰⁷ Cf. Wittgenstein's formerly "little known" but by now famous note from 1929 on Heidegger's talk of *Sein* and *Angst* ("This running-up against the limits of language is *Ethics*"), translated and commented on by Michael Murray in Murray, ed., *Heidegger and Modern Philosophy* (1978), pp. 80-81 (and the editor's commentary on pp. 81-83).

most outstanding and *proper* characteristic of the human life, or as Heidegger would rather have it called, *Dasein*.

So all this, the whole analysis of being-towards-the-end and being-towards-death, could be read against the exemplary ‘metaphor’ mentioned by Aristotle. Seen from this perspective, Aristotle disregards what in that allegedly merely ‘metaphorical’ way of speaking already speaks of the pre-ontological understanding of *authenticity* (*Eigentlichkeit*).

Death as the end of “being-there” is (only) in this being’s being-towards-its-end: “*Der Tod ist als Ende des Daseins im Sein dieses Seienden zu seinem Ende.*” (SuZ, § 52, p. 259.)

THE “UNSTABLE MULTIPLICITY” OF PRIMORDIAL SPEECH

But how are we to understand the primordial equivocality characterizing the non-thematized, but implicit co-intendedness of *Dasein*’s openness to its own being as manifested in such non-metaphorical, pre-metaphorical turns of speech as ‘death is the end of life’ (meaning completion of life, that which brings life to its limits, that which essentially determines life *from within* — as its *internal* limit)? Is this horizon of equivocality an originary richness of meaning residing in the original spontaneity of *Dasein*’s implicit, pre-thematic self-interpretation (in other words, the ontological precomprehension whose explication, in the sense of unfolding and thematization is, for Heidegger at least, the task of phenomenology), or rather poverty as an openness toward future? Or both at once? Both of these suggestions could be discussed with regard to Heidegger’s works. Perhaps we might also say that it is a question of neither positivity nor negativity but a certain type of *neutrality*. I would borrow Derrida’s words in order to designate this neutrality or this *unstable, potential multiplicity* (cf. *Apories*, pp. 26-27) as *disseminality*. It precedes the actual dispersion (or dissemination) of meanings (and thereby also the restricted polysemy that can be included in a dictionary) and corresponds to the *dispersion in space* of the primordial “meaningfulness of the world” for *Dasein*, of which Heidegger speaks in a passage of *Sein und Zeit* that Paul Celan marked with a double stroke in the margin.³⁰⁸ In a passage of his important essay “Différence sexuelle, différence ontologique (*Geschlecht I*)” (published first in 1983, henceforth “*Geschlecht I*”), Derrida writes:

Toute langue est d’abord déterminée par des significations spatiales (*Raumbedeutungen*). Le phénomène desdites métaphores spatialisantes n’est nullement accidentel ou à la portée du concept rhétorique de « métaphore ». Ce n’est pas une fatalité extérieure.³⁰⁹

³⁰⁸ SuZ, § 34, p. 166 [GA 2:221]; the passage (which we have already cited) was marked by Celan with a double stroke in the margin (*La bi. phi.*, 379, No. 609).

³⁰⁹ In *Heidegger et la question: De l’esprit et autres essais* (Paris: Flammarion, 1990), p. 164. En. trans. Ruben Bevezdivin, in *A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds*, ed. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Columbia U.P., 1991), pp. 380-402, here p. 395: “Every language is first of all determined by spatial significations [...]. The phenomenon of so-called spatializing metaphors is not at all accidental, nor within the scope of the rhetorical

The concept of metaphor is irrelevant at the level where the languages not only ‘contain’ but are *determined* by spatial significations, while this primary determination of all languages indicates “the phenomenon of *Dasein*’s dispersion in space”.³¹⁰ As the title suggests, Derrida’s essay is primarily concerned with the theme of sexual difference — which might seem conspicuously absent from Heidegger’s work, including the fundamental ontology of *Sein und Zeit* — with respect to ontological difference in early Heidegger’s thought, but this question is related to the general theme of *Dasein*’s ontological “neutrality” with respect to “all factual [and ontic] concretion [*vor aller faktischen Konkretion*]”. In the 1928 lectures on the metaphysical foundations of logic (*Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Logik im Ausgang von Leibniz*, GA 26), Heidegger writes:

Die eigentümliche Neutralität des Titels ›das Dasein‹ ist wesentlich, weil die Interpretation dieses Seienden vor aller faktischen Konkretion durchzuführen ist. Diese Neutralität besagt auch, daß das Dasein keines von beiden Geschlechtern ist. Aber diese Geschlechtslosigkeit ist nicht die Indifferenz des leeren Nichtigen, die schwache Negativität eines indifferenten ontischen Nichts. Das Dasein in seiner Neutralität ist nicht indifferent Niemand und Jeder, sondern die ursprüngliche Positivität und Mächtigkeit des Wesens. Die Neutralität ist nicht die Nichtigkeit einer Abstraktion, sondern gerade die Mächtigkeit des Ursprunges, der in sich die innere Möglichkeit eines jeden konkreten faktischen Menschentums trägt. [GA 26:171-172; cf. also p. 173.]

The notion of *Dasein*’s neutrality means, first of all, and already before this adverb *auch* (“also”) is applied to the example of sexual difference, “the neutralization of everything but the naked trait [*le trait nu*]” of *Dasein*’s relation to itself; it means the reduction or subtraction, neutralization of “every anthropological, ethical or metaphysical predetermination so as to keep nothing but a relation to itself, a bare relation, to the Being of its being [*de rapport dépouillée à l’être de son étant*]” (“*Geschlecht I*”, p. 152/384). Terms like ‘neutrality’ and also ‘asexuality’ (*Geschlechtslosigkeit*) are problematic because of the negativity they suggest, and therefore Heidegger has to make the distinction that in *Dasein*’s neutrality it is not a question of indifference or of an empty abstraction from ontic determinations, “a neither-nor” (*ein Weder-noch*), but “the authentic concrete of the origin [*das eigentlich Konkrete des Ursprunges*]”, more concrete than the concrete since it is *originary* neutrality and since it *precedes* the ontic determinations as their ontological *a priori*, as “the not-yet of dispersedness [*das Noch-nicht der faktischen Zerstreutheit*]”. The neutrality of the name *Dasein* is es-

concept of ‘metaphor’. It is not some exterior fatality.” Henceforth cited as “*Geschlecht I*”, p. 164/395, the first page number referring to the French and the second to the English version. — For Heidegger’s discussion of “spatial meanings [*Raumbedeutungen*]”, cf. GA 26:173; Derrida refers here also to *Sein und Zeit*, p. 166 (GA 2:221).

³¹⁰ Heidegger himself writes: “Das Phänomen der Zerstreuung des Daseins in den Raum hinein zeigt sich z.B. darin, daß alle Sprachen primär durch Raumbedeutungen bestimmt sind.” (GA 26:173.) As Derrida paraphrases: “La dispersion spatiale ou espaçante se manifeste par exemple dans la langue.” (“The spatial or spacing dispersion is manifested, for instance, in language.” *Loc. cit.*)

sential, since the interpretation of this being must be accomplished before any concretion, including such corporeal ‘dispersion’ as sex, “*before and outside of a concretion of that type*”.³¹¹ This neutrality is neither abstraction nor negation but, on the contrary, the very positivity and power of *origin*, power of essence (*Mächtigkeit des Ursprunges* [Heidegger underlines the word *Ursprunges*], *Mächtigkeit des Wesens*): it is an “originary positivity”. And furthermore, speaking of this originary neutrality (preceding the sexual *division* but perhaps not *sexuality* itself — or *Geschlechtlichkeit*, which is itself more equivocal than the English term ‘sexuality’ — in a more primordial sense, *not yet* divided into the *two* sexes) does not mean to deny the fact that *Dasein* always *does exist* in its concretion. (“*Dieses neutrale Dasein ist nie das Existierende; es existiert das Dasein je nur in seiner faktischen Konkretion.*”) This “‘power of the origin’ bears within itself the internal possibility of humanity in its concrete factuality”, as Derrida paraphrases.³¹²

So *Dasein* on the whole (or “in general”, *überhaupt*) “hides, shelters in itself the internal possibility of a factual dispersion or dissemination in its own body and ‘thereby in sexuality’”, as Derrida and his translator Bevezdivin partly paraphrase, partly translate Heidegger’s sentence: “*Das Dasein überhaupt birgt die innere Möglichkeit für die faktische Zerstreuung in die Leiblichkeit und damit in die Geschlechtlichkeit.*” Every *Leib*, every ‘lived body’, as *Leib* is sometimes translated, or “proper body of one’s own [*corps propre*] is sexed, and there is no *Dasein* without its own body”.³¹³ But the “neutral” *Geschlechtlichkeit* which precedes the factual dispersion or division denoted by its ontico-empirical homonym is, as Derrida notes, pre-sexual or, rather, pre-differential, pre-dual or pre-dualistic. It is *disseminality* before *dissemination* (inasmuch as the latter term is understood as dispersion, *Zerstreuung*). And of course, this neutrality which is *also* a “pre-sexual” neutrality (and pre-dualistic sexuality) is not *only* related to sexuality. It originally, originarily belongs to the primordial concretion of *Dasein*, which is also “worldliness” and “spatiality”, not to mention the major theme of *Being and Time*, temporality.

This is how Derrida (in Bevezdivin’s translation) paraphrases or partly translates a passage in Heidegger’s lectures:

³¹¹ GA 26:173; on the a priori, cf. p. 183; Derrida, “*Geschlecht I*”, p. 152/385.

³¹² “*Geschlecht I*”, p. 158/389; cf. Heidegger, GA 26:171–173. As Derrida suggests, the ontological negativity of this originary *Geschlechtslosigkeit* “is not deployed with respect to sexuality itself [...], but with respect to the marks of difference, or more precisely to sexual duality”. *Dasein* is not deprived of sex, but its sexuality must be conceived of as “predifferential, or rather a predual, sexuality”. And this “*Geschlechtslosigkeit* would not be [any] more negative than *aletheia*”: we are thus perhaps even invited to think of this suffix “-los-” in the same manner as we may think of the privative *alpha* of *a-letheia*, ‘truth’ as un-concealment (“*Geschlecht I*”, p. 155–6/387–8). — It must be noted, with Derrida, that Heidegger does not use the word *Sexualität* here, but the much more polyvalent word *Geschlechtlichkeit*. As Derrida points out, this enables Heidegger later to use the concepts of generation, race, mankind, ancestry, descent, etc., *along with sexual division*, or *all at once*, all of these concepts bundled into one ‘*Geschlechtlichkeit*’, and also with reference to Georg Trakl’s enigmatically emphasized “*E in Geschlecht*” (cf. “*Geschlecht I*”, p. 159/390–391; cf. “*La main de Heidegger [Geschlecht II]*” and “*De l’esprit: Heidegger et la question*”, in the same volume).

³¹³ Derrida, “*Geschlecht I*”, p. 160–161/391–392; Heidegger, GA 26:173.

First of all, *Dasein* never relates to *an* object, to a sole object. If it does, it is always in the mode of abstraction or abstention from other beings which always co-appear at the same time. [We remember the other abstraction: the ‘abstract hearing’ that would turn away from the ‘things themselves’, which are nevertheless far more familiar to us, as Heidegger maintains, than pure noise or mere sensations in general. I think *musique concrète* is a way to bring this enigma into relief, and not at all to forget it; modern art in general can be seen as a sort of practical phenomenology.] This multiplication does not supervene because there is a plurality of objects; actually it is the converse that takes place. It is the originary disseminal structure, the dispersion of *Dasein*, that makes possible this multiplicity.³¹⁴

This multiplicity is originally no aggregate of objects subsisting by themselves, each of them subsisting by itself, and confronted by a subject. Instead, it is the multiplicity, or rather the *multiplying* structure (*Mannigfaltigung*), that makes this appearing-together or co-appearance possible. This primordial disseminality, pre-disseminated dissemination (*ursprüngliche Streuung*), belongs to *Dasein*, belongs to the very essence of the human being-there itself. It *is* the human being-there, *Dasein*, and this ‘is’ must indeed be taken ‘transitively’, as Heidegger sometimes insists.

Indeed, the ‘linguistic’ disseminality must also be seen in a relation of *equiprimordiality* with the originary spatio-temporal multiplicity that characterizes *Dasein*.³¹⁵ It is a question of a pre-metaphoric, pre-literal, *preter-intentional disseminality*. If we accept Heidegger’s view of language as essentially poetic (*Dichtung im wesentlichen Sinne*) and of poetry as the most essential and primordial language,³¹⁶ and his view of the essentially poetic equivocality as a “garden of wilderness”, we must also concede that our words overpower us, that they ‘over-dict’ *themselves* in a strange manner, that they are both indebted to their history and open to their future. And yet, the equiprimordiality of being and being-there (*Sein, Dasein*), and on the other hand, the relation of equiprimordiality that resides between being and language (*logos*, “conversance”), the relation that deploys itself (*west*) as *logos* itself,

³¹⁴ “Tout d’abord, le *Dasein* ne se rapporte jamais à *un* objet, à un seul objet. S’il le fait, c’est toujours sur le mode de l’abstraction ou de l’abstention à l’égard des autres étants qui co-apparaissent toujours en même temps. Et cette multiplication ne survient pas en raison du fait qu’il y a pluralité d’objets, c’est en vérité l’inverse qui a lieu. C’est la structure originairement disséminale, c’est la dispersion du *Dasein* qui rend possible cette multiplicité.” (“*Geschlecht I*”, p. 163/393-394.) Cf. Heidegger, *GA 26:173*: “Hierzu ein roher Hinweis: Das *Dasein* verhält sich als existierendes nie je nur zu einem Objekt, und wenn, dann nur in der Weise des Absehens von zuvor und zugleich immer miterscheinenden anderen Seienden. Diese Mannigfaltigung geschieht nicht dadurch, daß es mehrere Objekte gibt, sondern umgekehrt.” — Cf. also Rodolphe Gasché, “Du trait non adéquat : la notion de rapport chez Heidegger”, in Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, Jean-Luc Nancy, eds., *Les fins de l’homme : à partir du travail de Jacques Derrida* [Colloque de Cérisy, 23 juillet – 2 août 1980] (Paris: Galilée, 1981), pp. 133-159 (and “Debat” on pp. 159-161); En. trans. Leonard Lawlor, “On the Nonadequate Trait”, in Gasché, *Of Minimal Things* (Stanford: Stanford U.P., 1999), pp. 195-220; “Joining the Text” (1980), also in *Of Minimal Things*, pp. 221-241; and “Metaphor”, in *The Tain of the Mirror: Derrida and the Philosophy of Reflection* (Cambridge: Harvard U.P., 1986), pp. 293-318.

³¹⁵ Equiprimordiality (*Gleichursprünglichkeit*) is one of the key concepts of Heidegger’s early thought. Cf. Gasché’s article “On the Nonadequate Trait” for a concise discussion of this term (pp. 197ff); “Du trait non adéquat”, pp. 135ff.

³¹⁶ “Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes”, in *Holzwege* (1950), *op. cit.*, p. 61; Celan, *La bi. phi.*, p. 359, No. 237 (*loc. cit.*).

“manifests itself always (*es gibt*) only in an extreme singularity”.³¹⁷ In the vocabulary of Celan’s *Meridian* speech, this ‘corresponds’ (while it is exactly this word ‘corresponds’ that is altogether irrelevant here) to “radical individuation” (which is actually part of Heidegger’s vocabulary, too: cf. *Sein und Zeit*, § 7, p. 38: “*radikalsten Individuation*”):

[...] das Gedicht behauptet sich am Rande seiner selbst; es ruft und holt sich, um bestehen zu können, unausgesetzt aus seinem Schon-nicht-mehr in sein Immer-noch zurück.

Dieses Immer-noch kann doch wohl nur ein Sprechen sein. Also nicht Sprache schlechthin und vermutlich auch nicht erst vom Wort her »Entsprechung«.

Sondern aktualisierte Sprache, freigesetzt unter dem Zeichen einer zwar radikalen, aber gleichzeitig auch der ihr von der Sprache gezogenen Grenzen, der ihr von der Sprache erschlossenen Möglichkeiten eingedenk bleibenden Individuation.

Dieses Immer-noch des Gedichts kann ja wohl nur in dem Gedicht dessen zu finden sein, der nicht vergißt, daß er unter dem Neigungswinkel seines Daseins, dem Neigungswinkel seiner Kreatürlichkeit spricht. [*TCA/Meridian*, Endf. 32-33.]³¹⁸

As we can gather from both the Edgar Jené essay of 1948 and the Bremen Prize Speech of 1958, language is, for Celan, sedimented as “ashes of extinguished sense-giving and not only these!”, and “enriched” (“*angereichert*” — this is also a geological term, presented with the ironic distance of the quotation marks) by all that it has had to pass through, including the Nazi verbicide (and not only that!),³¹⁹ but also something “reachable” (*erreichbar*) and actu-

³¹⁷ Gasché, “On the Nonadequate Trait”, p. 210; cf. “Du trait non adéquat”, p. 149. “Conversance” is Warnek and Brogan’s very fortunate translation of *logos* and for Heidegger’s translation of *logos* as *Kundschaft*; cf. *Aristotle’s Metaphysics Θ 1-3: On the Essence and Actuality of Force* (Bloomington: Indiana U.P., 1995), i.e. the translation of Heidegger, *GA 33*.

³¹⁸ The word between quotation marks, *Entsprechung*, has caused some perplexion, especially in one very specific reader of the *Meridian*, as it seems, namely Martin Heidegger, who has added a question mark in his personal copy of the speech. However, it seems to me that the denial of a poem’s being *Entsprechung* is not a critical remark in Heidegger’s direction, because Celan elsewhere has written very approvingly of the Heideggerean talk of “responding to the addressing of language”. Cf. Hadrien France-Lanord, *Paul Celan et Martin Heidegger : le sens d’un dialogue* (Paris: Fayard, 2004); James K. Lyon, *Paul Celan and Martin Heidegger: An Unresolved Conversation 1951-1970* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U.P., 2006). — Cf. *Sein und Zeit*, § 7, p. 38: “*Sein ist das transcendens schlechthin*. Die Transzendenz des Seins des Daseins ist eine ausgezeichnete, sofern in ihr die Möglichkeit und Notwendigkeit der radikalsten Individuation liegt.” The first of these two sentences, “*Sein ist das transcendens schlechthin*”, has been marked by Celan in his personal copy of the book (cf. *La bi. phi.*, p. 375, No. 553).

³¹⁹ “So mußte ich auch erkennen, daß sich zu dem, was zutiefst in seinem Innern seit unvordenklichen Zeiten nach Ausdruck rang, auch noch die Asche ausgebrannter Sinngebung gesellt hatte und nicht nur diese!” (“Edgar Jené und der Traum vom Traume”, *GW 3*:155-161, here p. 157.) Cf. Zanetti, “*zeitoffen*”, pp. 56ff, 56n24. — I wonder if Celan had come across the paleontological (or paleobiological as well as geological) term *Konzentratlagerstätte* (or *Konzentrat-Lagerstätte*, “concentration deposit”, distinguished from *Konservat-Lagerstätte*): “In [a *Konzentrat-Lagerstätte*, concentration deposit] organic remains are concentrated by sedimentological and biological processes which generally exclude the preservation of organic soft parts.” (Peter A. Allison, “*Konservat-Lagerstätten*: cause and classification”, in *Paleobiology*, 14(4), 1988, pp. 331-344, here p. 331.) Cf. Michael Streng, Gerd Geyer, Graham E. Budd, “A bone bed without bones: the Middle Cambrian ‘fragment limestone’ of Scania, Sweden”: “The fragment limestone is considered here to be a condensation deposit (*Konzentratlagerstätte*) in which phosphatic-shelled organisms have been enriched by long-term sedimentary reworking and winnowing of finer material.” [Abstract from: “The Palaeontological Association 50th Annual Meeting, 18th–21st December 2006, University of Sheffield. Abstracts.” URL: <http://www.palass.org/downloads/Annual2006Schedule&Abstracts.pdf>. Accessed Dec. 2006.] Cf. “Glossar” in *Palaeo-Online.de*: “*Konzentratlagerstätte* | Fossilagerstätte, die sich durch eine

alized only in “radical individuation” — not only the words containing the adjective *reich* (perhaps alluding to the noun *Reich*, as has been suggested; and this is indeed not only a conjecture, if we take the context of the word “*angereichert*” and its counter-word *erreichbar* into account), but also the word *hindurch* have a double aspect at least: it is through (*hindurch*) all the atrocities that language has had to pass, but also the poem is a narrow passage that life must pass through.³²⁰ Here is the passage in the Bremen Speech:

Erreichbar, nah und unverloren blieb inmitten der Verluste dies eine: die Sprache. Sie, die Sprache, blieb unverloren, ja, trotz allem. Aber sie mußte nun hindurchgehen durch ihre eigenen Antwortlosigkeiten, hindurchgehen durch furchtbares Verstummen, hindurchgehen durch die tausend Finsternisse todbringender Rede. Sie ging hindurch und gab keine Worte her für das, was geschah; aber sie ging durch dieses Geschehen. Ging hindurch und durfte wieder zutage treten, »angereichert« von all dem. [GW 3, 185-186.]

The proximity, the “neighbourliness [*Nachbarschaft*]”³²¹ between Celan and Heidegger is sometimes quite astonishing (we can actually touch upon only a couple of its aspects here); and yet, it is also shadowed by a certain, very specific silence: Heidegger’s relative silence concerning the atrocities committed by his former party comrades. And not only that: obviously enough, Celan thematizes the semantic ‘enrichment’, the historicity and sedimentation of language or the ‘names’ contained in it, with an ongoing reference to the verbicide *and* genocide committed in the name of the Third Reich. Celan’s poetics of “straitening”³²² must

hohe Konzentration von Fossilien auszeichnet, z. B. aufgrund von Anreicherung durch Strömungen oder Stürme, auch durch natürliche Tierfallen wie Sümpfe oder Senken mit giftigen vulkanischen Gasen.” (URL: <http://www.palaeo-online.de/d/allg/glossar.html#Anchor-39943>.)

³²⁰ “Gedichte sind Engpässe / ‘Du mußt hier hindurch, Leben’: Daseinsentwürfe.” (TCA/Meridian Ms. 352; cf. *passim* and below.) “Daseinsentwürfe” seems to have a Heideggerian motivation, and not only, or primarily, through the term *Dasein* (which is indeed the place where truth, as unconcealment and openness and clearing takes place); cf. Celan’s highlighting (by a stroke in the margin and underlining) of the following sentences in Heidegger’s “Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes”, which have had an obvious importance for his poetics: “Dichtung aber ist kein schweifendes Ersinnen des Beliebigen und kein Verschweben des bloßen Vorstellens und Einbildens in das Unwirkliche. Was die Dichtung als lichtender Entwurf an Unverborgenheit auseinanderfaltet und in den Riß der Gestalt vorauswirft, ist das Offene, das sie geschehen läßt und zwar dergestalt, daß jetzt das Offene erst inmitten des Seienden dieses zum Leuchten und Klingen bringt. Im Wesensblick auf das Wesen des Werkes und seinen Bezug zum Geschehns der Wahrheit des Seienden wird fraglich, ob das Wesen der Dichtung, und das sagt zugleich des Entwurfs, von der Imagination und Einbildungskraft her hinreichend gedacht werden kann. [...] Der Dichtende Entwurf kommt aus dem Nichts in der Hinsicht, daß er sein Geschenk nie aus dem Geläufigen und Bis-herigen nimmt.” (Holzwege [Frankfurt a.M.: Klostermann, 1950], pp. 60, 63; cit. Celan, *La bi. phi.*, pp. 358-359, nos. 235, 239.) Cf. e.g. in the poem “Aber”: “vom Nichts her, ein Wurfholz” (GW 1:182), and the discussion concerning that poem below.

³²¹ Cf. Celan’s draft for a letter to Heidegger, which he never sent, however, as far as we know; cited by Hadrien France-Lanord (2004); cited also by James K. Lyon (2006); also in Celan, *Mikrolithen* (2005).

³²² “[...] geh mit der Kunst in deine allereigenste Enge. Und setze dich frei.” (TCA/Meridian Endf. 42). Trans. John Felstiner: “Enlarge art? / No. But with art go into your very selfmost straits. And set yourself free.” (Selected Poems and Prose of Paul Celan [2001].) “Straitening” is Michael Hamburger’s translation of the title “Engführung”, which has also been translated by the technical term “Stretto” (by Felstiner, in the mentioned collection; I think the French title “Strette” was first introduced by André du Bouchet, who had consulted Celan himself for the translation). Several other poems (only one example: “Sprich auch du”, GW 1:135) and also the poetological fragments (in e.g. TCA/Meridian) often repeat the thematics of “straitening” or “constriction”, and this should be related also to Heidegger’s discussion of *Angst* and its lan-

be understood with respect to this double bind — let us say, the necessity of purifying words (ironically evoked by speaking of a “circumcision of the word”) with respect to its very impossibility (every word is exposed to being prostituted, “enwhored by the flayer’s-ears”, *umhurl von den Schinderohren*) — or *these* double binds (also as an ongoing, profoundly ambivalent dialogue with Heidegger), and this aporetic must also be related to the incitement of the tropes and metaphors, in a poem, to be “carried *ad absurdum*”.³²³

PRAYER ON THE HITHER SIDE OF PRAYER (CELAN: “WIRK NICHT VORAUS”)

Paul Celan marked in his personal copy of *Sein und Zeit* several passages dealing with death *as the limit that enters the very structure of Dasein itself as its ownmost possibility*; here is one of the sentences he marked:

Die Analyse des Todes bleibt aber insofern rein »diesseitig«, als sie das Phänomen lediglich daraufhin interpretiert, wie es als Seinsmöglichkeit des jeweiligen Daseins *in dieses hereinsteht*. [SuZ, § 49, 248.]³²⁴

This *inclusion* instead of exclusion, this standing-into or coming hither (*hereinstehen*) and this sub-lunar “behither” (as I would render »*diesseitig*«) correspond to the antimetaphoric characteristics in Paul Celan’s poetry and poetics. Heidegger has reduced the Aristotelian ‘metaphor’ into a structure of inclusion and insists that this talk of death as an ‘end’ of life belongs to the structure of life itself.

The last poem of the book *Lichtzwang* (1970), written in December 1967, contains certain terms that we encounter in reading the discussions of *Sein-zum-Ende*, *Sein-zum-Tode* in Heidegger’s work: these words are *hereinstehen*, *unüberholbar*, and the line “*durchgründet vom Nichts*”, which seems an unmistakable allusion to Heidegger’s discussion of *Angst* in *Sein und Zeit* and especially in “Was ist Metaphysik?” (1929).³²⁵ Remarkably

guage-related aspects. (See also below.)

³²³ Cf. *GW* 1:242, 275; *GW* 3:199; and below; the translation of the expression “umhurl von den Schinderohren” is mine.

³²⁴ Cf. Celan, *La bi. phi.*, pp. 380ff (this quote on p. 381, No. 647). Celan has underlined and otherwise marked passages dealing with death in *Sein und Zeit* at least in §§ 46-53, on each of the pages between pp. 237-257, then again on pp. 263-267; there are, according to the catalogue, some seventy-five markings on these twenty-five pages.

³²⁵ Cf. *SuZ*, “§ 40. Die Grundbefindlichkeit der Angst als eine ausgezeichnete Erschlossenheit des Daseins” (pp. 191ff, and on p. 186: “Das bedrohende [im Angst] [...] ist schon »da« – und doch nirgends, es ist so nah, daß es beengt und einem den Atem verschlägt – und doch nirgends.”), and esp. “Was ist Metaphysik?": “Die Angst offenbart das Nichts. / [...] Nur das reine Da-sein in der Durchschütterung dieses Schwebens, darin es sich an nichts halten kann, ist noch da. / Die Angst verschlägt uns das Wort. [...] Mit der Grundstimmung des Angst haben wir das Geschehen des Daseins erreicht, in dem das Nichts offenbar ist [...]. [...] das Dasein vom Nichten des Nichts durchschütterte bleibt. Abgründiger als die bloße Angemessenheit der denkenden Verneinung ist die Härte des Entgegenhandelns und die Schärfe des Verabscheuens. [...] Die Durchdrungenheit des Daseins vom nichtenden Verhalten bezeugt die ständige und freilich verdunkelte Offenbarkeit des Nichts, das ursprünglich nur die Angst enthüllt. Darin liegt aber: diese ursprüngliche Angst wird im Dasein zumeist niedergehalten. Die Angst ist da. Sie schläft nur. Ihr Atem zittert ständig durch das Dasein: [...] am sichersten durch das im Grunde verwegene Dasein. [...] So endlich sind wir, daß wir gerade

enough, this vocabulary is used together with several easily recognizable theologemes: not only prayer but also predestination, the sending out of the apostles; these theologemes are denied to the addressee of this prayer without prayer. There is also the Pre-Script that is unsurpassable, not surpassed by Scripture, unlike the Old Testament which allegedly prefigured the New Testament and was then surpassed by it, according to the traditional Christian conception. This Pre-Script is an antitype, a *contra-figura* resisting the typological order. What is especially striking at the first reading of this poem, consisting of a single sentence, is its syntactic ambiguity, forcing this first reading to divide itself:

WIRK NICHT VORAUS,
 sende nicht aus,
 steh
 herein:

durchgründet vom Nichts,
 ledig allen
 Gebets,
 feinfügig, nach
 der Vor-Schrift,
 unüberholbar,

nehm ich dich auf,
 statt aller
 Ruhe.³²⁶

The equivocality does not reside only in the fact that this poem seems to contradict its own manner of speaking: it begins in the imperative or optative mode, but the middle strophe contains the clause “*ledig allen / Gebets*”. As if the poem said: pray — that is: please — be free of all prayer. Or: I beg you, and I receive you, but free of all prayer. The syntax allows for the reader’s ignorance as to the reference of the attributes (adjectives and whole clauses) in

nicht durch eigenen Beschluß und Willen uns ursprünglich vor das Nichts zu bringen vermögen. So abgründig gräbt im Dasein die Verendlichkeit, daß sich unserer Freiheit die eigenste und tiefste Endlichkeit versagt. [...] Einzig weil das Nichts im Grunde des Daseins offenbar ist, kann die volle Befremdlichkeit des Seienden über uns kommen.” (*Wegmarken*, pp. 112, 117-118, 121.)

³²⁶ In *Lichtzwang* (*TCA/Lichtzwang*, pp. 178-179; *GW* 2:328). Transl. John Felstiner: “Do not work ahead, / do not send abroad, / stand / in here: // deep-grounded by Nothingness, / free of all / prayer, / fine-fitted to / the Pre-Script / unoutstrippable, // you I take up / in place of all / rest.” (*Selected Poems and Prose of Paul Celan* [2001], p. 325.) I have attempted a more detailed and otherwise focused analysis of this poem in a forthcoming article entitled “‘*Schreiben als Form des Gebets*’ — An Impossible Form of Apostrophe? (‘P.S.’ on a Fragment by Kafka as Adapted by Celan)”, in Päivi Mehtonen, ed., *Illuminating Darkness: Approaches to Obscurity and Nothingness in Literature* (forthcoming, 2007). In the present context I will discuss the poem from a slightly different viewpoint. Here I will not discuss the previous readings of this poem by Hans-Georg Gadamer, Anders Olsson and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe either (Hans-Georg Gadamer, “Im Schatten des Nihilismus”, in Hubert Dethier, Eldert Willems, eds., *Cultural Hermeneutics of Modern Art: Essays in honor of Jan Aler* [Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1989], pp. 233-244; also in *Gesammelte Werke*, Bd. 9 [Tübingen: Mohr, 1993], pp. 367-382; En. transl. Monika Reuss and Lawrence K. Schmidt, “Under the Shadow of Nihilism”, in *Hans-Georg Gadamer on Education, Poetry, and History: Applied Hermeneutics*, ed. Dieter Misgeld and Graeme Nicholson [Albany: SUNY Press, 1992], pp. 111-123; Anders Olsson, “Epilog (Celan)”, in *Läsningar av intel* [Stockholm: Bonnier, 2000], pp. 424-436; Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *La poésie comme expérience* [Paris: Bourgois, 1986], pp. 104ff.).

that second strophe, namely whether these five distinct attributes, separated by commas, are attributed to the Thou or to the I of the poem, the Thou addressed in the first and the third strophe or the I who speaks through the poem and speaks of himself in the third strophe.

The phrase “*durchgründet vom Nichts*” could contain a theologeme, too. The rare verb *durchgründen* is not coined by Celan and need not be an “audacious word destruction” as Hans-Georg Gadamer takes it, one that “permits two completely incompatible meanings to melt together”, namely “‘founded upon something’ [*gegründet auf etwas*] and ‘governed by nothingness’ [*durchwaltet vom Nichts*]” (“Under the Shadow of Nihilism”, p. 117). The Grimm dictionary has an entry on the verb, offering the Latin equivalents *perscrutari*, ‘to scrutinize thoroughly’, and *comprehendere*, ‘to grasp, comprehend’. Many of the examples given by Grimm refer to the examination of holy texts, such as the citation from Johannes Reuchlin’s *Augenspiegel* referring to the alleged penetration to the Kabbalah in the book *Apologia* by Pico della Mirandola.³²⁷ If the poem would say ‘no one’ instead of “Nothing” or “nothingness [*Nichts*]”, we might suggest that the address concerns something like a Script coming ‘after the Pre-Script’, “*nach / der Vor-Schrift*”, ‘scrutinized by no one’; even when the ‘script’, the written form of the poem contained the word *nichts* without the capital letter, we might think that some impenetrable, inscrutable Script is being addressed here. But the capital letter complicates the matter even beyond this suggestion: we must not disregard the equivocality introduced by the difference between the lower case and the upper case, more or less inaudible when the poem is read aloud (more or less, since a hint might be given by intonation), and yet, the upper-case letter in the noun (*das*) *Nichts* is not nothing. This Nothingness could be read as another theologeme, as the Nothingness of God in the apophatic discourse (so-called ‘negative theology’, that is), or perhaps the Cabbalistic nothingness of God’s withdrawal, his trace or retreat into himself, his ‘contraction’ (*Zimzum*) into his own depths, as discussed by Gershom Scholem.³²⁸ It would be God’s nothingness, his absence or his withdrawal, his trace that is irreducible to the dichotomy of presence and absence, that ‘deeply grounds’ the speaker, the I of the poem. But the fact that the (Christian) theologemes are, in the first strophe and perhaps also later, denied to

³²⁷ The Grimm dictionary attributes this perscrutation falsely to the Pope himself: “breve apostolicum Alexandri VI, darin er die bücher der cabala durchgründt REUCHLIN Augenspiegel 13a” (*DWB*); cf. Johannes Reuchlin, “Augenspiegel” (1511), in *Sämtliche Werke, Bd. IV: Schriften zum Bücherstreit; I. Teil: Reuchlins Schriften*, ed. W.W. Ehlers, H.G. Roloff und P. Schäfer, unter Mitw. v. B. Sommer (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann, 1999).

³²⁸ *Über einige Grundbegriffe des Judentums* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1996 [1st ed. 1970]), pp. 84-89.

the addressee, could also mean that this Thou is not God in the first place. Or perhaps his identity remains uncertain? Perhaps a little like in the tales dealing with hospitality that belong to the Greek as well as the Jewish tradition: the stranger is to be received as if he or she might be a god or goddess in disguise or a divine incarnation.³²⁹

Indeed, the equivocality — and we might do well not to decide hastily for one option or the other — might be motivated by the radical openness of the *poem's* hospitality, a prayer free of all prayer. Who does the poem's speaker invite? Who does the poem invite, perhaps itself an "unoutstrippable", unsurpassable Script following a "Pre-Script"? The verb *hereinstehen* means, in the largely Austrian idiom which was also Celan's mother tongue, 'to enter', 'to come in', and thus the third request of the first strophe, "*steh / herein*", divided by an enjambment that might even be taken as a moment of suspense between 'standing' and 'entering', may well be rendered as "stand / forth" or "stand / in here". And another division takes place when the word *Ruhestatt* (place of rest) is inverted into the syntagm "*statt aller / Ruhe*", "in place of all / rest".

The fact that the verb *hereinstehen* as well as the adjective *unüberholbar* occur also in Celan's underlinings of *Sein und Zeit* is perhaps not altogether incidental or insignificant. The latter belongs to at least four passages marked by Celan, speaking of death as the ownmost, non-relational, unoutstrippable possibility, and of anxiety facing death (*Angst vor dem Tode*) as that which brings *Dasein* face to face with itself as delivered to this unoutstrippable possibility, namely the possibility of the impossibility of being-there.³³⁰

³²⁹ One of the hasidic tales told by Martin Buber is entitled "Gottes Wohnung": "»Wo wohnt Gott?« / Mit dieser Frage überraschte der Kozker einige gelehrte Männer, die bei ihm zu Gast waren. Sie lachten über ihn: »Wie redet Ihr! Ist doch die Welt seiner Herrlichkeit voll!« / Er aber beantwortete die eigene Frage: / »Gott wohnt, wo man ihn einläßt.«" (*Die Erzählungen der Chassidim* [Zürich: Manesse, 1990], pp. 784-785.) This resembles the anecdote concerning Heraclitus, told by Aristotle and quoted by Heidegger in his "Letter on 'Humanism'" (*Wegmarken* [Frankfurt a.M.: Klostermann, 1996 (1st ed. 1967)] [=GA 9], pp. 355-356).

³³⁰ "[Der Tod ist die Möglichkeit der schlechthinnigen Daseinsunmöglichkeit.] So enthüllt sich der *Tod* als die *eigenste, unbezügliche, unüberholbare Möglichkeit*. [...] Die Angst vor dem Tode ist Angst »vor« dem eigensten, unbezüglichen und unüberholbaren Seinkönnen. [...] In der Angst vor dem Tode wird das Dasein vor es selbst gebracht als überantwortet der unüberholbaren Möglichkeit. [...] Dem Dasein geht es auch in der durchschnittlichen Alltäglichkeit ständig um dieses *eigenste, unbezügliche und unüberholbare Seinkönnen*, wenn auch nur im Modus des Besorgens einer unbehelligten Gleichgültigkeit *g e g e n* die äußerste Möglichkeit seiner Existenz." (SuZ, 250, 251, 254, 254-255; cit. Celan, *La bi. phi.*, pp. 382-383, nos. 659, 660, 677, 681. The addition in square brackets is by the editors of *La bibliothèque philosophique*, in order to clarify the context of the highlighted passage; the italics and emphasis by letter-spacing are by Heidegger, the underlining by Celan; the last of these passages has been marked with a double stroke in the margin in Celan's personal copy. In *Sein und Zeit*, cf. also e.g. § 52, p. 258: "der Tod als *eigenste, unbezügliche, unüberholbare, gewisse Möglichkeit*"; this is an occurrence not marked by Celan.) — The verb *hereinstehen* (cf. above) is also part of a sentence underlined by him in "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes": "Die Lichtung, in die das Seiende hereinsteht, ist in sich zugleich Verbergung." (*Holzwege* [Frankfurt a.M.: Klostermann, 1950],

If we are willing to accept the possibility that the verb *hereinstehen* alludes to Heidegger's use of this rather unusual verb, the context might add yet another aspect to the equivocal unity — iterable uniqueness — of the poem. In the passage already cited, Heidegger maintains that the analysis of death remains purely “on the hither side [*rein »diesseitig«*]” inasmuch as the phenomenon is interpreted in terms of a possibility of being (*als Seinsmöglichkeit*) of each *Dasein* that “stands forth into” this *Dasein*;³³¹ the phenomenon of death is a phenomenon of life. Or rather, a phenomenon of being-there. The limit is an internal limit, and, as such, unoutstrippable, an unsurpassable limit.

A whole decade after reading *Sein und Zeit* for the first time (in 1952-1953, judging by the “reading traces” reported by the catalogue *La bibliothèque philosophique*), in April 1963, Celan marked a sentence in Margaret Susman's *Gestalten und Kreise* (1954), comparing Gurewitsch with Heidegger; I add in square brackets the few sentences preceding and following the underlinings, in order to clarify the context:

[Die Grundform, in der sich diese Unendlichkeitsfülle des Seins gestaltet, nennt Gurewitsch die »Transzendenz-Immanenz«. Diese etwas schwerfällige Bezeichnung für die Einheit vom Uebersinnlichem und Sinnlichem ist der Ausdruck der mystischen Gewissheit, dass nichts, gar nichts, weder Göttliches noch Menschliches, weder Uebersinnliches noch Sinnliches ausserhalb des menschlichen Daseins gegeben, dass alles in seinen Kreis ursprünglich einbezogen ist, alles uns nur in ihm offenbar wird.] Es ist dieselbe Gewissheit, die

p. 42; cit. Celan, *La bi. phi.*, p. 357, No. 217.)

³³¹ “Die Analyse des Todes bleibt aber insofern rein »diesseitig«, als sie das Phänomen lediglich daraufhin interpretiert, wie es als Seinsmöglichkeit des jeweiligen Daseins *in dieses hereinsteht*.” (*SuZ*, § 49, 248, *loc. cit.*). The verb *hereinstehen* occurs a few times also in sentences not underlined or otherwise marked by Celan, such as the second occurrence on the page just quoted: “Wenn schon das Dasein überhaupt nie zugänglich wird als Vorhandenes, weil zu seiner Seinsart das Mögliche in eigener Weise gehört, dann darf um so weniger erwartet werden, die ontologische Struktur des Todes einfach ablesen zu können, wenn anders der Tod eine ausgezeichnete Möglichkeit des Daseins ist. / Andererseits kann sich die Analyse nicht an eine zufällig und beliebig erdachte Idee vom Tode halten. Dieser Willkür wird nur gesteuert durch eine vorgängige ontologische Kennzeichnung der Seinsart, in der das »Ende« in die durchschnittliche Alltäglichkeit des Daseins hereinsteht.” (*SuZ*, § 49, p. 248. Partly cit. in Celan, *La bi. phi.*, p. 381, No. 651; underlinings by Celan; he has not highlighted the two sentences following the paragraph break, signalled here by a slash.) And earlier, in the important section 32, containing only one sentence marked by Celan, which is not this one: “Und wenn wir nach dem Sinn von Sein fragen, dann wird die Untersuchung nicht tiefsinnig und ergrübelt nichts, was hinter dem Sein steht, sondern fragt nach ihm selbst, sofern es in die Verständlichkeit des Daseins hereinsteht.” (§ 32, p. 152.) And later, in a section that contains no markings by Celan (§ 61): “Noch bleibt als methodisch einzig möglicher Weg, von dem in seiner existenziellen Möglichkeit bezeugten Phänomen der Entschlossenheit auszugehen und zu fragen: *weist die Entschlossenheit in ihrer eigensten existenziellen Seinstendenz selbst vor auf die vorlaufende Entschlossenheit als ihre eigenste eigentliche Möglichkeit?* Wenn sich die Entschlossenheit ihrem eigenen Sinne nach erst dann in ihre Eigentlichkeit gebracht hätte, sobald sie sich nicht auf beliebige und je nur nächste Möglichkeiten entwirft, sondern auf die äußerste, die allem faktischen Seinkönnen des Daseins vorgelagert ist und als solche in jedes faktisch ergriffene Seinkönnen des Daseins mehr oder minder unverstellt hereinsteht?” (§ 61, p. 302.) Cf. also below, the quote from *SuZ*, § 52, p. 255.

dreissig Jahre später Heidegger in dem Wort formuliert hat, dass »die Transzendenz (d.h. das Uebersinnliche) in das Dasein hereinsteht«. [Denn bei beiden, bei Gurewitsch wie bei Heidegger, bleibt das Uebersinnliche eine selbständige Sphäre, löst es sich nicht in der Sphäre des Daseins, in der allein es sich offenbart, auf. Transzendenz-Immanenz ist also nur ein anderer Ausdruck für ein Dasein, in dem alles: Göttliches wie Menschliches in einer lebendigen Einheit erfahren und gelebt wird.]³³²

The ‘quotation’ here (“*die Transzendenz [...] in das Dasein hereinsteht*”) is not to be found as such in Heidegger, at least not in *Sein und Zeit*. The passage that corresponds most verbatim with it seems to be the following:

Niemand zweifelt daran, daß man stirbt. Allein dieses »nicht zweifeln« braucht nicht schon *das* Gewißsein in sich zu bergen, das dem entspricht, als was der Tod im Sinne der charakterisierten ausgezeichneten Möglichkeit in das Dasein hereinsteht. [*SuZ*, § 52, p. 255.]

“Transcendence” is precisely that which remains beyond experience. Susman’s use of the term “suprasensible” must be understood in these terms, as lying beyond what can be experienced; and yet, it is indeed a question of that which could be called “transcendence-immanence” — which is not Heidegger’s term, of course, but Gurewitsch’s. The transcendence of death, this end or limit or unsurpassable ‘completion’ is indeed ‘immanent’ to *Dasein*’s structure, it enters, “stands forth” into the innermost core of “being-there”, as the possibility of its impossibility (“*die Möglichkeit der schlechthinnigen Daseinsunmöglichkeit*”). It is a radical openness toward the future, a future that never comes to be experienced as something presently ‘there’; this openness is also the temporality characterizing all “being-there”. Being away as a way of being there. The poem understood as a gift (*Geschenk*) and *Daseinsentwurf* (“projection of existence”) must be seen in this light: a projection that cannot be experienced as completed by the one who ‘projects’ it.³³³

Seen in this light, the invitation ending the first strophe of “Wirk nicht voraus” seems an affirmation of something that already “stands / in here” — perhaps death, mortality, finitude? In the prose drafts written for the *Meridian* speech (or while preparing that speech), we find such fragments that seem to correspond to this strange form of apostrophe, addressing Death as a ‘Thou’. Or addressing death in another sense,

³³² Margarete Susman, “Ein Frühvollendeter”, in *Gestalten und Kreise* (Zürich: Diana, 1954), pp. 318-319. Cit. Celan, *La bi. phi.*, p. 540, No. 790. Underlinings by Celan.

³³³ Cf. *TCA/Meridian*, Endf. 46; cf. also *ibid.*, D.O.M., 21 (p. 221): “Gedichte sind Daseinsentwürfe.” (Also in »*Mikrolithen...*«, p. 206.) In the already mentioned letter to Hans Bender, Celan also writes: “Gedichte, das sind auch Geschenke – Geschenke an die Aufmerksamen. Schicksal mitführende Geschenke.” (*GW* 3:178.)

death as a form-bestowing principle, a principle of delimitation and unity.³³⁴ Perhaps the Thou of the poem is, in a certain sense, always Death? Writing a poem means “talking oneself literally to death”,³³⁵ and poems are, as written, “speech of an absent one”, addressed to someone who is even more absent.³³⁶ So the invitation of sorts, the prayer without prayer in the poem we are dealing with, might even be an affirmation of this radical openness, occupiability to which the voice of the poem’s “I” exposes itself. So it might be an invitation by a mortal to another mortal — to the wholly other who arrives as a mortal, receives the address and the figure without figure, prayer without prayer, at another time. This wholly other is not the one of Christian theology, the one who predestines and sends abroad, yet even this possibility is left open, inasmuch as the syntagm “free of all / prayer” (“*ledig allen / Gebets*”) applies equivocally to both the speaker and the addressee of the poem: if I say ‘pray, be free of all prayer’, I really cannot exclude anything; I cannot give orders to the other or prescribe or request anything, only address the other, unconditionally invite the other to “stand / in here”, to arrive where the other has perhaps already arrived, even before me. Unconditional hospitality.

But on the other hand, in all its equivocality, the poem also ‘prescribes’ our relation to itself, our relation as its readers, in a most powerful way.³³⁷ We repeat its invitation, in response, word for word, and as its readers, we *cannot but* repeat it. Even when we choose to disregard the poem, we cannot annihilate its injunction. We remain “fine-fitted to / the pre-script” and to the script coming ‘after’ the pre-script (“*feinfügig, nach / der Vor-Schrift*”), we remain *given over* to the words of the other, *delivered to*

³³⁴ Cf. *TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 321=800: “22.8.60. – B[üchner-Rede?] – / Stimme – Rhythmus – / Person, Geheimnis, Gegenwärtigkeit / aber: Frage nach Grenze und Einheit der Person / das Gedicht als Ich-Suche? / Der Tod als Einheit und Grenze schaffendes Prinzip, daher seine Allgegenwart im Gedicht. – / -i- Das Gedicht als Personwerdung des Ich: im Gespräch – die Wahrnehmung des anderen und Fremden. Das aktive Prinzip also ein so oder so gesetztes (»besetzbares«) Du. – / (der Tod als Du?)” Cf. Ms. 272: “Stimme / ↔ Timbre \ – Richtung (woher ← Beseelung / wohin → Tod, Gott)” The typography of these notes has been conventionalized here, especially as it comes to spacing, which is here indicated by slashes; e.g. “Timbre” is written below “Stimme” and the two-way arrow is positioned vertically between these words.

³³⁵ In a fragment Celan writes: “Das Gedicht als das sich buchstäblich zu-Tode-Sprechende.” (*TCA/Meridian* Ms. 304.) But on the other hand: “Gedichte [...] haben die Lebendigkeit sterblicher Seelenwesen –” (*TCA/Meridian* Ms. 302.)

³³⁶ Cf. *TCA/Meridian* Ms. 458: “Freud, Unbehagen S. 49: »Die Schrift ist ursprüngl. die Sprache des Abwesenden« – im Gedicht wird ein abwesendes nahe, tritt es an dich | einen noch Abwesenderen | heran = / Im Gedicht, und das Gedicht ist, als Schrift, »Sprache eines Abwesenden«, tritt ein Abwesender an dich, den | noch | Abwesenderen, heran. / Der Gedanke, die Begegnung der Abwesenden könnte ausbleiben, liegt nahe.” (The editorial typography has been modified. The text from “Im Gedicht, und...” onward has been emphasized by Celan by a double stroke in the margin.)

³³⁷ Typically enough, Gadamer writes: “It is a poem since we are this I.” (“Under the Shadow of Nihilism”, p. 119.)

them (*überantwortet*: this is also a frequently used term in Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*, not in direct relation to this theme of death and survival *in words*, but in relation to mortality), preceding our speech and following our speech, whether we are willing to acknowledge this or not. We have no other alternative than to receive the injunction by the other, to receive the invitation "in place of all / rest".

In the famous letter of May 18, 1960 to Hans Bender, Celan writes that he sees no difference of principle between a handshake and a poem ("*Ich sehe keinen prinzipiellen Unterschied zwischen Händedruck und Gedicht*"). And in one of the prose fragments written while preparing for the Büchner Prize Speech, about the same time, he quotes Kafka's striking fragment, "*Schreiben als Form des Gebets*", pointing out that in Kafka's words it is not primarily a question of praying but of writing, and this is something that cannot be done with folded hands.³³⁸ The poem "Wirk nicht voraus" is a case in point. It is a hand unfolded, reaching toward the other, free of all prayer.³³⁹ It is not simply metaphorical to say that the poem is a hand reaching toward the other.

These extravagant claims shall have to serve here as a transition from these prolegomena to the main part of the present treatise. I think "Wirk nicht voraus" is a poem that demonstrates what Derrida writes, in response to a couple of other poems by Celan, about indecision and attention, about life and giving ear:

L'indécision tient à jamais l'attention en haleine, c'est-à-dire en vie, éveillée, vigilante, prête à s'engager dans tout autre chemin, à laisser venir, tendant l'oreille, l'écoutant fidèlement, l'autre parole, suspendue au souffle de l'autre parole et de la parole de l'autre – là même où elle pourrait sembler encore inintelligible, inaudible, intraduisible. [*Béliers*, pp. 37-38.]

Intraduisible is a word that could be translated from the German equivalent *unübersetzbar*; often this corresponds to *unübertragbar*, which also sometimes means, depending on the context, 'untransferable' or 'untransportable' in general, and sometimes more specifically, 'unmetaphorizable'. Metaphor, or the notion of metaphor, is indeed all too often a shortcut out of aporia, an instrument of decision where we should perhaps rather suspend decision and give an ear to indecision and equivocality instead. We shall see that this failure or unwillingness to pay attention, associated with the concept of metaphor, is indeed one of the many contraindications, in Celan's view, for the application of this concept to poetry.

³³⁸ Cf. *GW* 3:177; *TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 60/582; I will return to both of these motives, and I have discussed them also in the article already mentioned.

³³⁹ Perhaps a poem is, not only an unfolded, but also and at once, a folded hand: "une main donnée, à la fois ouverte et pliée" (Derrida, *Béliers — Le dialogue ininterrompu : entre deux infinis, le poème* [Paris: Galilée, 2003], p. 33). In the context of these words, Derrida discusses the poem "Wege im Schatten-Gebräch" and Gadamer's reading of it (cf. *ibid.*, pp. 30-37): "WEGE IM SCHATTEN-GEBRÄCH / deiner Hand. // Aus der Vier-Finger-Furche / wühl ich mir den / versteinerten Segen." (*DGKG*, p. 177; *TCA/Atemwende*, p. 21.)

Part II

CROSSING THE TROPOSPHERE

**Paul Celan's poetry and poetics
at the limits of figurality**

“DEPORTED”

Resistance to metaphorical interpretation in Peter Szondi’s “Reading ‘Engführung’”

VERBRACHT ins
Gelände
mit der untrüglichen Spur:

Gras, auseinandergeschrieben. Die Steine, weiß,
mit den Schatten der Halme:
Lies nicht mehr – schau!
Schau nicht mehr – geh!

Geh, deine Stunde
hat keine Schwestern, du bist –
bist zuhause. [...] ³⁴⁰

Before being properly introduced, without the formalities of introduction, the reader finds himself, herself (perhaps the sexual difference counts here less than the ontological: “your hour / has no sisters” addresses itself, at this point, indifferently to any of us, whether a brother or a sister) here *deported into the terrain with the unmistakable trace*: this trace is unmistakable, first of all, because it is right there, in front of our eyes, as the text we are reading. But not only as the visible black-on-white, the empirical text, but also as the “singable residue”³⁴¹ that addresses us in an unheard-of way.

After the uncanny lines from the beginning of Paul Celan’s poem “Engführung” (1958), and still before any proper introduction to the present essay on Paul Celan’s poetry and poetics, let us quote a few sentences from Peter Szondi’s reading of these opening lines, in his essay “Reading ‘Engführung’”; it is an early study on Celan showing rare ability and will to resist metaphorical interpretation, an essay first published in French 1971, and we cite it in Susan Bernofsky’s translation:

The difficulties of reading become apparent the moment the poem begins, but at the same time, they show us that the approaches traditionally employed in literary interpretation — particularly when applied to texts said to be obscure — distort both the reading itself and the text being read. [...] [W]e should stop wondering for the moment what is meant by the “unmistakable trace” and instead note that these first three lines do not tell us what it is, although the repeated use of the definite article suggests that the reader does know what “terrain” and “trace” are being invoked. The opening of

³⁴⁰ “Engführung”, in *TCA/Sprachgitter*, p. 89 (*GW* 1:197); trans. John Felstiner: “TAKEN OFF into / the terrain / with the unmistakable trace: // Grass, written asunder. The stones, white / with the grassblades’ shadows: / Read no more — look! / Look no more — go! // Go, your hour / has no sisters, you are — / are at home. [...]” (*Selected Poems and Prose of Paul Celan*, p. 119.) Cf. Susan Bernofsky’s translation: “Deported to the / terrain / with the unmistakable trace: // grass, written asunder. The stones, white, / with the shadows of grassblades: [etc.]”; the rest of Bernofsky’s translation of these lines, as part of her translation of Peter Szondi’s essay (cf. below), follows Felstiner’s rendering.

³⁴¹ “Singbarer Rest”, in *TCA/Atemwende*, p. 53; we shall return to the poem a couple of times.

“Engführung”, then, is characterized less by the (potential) meaning of the expressions used in it than by the fact that the reader finds himself being at the same time drawn into a context he does not recognize and treated as though it were familiar to him; or, to be more precise, he is being treated like someone who has no right to know. From the very beginning, the reader has been deported — *verbracht*, “forcibly brought” — to a terrain that is both foreign and strange. Is this the “terrain / with the unmistakable trace”? We do not know, do not yet know. But it has now been established that if these first few lines specify a referent, the reader cannot safely assume they do not refer to him. Here, too, then, we should stop asking ourselves to whom the phrase “Deported to the / terrain / with the unmistakable trace” refers and instead note that this information is being withheld, and that it is precisely this absence of information that lets the reader assume the phrase refers to him (though not necessarily to him alone) [*qu’il s’agit (aussi) de lui*]. And so the opening lines of “Engführung” give us to understand that while it is not true that the poet is addressing the reader directly (as is the case in a great many poems), nor even that the words have anything to do with him, the reader finds himself transported [*que l’on est déplacé*] to the interior of the text in such a way that it is no longer possible to distinguish between the one who is reading and what is being read. The reading subject coincides with the subject of reading [*le sujet lecteur coïncidant avec le sujet de la lecture*].³⁴²

This uncanny coincidence does not by any means signify that the reader would now be permitted to interpret the text ‘subjectively’, as though the text was his own, or addressed to him — or just anyone who happens to read it and is free to receive it as he will. To the contrary: it forces the “deported” reader into an immanent reading which tries to open itself up, as much as it can, to the very letter of the text *as* a text which urges him forward without telling very much (not even whether this addressing concerns him *directly* — him or her, the brother or sister whose hour has no sisters). Nor does it mean that the “landscape” or “terrain” is a metaphor for the text. To the contrary, this terrain one finds oneself deported into *is* the text, primarily and before being anything else; before being, for instance, a mimetic representation of some real or fantastic landscape. Even if one knows nothing else yet, this sense of being forcibly taken into the terrain which is, strangely and paradoxically, both literally visible and yet otherwise invisible at the same time (what else is there to *look* at this first sight but the terrain with the unmistakable trace — and you are allowed only a glimpse, as it seems, before you are told just to “go”); black and white on the page, but not to be read; to be seen, but only as in passing; to be gone into, deported.

What makes the address and coincidence so strange (namely, the coincidence due to which the reader faces the literality of the text as the terrain into which he is being deported, and yet does not even know whether he is being directly concerned and whether this is the *only* signification of the terrain he is now facing, as if blindfolded by the very visibility of the empirical text itself), so very uncanny, is spelled out, in the middle of this “terrain that is both

³⁴² Peter Szondi, “Reading ‘Engführung’”, trans. Susan Bernofsky, in Szondi, *Celan Studies* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), pp. 27-29. The original version: “Lecture de Strette. Essai sur la poésie de Paul Celan”, in *Critique* 288 (mai 1971), pp. 387-420, here pp. 387-388; it was translated into Szondi’s native language after his death by Jean Bollack et al. as “Durch die Enge geführt. Versuch über die Verständlichkeit des modernen Gedichts”, in *Schriften* 2, Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1978, pp. 345-389.

foreign and strange”, by the affirmation: “You are — / are at home [*Du bist — / bist zuhause*].” In this primarily verbal, textual terrain you are “at home”. There already. You are already there, deported into this terrain and gone, as if already before you are even told to “go”, there where “your hour / has no sisters”.

Let us follow Szondi’s lead a little further on this lonely trail where all assistance is welcome:

The scene is a landscape, but one described as a *written* landscape. The grass is “written asunder.” A traditional *explication de texte*, one based on a traditional notion of rhetoric, would no doubt say that the grass in this landscape is being compared to written characters and that it is the analogy between the one and the other (according to the Aristotelian definition of metaphor) that allows the poet to say: “grass, written asunder” and the reader to understand that this grass is like something that has been broken down into letters. It isn’t literally a matter of letters — and what is the poetic text if not the texture of language [*sinon la texture du verbe*]? — but of grass. It is the grass that has been “written asunder.” In other words, this grass is also language, and the landscape is text. It is because the “terrain with the unmistakable trace” is (also) text that the reader can be deported to it.

One might wonder what this landscape-text is, or, perhaps more modestly: what it is like. The stanza’s second sentence seems to provide an answer: “The stones, white...” This is a terrain [*étendue*] composed of whiteness, of void, but also of stones and shadows. Are these stones tombstones, or merely those hard, lusterless, impenetrable bodies — the forms, both crumbling and protective, of stars and eyes — that occupy an important position within Paul Celan’s “imaginary universe”? We do not know, and this means quite precisely that it is not for us to know. What can be known, can be seen, is the textuality of the terrain. [*Nous ne le savons pas, et cela veut dire très précisément que nous n’avons pas à le savoir. Ce qui se sait et se voit, c’est la textualité de l’étendue.*] Once the grass has become letter, the white of the stones is also the white of the page — whiteness itself [n.: Cf. J. DERRIDA, *La double séance. Tel Quel*, 42, p. 20 sq.], interrupted only by the “grassblade” letters [*tiges-lettres*], or, rather, by the shadows they cast. This landscape-text is a fateful, funereal terrain [*Ce paysage-texte est une étendue funeste et funèbre*]. One might be tempted to say that the reader finds himself deported to a landscape dominated by death and shadow — the dead and their memory. But once again, such interpretations are precluded by the textuality of a landscape that is not merely the subject of what we are reading — it is what we are reading [*la textualité d’un paysage qui n’est pas le sujet de ce qu’on lit, mais bien ce que l’on lit*]. This is why the orders issued by the poet — to himself, the reader? no doubt to both — do not serve as an introduction, as they might in poetry of a certain sort. One can receive and follow these orders only once one has been “deported” to the text-terrain. [*Celan Studies*, pp. 30-31; “Lecture de Strette”, pp. 389-390.]

The terrain is no metaphor for the text, the text is no metaphor for the terrain. Szondi’s faithfulness to the experience of being deported to the text-terrain, and of being deprived of the traditional instruments of interpretation, is one of the ways to resist the temptations of metaphorical undertaking: before interpreting, before taking the metaphorical shortcut, one should read the text to the letter, as closely as possible, and this *incipit* indeed forces the reader to do that, insofar as he is willing to bestow any real attention to what he is actually reading. The grassblades and their shadows, the white stones are no metaphors: they are literally the text

and they do not, in the first place, name anything but themselves in this text-terrain or terrain-text, themselves “written asunder”. And this is what is so uncanny in this experience: this terrain *is* a fateful, funereal terrain and a landscape dominated by death and shadow, even *before* we interpret it as something else than text (as a representation of some other terrain, a graveyard perhaps, which the text itself hardly allows at this point), even before we try to break through its opacity. An opacity of which we do not even know whether it is the opacity of a tombstone or not; this not knowing *and* yet being addressed *as if we already knew*, this arriving *at home* as utter strangers even to ourselves (since the unknown addressee is indeed *also* the reader, unmistakably) makes this deportation into the text so very real in its apparent unreality (it is *also* an “imaginary universe”, no doubt). What we see, what we do know, the little that we do know in facing this poem, is that we are dealing with words, *unmistakably*. Words, lines, such as these:

Gras, auseinandergeschrieben. Die Steine, weiß,
mit den Schatten der Halme.

And indeed, the words have their own reality, and they have *the same names as the things* — namely the things that they are thought to denote — as it is said in another poem, through a negative turn of speech:

kein Wort, kein Ding,
und beider einziger Name,³⁴³

Interpretation, or what the imperative in the poem calls *reading* and what it forbids us, saying: “Read no more — look!”, or knowing about the terrain into which we are being deported, is denied to us at the outset; we are just urged to look instead of read (perhaps to look how this landscape deploys itself before our hurried glimpse) and then, right away, to go instead of looking (perhaps to go into the terrain which thus opens before us — but opens only as something that is, at the very same moment, essentially inaccessible to us — or to *you*: the address of this poem is unmistakably singular). The access to the text is at the one and the same instant both inevitable and denied: inevitable, since the address concerns, in principle, anyone who understands the language, any Thou at all; denied, since I cannot *quite* recognize myself in being addressed like this, cannot quite *identify* myself as the addressee; and yet, in a peculiar way, I cannot escape the fact that I am being “deported” into this unknown territory, either. It seems that I am concerned by the address, perhaps more than ever (as the one whose hour has no sisters, namely anyone, any single mortal; personal and impersonal at the same time, someone, anyone, no one in particular), and yet, it also seems that I am only overhearing it (I can never be *certain* that I understood the nature of the address correctly, even though it seems undeniable that it concerns me too, someone, anyone, no one in particular).

³⁴³ “Fahlstimmig”, in *Lichtzwang*, GW 2:307. Trans. John Felstiner: “not a word, not a thing, / and of both the single name” (*Selected...*, p. 319).

On the other hand, this urging onward in the poem has its point: it hurries in order not to hurry. The poem's imperative hastens the reader in order that he would not make too much haste in deciding about the meaning of such deportation yet, when it is too early, and finally, in order also *not* to decide and select one of several meanings, but to respect an ambiguity that is "neither a defect nor purely a stylistic trait" but one which "determines the structure of the poetic text itself" (*Celan Studies*, p. 29):

He who has learned to "read" Celan's writing knows it isn't a matter of selecting one of several meanings [*significations*], but of understanding that they do not *differ*, but coincide. Ambiguity, which has become a means of knowledge, shows us the unity of what only appeared to be difference. This ambiguity serves the cause of precision. [*Elle sert la précision.*] [*Celan Studies*, pp. 81-82; "Lecture de Strette", p. 420.]

This is one of the most important lessons that we may learn from Szondi about Celan's poetics, one of the many important lessons.

In a conversation with Hugo Huppert in 1966, Celan said that he saw his own way of writing as characterized by "ambiguity without a mask [*Mehrdeutigkeit ohne Maske*]", conceptual overlapping and multifacetedness.³⁴⁴ On the other hand, this unity of the apparently separate, delineated by Szondi, does not do away with all the difference and distance involved in the poem. In the famous conversation with Huppert — to which we shall later return — Celan emphasized the necessary distance between the individuals engaged in conversation across what he calls *Sprachgitter* (translated as "language mesh" or "speech-grille"; in its primary lexical meaning it means concretely the parlatory window in a convent, a lattice through which the nuns talked with the worldly; we shall return to this, too), the distanced or deferred comprehension of which it is a question also in reading poetry. And he opposed this poetics of distanced comprehension and ambiguity without a mask to the hide-and-seek behind metaphors (which he conceded to having sometimes exercised in his early poetry) and, on the other hand, to the treacherous little word "like" pertaining to comparison, simile or, more implicitly, metaphor.³⁴⁵

This ambiguity of course allows for the presence of metaphor, the empirical presence of metaphor which appears to be inescapable. The words in the poem are not absolutely immune to their metaphorical sense, whether we mean by 'metaphoricity' the inescapable necessity of using the words tied with established commonplaces, or whether metaphor is rather understood as the secondary effect that belongs to the effort of interpretation; still, as it is said in one of Celan's manuscript fragments written in preparation for the Büchner Prize Speech (i.e. *Der Meridian*, 1960), the words in the poem *mean to be* untransportable, untranslatable, unmetaphorizable.³⁴⁶ The poem requires attention, which is to say, in other words, it requires

³⁴⁴ Hugo Huppert, "»Spirituell«: Gespräch mit Paul Celan", in Werner Hamacher & Winfried Menninghaus, eds., *Paul Celan* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1988), pp. 319-324, here p. 321. We shall return to this.

³⁴⁵ Cf. Huppert, "Spirituell", pp. 319-320.

³⁴⁶ "Es gibt kein Wort, das, einmal ausgesprochen, nicht auch seinen übertragenen Sinn mitbrächte; und doch

time. The unique punctual presence of the poem³⁴⁷ demands time and attention (while attentiveness is a necessary but not always sufficient condition for the encounter [*Begegnung*],³⁴⁸ of which the *Meridian* speech also speaks). This is to say that the poem, as a whole, the poetic corpus or the verbal body that the poem is, requires *its own time*, the time which already *belongs to it*, as its ownmost property. And this is why it resists the metaphorical shortcut of interpretation. The poem's time cannot be reduced into *my* time by any shortcut. Not even by the "overall key of all poetics", as Heidegger describes the concept of metaphor.³⁴⁹

Szondi actually demonstrates something about this "unheard-of demand"³⁵⁰ by directing our attention to the suspension of knowledge and the contrapuntal structure of "Engführung", in which the uncanny beginning is reiterated at the end of the relatively long poem, where we have come to know and understand more (inasmuch as we have been reading attentively enough) at least about the motivation for this suspension of knowledge.³⁵¹ This request for time and attention — these inseparable conditions,³⁵² which are also, in Celan's poetics,

meinen die Worte im Gedicht, unübertragbar zu sein; das Gedicht erscheint als der Ort, wo alle Metaphorik ad absurdum geführt wird." (*TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 71; cf. below.)

³⁴⁷ "Noch im Hier und Jetzt des Gedichts – das Gedicht selbst hat ja immer nur diese eine, einmalige, punktuelle Gegenwart –, noch in dieser Unmittelbarkeit und Nähe läßt es das ihm, dem Anderen, Eigenste mitsprechen: dessen Zeit." ("Der Meridian", *TCA/Meridian*, Endf. 36b.)

³⁴⁸ "Sprung — als eintritt ins Gedicht [...] Sprung (O[skar] Becker) / Spra schöpf. Sprung des Dichters, schöpf. Sprung des Lesers (Du) — Voraussetzung (nicht Gewähr!) ist das Einanderzugewendetsein" (*TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 428, 429). Celan refers here to Oskar Becker, *Von der Hinfälligkeit des Schönen und der Abenteuerlichkeit des Künstlers & Von der Abenteuerlichkeit des Künstlers und der vorsichtigen Verwegenheit des Philosophen* (Berlin: Alexander Verlag, 1994); these essays first appeared in 1929 and 1958.

³⁴⁹ "Was Hölderlin denkt, wenn er vom »feurigen Geist« und der »guter Fahrt« spricht, muß sich bei gegebener Gelegenheit klären. Wir sollen jetzt nur darauf merken, daß der Hauptschlüssel aller »Poetik«, die Lehre vom »Bild« in der Dichtung, von der »Metapher«, im Bereich der Hölderlinschen Hymnendichtung keine einzige Tür öffnet und nirgends ins Freie bringt. Es genügt hier, nur dies Eine zu bedenken: Auch die »Dinge selbst« sind schon, bevor sie zu sogenannten »Symbolen« werden, jedesmal gedichtet. Die Frage bleibt nur, in welchem Wesensbereich und aus welcher Wahrheit des Dichtens." (*GA* 52:40.)

³⁵⁰ Cf. *Der Meridian*, *TCA/Meridian*, Endf. 38d, & below.

³⁵¹ Near the end of his essay, Szondi writes: "The reader who was 'Deported to the / terrain / with the unmistakable trace' (I, 1) was neither able nor supposed to know what this 'unmistakable trace' was. Now, having reached the end of the progression that was our reading, a reading of something that is itself a progression, he understands. And this is why no explanation is being offered him. Once again, the reader has the opportunity to ignore the laws of musical composition and ask: What is the meaning of 'the conversations, day-gray, / of the groundwater traces'? And again, it is not by studying other passages in Celan's work where such expressions appear that the answer will be found (though readers are encouraged to engage in such study by the existence of a concordance that was published several years ago). While at the beginning of the poem the reader was forced to come to terms with the fact that he was apparently not yet supposed to know what was being spoken of, it is now assumed that he already does know what is being referred to, that the 'groundwater traces' are 'the / grooves, the // choruses, once, the / psalms,' but at the same time also the 'unmistakable trace' that characterizes this 'terrain' in which he has been moving since he began to read, without knowing where he was. The poem's opening is repeated for the purpose of his knowing." (*Celan Studies*, pp. 79-80.) Cf. also pp. 31-32, e.g. the following: "Poetry is ceasing to be mimesis, representation; it is becoming reality. To be sure, this is a poetic reality: The text no longer stands in the service of a predetermined reality, but rather is projecting itself, constituting itself as reality." By this, Szondi is very close to what Celan writes, not only on the "constitution" of reality in the poem, in the finalized version of the *Meridian* (*TCA/Meridian*, Endf. 36b), but of poetry, not only as "narrow straits" but as drafts for existence or projected reality: "Gedichte sind Engpässe / 'Du mußt hier hindurch, Leben': • Daseinsentwürfe" (*TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 352.)

³⁵² The relations between *Aufmerksamkeit* and *Wahrnehmung* in the *Meridian*, and *Gewärtigen* — or *Ver-*

inseparable from the resistance to the metaphorical undertaking — is perhaps also what makes poetry so unbearable (*unerträglich*) for so many.³⁵³

Metaphor — metaphorical interpretation — could be an escape from this uncanny reportedness, a shortcut back from the landscape of the text.³⁵⁴

“AND THEN WHAT WOULD THE IMAGES BE?”

Introductory remarks on “carrying metaphors ad absurdum”:
The *Meridian* speech and its margins

Und was wären dann die Bilder?

Das einmal, das immer wieder einmal und nur jetzt und nur hier Wahrgenommene und Wahrzunehmende. Und das Gedicht wäre somit der Ort, wo alle Tropen und Metaphern ad absurdum geführt werden wollen.³⁵⁵

It is by no means immediately clear what is meant by this “carrying to the absurd” of tropes and metaphors in a poem. Tropes are also mentioned later on in this Büchner Prize Speech, given on October 22nd, 1960, in a passage near the end of the speech introducing the word that provides the famous title, *Der Meridian*:

Ich finde das Verbindende und wie das Gedicht zur Begegnung Führende.

Ich finde etwas – wie die Sprache – Immaterielles, aber Irdisches, Terrestrisches, etwas Kreisförmiges, über die beiden Pole in sich selbst Zurückkehrendes und dabei – heitererweise – sogar die Tropen Durchkreuzendes –: ich finde ... einen *Meridian*.

Mit ihnen und Georg Büchner und dem Lande Hessen habe ich ihn soeben wieder zu berühren geglaubt.³⁵⁶

gegenwärtigung — as well as “*Wahrnehmung eher: Gewährwerden*” (*TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 434; cf. Ms. 440: “Sehen als Gewahren, Wahrnehmen, Wahrhaben, Wahrsein”; cf. *passim*), a whole phenomenology of temporal consciousness that nevertheless has to detach itself from Husserl’s notion of perceiving temporal objects, must be at least briefly discussed later on.

³⁵³ Cf. *TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 896 (cf. below). The resistance is also the resistance of *immediacy* — not only the resistance, offered by opacity, to an immediate grasp or “cultivation of intimacy”, but also the resistance offered by immediacy, the immediacy *endowed* to the poem: “Wer dem Gedicht nicht die Widerstandskraft des Unmittelbaren mitgibt, hat kein Gedicht geschrieben –” (*Mikrolithen*, p. 53, No. 84; dated “2.1.1966”. These notes and fragments often end with a dash.)

³⁵⁴ “Von der Hybris (der Vermessenheit) derer, die Wissen in Form von versandfertigen und unmittelbar wirk-samen Sinnbildern verwalten wollen.” (*Mikrolithen*, p. 46, No. 67.7; cf. pp. 396ff; written in 1963.)

³⁵⁵ *TCA/Meridian*, Endf. 39. Trans. John Felstiner: “And then what would the images be? / Something perceived and to be perceived only now and only here, once, again and again once. And so a poem would be the place where all tropes and metaphors will be carried ad absurdum.” (Pp. 410-411.)

³⁵⁶ *TCA/Meridian*, Endf. 50c-e. (*GW* 3:202.) Trans. Felstiner: “I find something that binds and that leads to encounter, like a poem. / I find something — like language — immaterial yet earthly, terrestrial, something circular, returning upon itself by way of both poles and thereby — happily — even crossing the tropics (and tropes): I find ... a *meridian*.” (P. 413.)

Meridian is the name for something *like* the poem, something *like* language. It is a trope “crossing through the tropes” (and not *only*, or primarily, the tropics):³⁵⁷ a counter-trope of sorts. The fact that this word “meridian” gives the speech its title, should already be enough to suggest that the couple of remarks earlier in the speech, concerning images, tropes and metaphors, were never mere side remarks. But in any case, it is not immediately clear how this crossing-through (*Durchkreuzen*) and this carrying *ad absurdum* would take place in the poem.

Among the manuscript material written for the *Meridian* speech (or at least around the time of composing it), published a few years ago as part of the Tübingen edition of Celan’s works, we find many notes that much more ardently denounce metaphor, or rather the concept of metaphor, as a means of interpreting poetry. It seems that towards the completion of the final version of the speech, Celan wanted to moderate the vehemently anti-metaphoric impetus into a counter-metaphoric, counter-tropic movement of which he speaks in the *Meridian*. For instance the following manuscript fragment concedes that the words also carry along their “transferred sense”, but also maintains that *in the poem*, the words *mean to be* untransferable, untransportable, unmetaphorizable (*unübertragbar*, which in other contexts also means untranslatable):

Es gibt kein Wort, das, einmal ausgesprochen, nicht auch seinen übertragenen Sinn mitbrächte; und doch meinen die Worte im Gedicht, unübertragbar zu sein; das Gedicht erscheint als der Ort, wo alle Metaphorik *ad absurdum* geführt wird.³⁵⁸

Perhaps it is a significant detail that in the final version, the verb *werden* (*wird*) has been replaced by the verb *wollen*:

Und das Gedicht *wäre* somit der Ort, wo alle Tropen und Metaphern *ad absurdum* geführt werden *wollen*.

The poem *would be* the place where all tropes and metaphors *would be* carried to the absurd (perhaps submitted to a *reductio ad absurdum*?): the verbs *werden* and *meinen* have been replaced and, as it were, condensed into the slightly more equivocal verb *wollen*, and thus it is as if the tropes and metaphors in the poem had a *will* of their own to be carried *ad absurdum*. Here this will seems to be equivalent to the will for being *unübertragbar*, untransportable, untranslatable, unmetaphorizable.

In other, presumably earlier notes, Celan speaks of “an antimetaphoric character” of poetry (and this emphatic *anti-metaphorisch* is connected with the slightly more ambiguous adjective *unübertragbar*), “even where it is most image-laden [*noch da wo es am bildhaftesten ist*]” (we shall quote the fragment in more detail in just a moment); so we can see that in

³⁵⁷ In a draft Celan still added: “ich sage nicht: die Wendekreise” (*TCA/Meridian*, p. 44 [“aus: Nr. 81 (C 8/9)”]). But this addition was erased, again, in the final version: we might think that the crossing of the “tropics” is not excluded, but it is primarily the tropes that are crossed through.

³⁵⁸ *TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 71.

this poetics, in this draft for a *phenomenology of poetry*, it is not a question of an attempt to write poetry simply without images, some sort of realistic prose poetry that would naïvely try to use only the most ordinary words, but the ‘images’ themselves are something other than metaphors; the poem is the place where all synonymy ends, where all tropes and everything “inauthentic” is carried *ad absurdum*, and the place where the images have a *phenomenal* character:

Das Gedicht ist der Ort, wo alle Synonymik aufhört; wo alle Tropen und alles Uneigentliche *ad absurdum* geführt werden; das Gedicht hat, glaube ich, noch da wo es am bildhaftesten ist, einen antimetaphorischen Charakter; das Bild hat einen phänomenalen, durch Anschauung erkennbaren Zug. – Was dich von ihm trennt, überbrückst du nicht; du mußt dich zum Sprung entschließen.³⁵⁹

This phenomenality of the image is actually the phenomenality of the non-phenomenal, the visibility of the invisible, and the distance to be leaped is not bridged by metaphor, as the meta-rhetoric, meta-metaphoric sentence closing this note suggests. These paradoxes will become clearer, little by little, I hope, as we proceed. In the meanwhile, we shall note that the phenomenality of the poem and its images and figures (*Gestalt* is a word often used by Celan, more or less as a synonym for *Figur*, but not for “figure of speech [*Redefigur*]”) ³⁶⁰ is the becoming phenomenal of language, in the singular figure that is taken on by language in the poem:

Das Gedicht ist der Ort, wo das Synonyme unmöglich wird: es hat nur seine Sprach-* / und damit Bedeutungsebene. Aus der Sprache hervortretend, tritt ~~die Spr~~ das Gedicht der Sprache gegenüber. Dieses Gegenüber ist unaufhebbar.

To this manuscript fragment, to the word *Sprach[ebene]* in it, Celan has added a footnote of sorts:

*) [D]arum auch ist das Gedicht, von seinem Wesen und nicht erst von seiner Thematik her – eine Schule wirklicher Menschlichkeit: es lehrt das Andere als das Andere {d.h. in seinem Anderssein} verstehen, es fordert zur Brüderlichkeit mit {zur Ehrfurcht vor} diesem Andern auf, zur Hinwendung zu diesem Andern, auch da, wo

³⁵⁹ *TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 68. Cf. Ms. 66: “Das Bild? Die Metapher? Sie sind das Gesehene, Wahrnehmbare, sie haben phänomenalen Charakter. Das Gedicht ist der einmalige Ort, wo alle Tropen *ad absurdum* geführt werden –” Cf. Ts. (Ms.) 70: “Gedichte, n’en déplaise à Mallarmé, werden nicht aus Worten und auch nicht, n’en déplaise à certains autres, aus Wort-material gemacht; Im Gedicht wird alle Synonymik und Tropik *ad absurdum* geführt; im Gedicht wiederholt sich, im Einmaligen* und Endlichen, die Sprache als geistige Gestalt. / *) Im Einmaligen und Endlichen wird das Wort zum Namen – Nomen, Hang zum Substantivischen[.] Es ist einem Namen zugeordnet, der unaussprechlich ist.”

³⁶⁰ Cf. *Der Meridian*: “Lucile nimmt Sprache als Gestalt und Richtung und Atem wahr”; “ich suche Lenz selbst, ich suche ihn – als Person, ich suche seine Gestalt: um des Ortes der Dichtung, um der Freisetzung, um des Schritts willen”; “Aber Dichtung versucht ja, wie Lucile, die Gestalt in ihrer Richtung zu sehen”; “wäre das Gedicht [...] gestaltgewordene Sprache eines Einzelnen”; “Jedes Ding, jeder Mensch ist dem Gedicht, das auf das Andere zuhält, eine Gestalt dieses Anderen” (*TCA/Meridian*, Endf., *passim*.) Cf. *TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 239: “Das Gedicht ist als Figur der ganzen Sprache eingeschrieben [...]”; cf. also Ms. 588, and below.

das Andre als das Krummnasige und Mißgestalte – keineswegs Mandeläugige –
auftritt – angeklagt von den »Geradnasigen« ...³⁶¹

The encounter with language (the poem stepping forward from language toward language, standing forth *from* language to *confront* language), in the place or *as* the place where synonyms become impossible,³⁶² is an encounter with the human other. The meridian, the counter-trope crossing through the tropes, something *like* the poem and *like* language, is also something that leads the way to the encounter. While of course, we do not know yet what is an encounter, or the *secret* of the encounter of which the *Meridian* speaks:

Das Gedicht ist einsam. Es ist einsam und unterwegs. Wer es schreibt, bleibt ihm
mitgegeben.
Aber steht das Gedicht nicht gerade dadurch, also schon hier, in der Begegnung – im
Geheimnis der Begegnung?³⁶³

The writer of the poem remains “mated” with it (as Felstiner translates), *given with* the gift of the poem, *endowed* to it: *mitgegeben*. Is this, then, the sense in which we can say that the poem has a will of its own, that it bears witness to the unique moment of writing, to the singularity of an existence? And is this the singularity of the writer himself? Or is it rather so that the poem bears witness to the singularity of the “perception”, *Wahrnehmung* or *Anschauung*, which is at once a vision and an address directed at a singularity:³⁶⁴

³⁶¹ Ms. 240. “19.8.60”. The braces, i.e. “{}”, denote an addition by Celan.

³⁶² This could even be seen as an objection to the Aristotelian tradition seeing the poet as a man of synonymy, namely operating on the paradigmatic axis of choice (cf. Jakobson on this), and thereby a man of metaphor, in contradistinction to the sophist seen as a man of homonymy. (Cf. *Rh.* III, 2, 1404b37ff.)

³⁶³ *TCA/Meridian*, Endf. 34. Trans. Jerry Glenn: “The poem is alone. It is alone and underway. Whoever writes it must remain in its company. / But doesn’t the poem, for precisely that reason, at this point participate in an encounter — *in the mystery of an encounter*.” (“Appendix: The Meridian”, in Jacques Derrida, *Sovereignities in Question: The Poetics of Paul Celan*, ed. Thomas Dutoit and Outi Pasanen, trans. T. Dutoit, O. Pasanen, Joshua Wilner [revised T. Dutoit], Philippe Romanski [New York: Fordham U.P., 2005], pp. 173–185, here p. 181.) We shall be using variably both Glenn’s and Felstiner’s translation.

³⁶⁴ Cf. e.g. *TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 463: “Wahrnehmung: im aller-wörtlichsten Sinne”. — Cf. also the following: “Die Dichtung entsteht nicht da, wo »Wandermetaphern« Station machen; sondern da, wo das Bild im einmalig-sterblichen Auge des Dichters als ein von ihm Gesehenes erwacht.” (In Barbara Wiedemann, ed., *Paul Celan – Die Goll-Affäre. Dokumente zu einer »Infamie«* [Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 2000], p. 460, doc. No. 122.) This note and the next one are classified by the editor as belonging under the rubric “Texte, Entwürfe und Notizen zu den Plagiatvorwürfen” and they belong to a “*Konvolut*” related to the work in progress that became the volume of poems entitled *Die Niemandsrose* (1963). — In the drafts for the *Meridian* speech, Celan often uses the term *Anschauung* (*Anschauen*), which is actually the opposite of the ‘seeing through’ implied by *percipere*, and the term *Wahrnehmung* is qualified thus: “Wahrnehmung eher: Gewährwerden”. (*TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 434=804; “22.8.60”.) On the verb *gewährwerden* or *gewahr werden*, cf. *DWB*, entry “*GEWAHR*, *adj.*”, e.g.: “*gewar* = aufmerksam, die Aufmerksamkeit auf etwas wendend”; “wahrnehmen, inne werden”; “erkennen, inne werden”. — “Perception” and “to perceive” are in any case obviously insufficient translations for Celan’s use of the verb *wahrnehmen*. Without pretending to know what Celan exactly meant by this “most literal sense”, let us only indicate the proximity of *Wahrnehmen* to another central term of the *Meridian*, namely *Aufmerksamkeit*. The German understanding of the verb *wahrnehmen* comprises not only *percipere*, the philosophical equivalent which the native verb *wahrnehmen* was designed to translate, while these terms were introduced to each other actually as late as in the 18th century, but also *attendere*: one of the primary determinations for *wahrnehmen* given by the Grimm dictionary is “*seine aufmerksamkei schenken*”, to grant one’s attention, to pay heed. (“WAHRNEHMEN, verb. *sich umschauen, ins auge fassen, betrachten, acht haben, seine aufmerksamkei schenken, sorge*

Der Ort wo die Bilder phänomenalen Charakter haben: aber als Gesehenes, als Angesprochenes — als Zeugen eines einmaligen Daseins. [*TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 333.]

The anti-metaphoric, counter-tropic will of the poem's images is associated with phenomenality, attentiveness, uniqueness, testimony and *Wahrnehmung*, while metaphors and rhetorical tropes are rather associated with a failure or unwillingness to pay attention:

Wer im Gedicht nur die Metapher findet, der hat auch nichts anderes gesucht; er nimmt nichts wahr; [...]. [*TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 470.]

In another fragment, Celan writes that whoever concentrates on “snuffling” for metaphors in a poem — often “ambulant” metaphors that wander from one poem to the other — will never even find anything else.³⁶⁵ The images in the poem imply neither an abundance of aesthetic or synaesthetic, sensuous or affective qualities, nor their supra-sensible counterpart or paradigm (i.e. “antitype” or “counterfigure” in the sense of the “spiritual” counterpart of a sensible figure or emblem, *Sinn-bild*)³⁶⁶ in an elevated, transfigured, “higher” reality; here is

tragen, [etc.], “*seine aufmerksamkeit auf etwas richten*”; Wahrig explains the etymology of this verb as follows: “mhd. *war nemen* < ahd. *wara neman*; zu ahd. *wara* ‘Aufmerksamkeit’.”) In the *Meridian*, the passage on the attentiveness that the poem tries to dedicate to all that it encounters (“Die Aufmerksamkeit, die das Gedicht allem ihm Begegnenden zu widmen versucht”) is followed by a paragraph on *Wahrnehmung* and on the “unavoidable question” and “unheard-of demand” that are later referred to; this arrangement confirms the connection between *Wahrnehmung* and *Aufmerksamkeit* in Celan's text, and we may relate *Wahrnehmung* back to Celan's famous citation of Malebranche's sentence, quoted by Celan through Walter Benjamin's essay on Kafka: “Aufmerksamkeit ist das natürliche Gebet der Seele.” “Attentiveness is the natural prayer of the soul.” (Trans. Felstiner.) In an earlier version Celan misquotes the translation Benjamin uses by substituting ‘piety’ (*Frömmigkeit*) for ‘prayer’ (Gebet): “Aufmerksamkeit ist das natürliche Frömmigkeit der Seele.” (Variant of the section 35d in *TCA/Meridian*, p. 36.) This attentiveness in question is “a concentration that stays mindful of all our dates” (cf. *TCA/Meridian*, Endf. 35a-c). — An earlier version, written for the radio essay on Mandelstam, adds the word *aufmerksam* to the context of the passage that found its way, modified, to the *Meridian*: “Die Gedichte Ossip Mandelstamms {sind die Gedichte eines Wahrnehmenden} dem Erscheinenden {aufmerksam} zugewandten, [etc.]” (*TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 56.) Cf. also the context from which Celan quotes Malebranche's sentence, in Benjamin's essay on Kafka: “Wenn Kafka nicht gebetet hat – was wir nicht wissen –, so war ihm doch aufs höchste eigen, was Malebranche »das natürliche Gebet der Seele« nennt – die Aufmerksamkeit. Und in sie hat er, wie die Heiligen in ihre Gebete, alle Kreatur eingeschlossen.” (*Schriften II*, [Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1955], p. 222; cf. Celan, *La bi. phi.*, p. 297, No. 399.) — Still, besides ‘attentive concentration’, we might also use a constellation of other expressions to explain “the most verbatim sense” of *Wahrnehmung*, such as ‘true reception’ with the implication of ‘[taking under] protection’, and also ‘[ap]prehension’, inasmuch as this is also ‘hand-clasping’...

³⁶⁵ “Kein ‘trobar cluz’. Ich bin dein, du bist mein, ›verloren ist das slüzzelin‹. Wer das Gedicht aufsucht, um nach Metaphern zu schnüffeln, wird immer nur – Metaphern finden. Sofern sich seiner, denn er befindet sich ja – und hier darf ich mit diesem Wortspiel wohl seine Denkweise ebenfalls ein wenig naseweis »nachvollziehen« – in den »Tropen«, sofern sich seiner nicht dieses oder jenes Schlinggewächs annimmt. Dem Gedicht, das eines Menschen Gedicht ist, ist der Mensch mehr als ein durch Bildung hypertrophiertes Riechorgan, und schon gar nicht ein Rüssel(Tier) (wesen)” (*TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 584; *Mikrolithen*, pp. 138–139, No. 251.1; the typography has been conventionalized by Wiedemann.) *TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 65: “Die an ambulante Metapher glauben. / Toposforschung, Freund? Gewiß – aber im Lichte des zu Erforschenden, im Lichte der U-topie.” The apostrophe to the friend here might be directed at Otto Pöggeler, a long-time friend and the author of the article “Dichtungstheorie und Toposforschung” (in Heinrich Lützeler et al., eds., *Jahrbuch für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*. Bd. 5 [Köln: Kölner Universitäts-Verlag, 1960], pp. 89–201.)

³⁶⁶ Cf. the extracts from the *OED* cited above as an epigraph. On the double character of *Sinn-bild*, cf. Heideg-

an excerpt from Celan's polylogue on Mandelstam, written for radio and broadcast on March 19th, 1960:

Die zwanzig Gedichte aus dem Gedichtband »Der Stein« befremden.
Sie sind keine »Wortmusik«, keine aus »Klangfarben« zusammengewobene, impressionistische »Stimmungspoesie«, keine das Wirkliche sinnbildlich überhöhende »zweite« Wirklichkeit. Ihre Bilder widerstehen dem Begriff der Metapher und des Emblems; sie haben phänomenalen Charakter.³⁶⁷

So the images in the poem are neither metaphors nor emblems of some supralunary, supra-sensible second reality, nor symbolic or impressionistic synaesthetic textures of correspondences between colours and sounds. However, the so-called materiality of language, in the restricted sense, coincides with the singular "untransportability" of the poetic token: *Timbre* — the grain of the voice as Roland Barthes would say — is also one of the things that makes poetry not only untranslatable with regard to all its idiomatic aspects but also untransferable in a more extensive sense (*unübertragbar*).³⁶⁸

In any case, the 'images' are indeed tokens for a voice and for an 'I', vocals endowed with consonants that are not only graphemes or phonemes but carry along a singular voice onto another time:

Das Gespräch mit den Dingen (die Dinge nicht eben kongruent mit dem Zeichen oder so ähnl<ich>) – die Dinge als {(künftige)} Zeugen* – die {vokalischen} Dinge, denen {sich} der Mensch {das Ich} als Mitlaut mitgibt in eine andere Zeit / *) = als Ichträger = der Mensch überträgt sich ihnen (sein Ich)³⁶⁹

In the untransportable poems the 'I' is indeed 'carried over', but neither metaphorically nor so that we could, as readers and receivers, bridge the distance and appropriate these "vocal

ger, *GA* 53:17ff.

³⁶⁷ "Die Dichtung Ossip Mandelstams" = *TCA/Meridian*, D.O.M. 5 (p. 215). Cf. Ms. 525: "Mandelstamm / Die Dinge: dinglicher im Sinne ihres Gegenwärtigseins, dem sie Sehenden und sich mit ihnen Auseinandersetzen. Nicht verklärt, nicht überhöht[,] nicht in ein symbolisches Ungefähr getaucht[,] – sondern angeschaut[,] und in Worte gefaßt (eingefaßt?) (sertis dans des mots) – aus der Nähe mit sterblichen Augen[.] / Dingfest[.]" (Typography slightly conventionalized. Cf. also Dsl./Ts. (Ms.) 17.)

³⁶⁸ "Das Anklingen der Sprache (als Ganzes) im Gedicht. – / → *Timbre* = / Unübertragbare" (*TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 249=763.) — In speaking of "untranslatability", we must of course remember that Celan was a great translator of poetry, but perhaps one whose translations originated rather for the sake of difference than for similarity, as Axel Gellhaus has observed, readings "recast in new form": "Vielleicht ist nur um dieses Unterschiedes willen die Übersetzung entstanden?" (Gellhaus, "Fergendienst – Einleitende Gedanken zum Übersetzen bei Paul Celan", in Axel Gellhaus, ed., *»Fremde Nähe« – Celan als Übersetzer* [Marbach: Deutsche Schillergesellschaft, 1997], pp. 9-16, here p. 9.) Gellhaus refers here primarily to Celan's early translation of Shakespeare's Sonnet 57, but this emphasis on (productive) difference could indeed be applied to Celan's activity as a translator in general. Cf. p. 10: "Eine poetische Übersetzung [...] ist Lesevorgang und zugleich dessen Umschmelzung in eine neue Gestalt: Dokument einer Rezeption und einer Neuschöpfung." — To adopt Celan's own figures for the unmetaphorical process of translation, it is a question of creative leaps across an abyss and not bridges that would ensure the transmission of messages or information (cf., however, *Mikrolithen*, pp. 95-96, No. 156, and below).

³⁶⁹ *TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 506. Date of the fragment: "6.10.60". The additions between braces are Celan's; the one between the arrow brackets, in "ähnl<ich>", is by the editors of the *TCA* volume.

things” as if they were simply our own. The gift of the poem is endowed with the ‘I’, the human being. But this endowment or *complicity* with the poem (*Mitwisserschaft*) is obviously not very simple or one-sided, and the emphasis on the “person” has nothing to do with reducing poetry to biography. “Authentic poetry” is not only anti-metaphoric, but also “anti-biographic”, as Celan a few years earlier wrote.³⁷⁰

Also the ‘Thou’ is endowed to the poem, given with the gift. This cannot mean that someone could, once and for all, appropriate the poem or ‘transport’ himself into it, as if into a mirror. Neither the writer nor the reader can do that:

Metapher, d.i. mitunter nur ein (Hilfs)wort {eine (Not)lüge} im Munde derer, die über das Gedicht hinweg und in den Spiegel gucken; es ist Selbstübertragung, Selbsttransport, Selbstbeförderung. Es steht für Überheblichkeit. Mit Transit als primum und Exit als secundum movens. [*TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 585.]

Metaphor, as an interpreter’s short-circuit between transit and exit, is a “(white) lie” and self-transport, self-promotion, a pretext for self-reflection on the far side of the poem. This carrying-over-oneself-into-the-poem-and-out-of-it implies an unwillingness to *bear with* the poem itself: “*Wer das Gedicht nicht mit-tragen will, überträgt und spricht gern von Metaphern.*”³⁷¹ And this failure or unwillingness may result from experiencing the untransportability, unmetaphorizability and untranslatability of the poem — its uniqueness, its singularity, its bearing witness to uniqueness and singularity — as something unbearable, as a tyranny of sorts:

Zu Metapher:

Die Unübertragbarkeit des Gedichts erleben viele als ein Unerträgliches, als eine Tyrannis; aber unter Menschen-Sein, das kann auch so verstanden werden: unter Königen sein –

↓

Gerade wegen seiner Unübertragbarkeit wird das Gedicht so oft als ein Unerträgliches empfunden – und gehaßt. Es gibt zweifellos eine Tyrannis des Gedichts: sie hat das Gebieterische des Gedankens, daß unter Menschen sein auch heißen kann: unter Königen sein. [*TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 896.]³⁷²

³⁷⁰ “Echte Dichtung ist antibiographisch. Die Heimat des Dichters ist sein Gedicht, sie wechselt von einem Gedicht zum andern. Die Entfernungen sind die alten, ewigen: unendlich wie der Weltraum, in dem jedes Gedicht sich zu behaupten sucht als – winziges – Gestirn. Unendlich auch wie die Entfernung zwischen seinem Ich und seinem Du: von beiden Seiten, beiden Polen her wird die Brücke geschlagen: in der Mitte, auf halbem Wege, da wo der tragende Pfeiler erwartet wird, von oben her und von unten her, ist der Ort des Gedichts. Von oben her: unsichtbar und ungewiß. Von unten her: aus dem Abgrund der Hoffnung auf den fernen, den zukunftsfernen Nächsten.” (»*Mikrolithen*, pp. 95-96, No. 156.) In this fragment from 1954, Celan indeed speaks of “building a bridge”, an image he would later renounce.

³⁷¹ *TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 587. Cf. the Grimm dictionary (*DWB*): “MITTRAGEN, *verb.* vereint tragen, am tragen theilnehmen [...] MITTRÄGER, *m.* der vereint trägt; ohne umlaut: der mittrager, *socius laboris*. [...] *fem.* mitträgerin: [...]”. The typography of the Tübingen edition has been conventionalized in the quote.

³⁷² The typography of the Tübingen edition has been simplified, once again, but the apparent clerical error (“unter Menschen-Sein”) has been preserved. The latter paragraph, obviously a revision of the former, has been emphasized by Celan in the manuscript by a double stroke in the margin.

The anti-metaphoricity of the poem (here the term is *Unübertragbarkeit*, while in our next quote we have the adjective *anti-metaphorisch*, together with *das Einmalige Unübertragbare*) and its images or figures is associated with “naming [*Nennen*]” which is also, at the same time, an “invoking [*Anrufen*]”, even when it is a silent “looking-at [*Anschauen*]”, and an “incorporation [*sich verkörpern*]” which is an “objectification [*Vergegenständlichen*]” and, as such, “dialogue”, even a dialogue with that which is mute and opaque:

Das Vergegenständlichen, zum Gegenstand-Werden (*Dialog*) des Gedichts: auch im Vokabular (wie es ja überall {um ein s<ich>} verkörpern {geht}. – Ein Nennen – das ist, ehe es etwas anderes ist, immer noch ein Anrufen (auch da wo es stumm ein Anschauen ist): daher, von diesem Nennen her, ist das Gedicht seinem Wesen nach anti-metaphorisch; übertragen wird allenfalls das Ich auf die Dinge: es ist, vom Nennen her, der stumme Mitlaut am Genannten[.]
Warum es nicht extrem formulieren?: Das Gedicht ist das Einmalige Unübertragbare Gegenwärtige –
Es kann, als das Gegenständliche, auch dessen Stummheit und Opazität haben; es erwacht erst in der wirklichen Begegnung, die es als sein Geheimnis hat. Darum ist jede wirkliche Begegnung auch Erinnerung an das Geheimnis des Gedichts.
[TCA/Meridian, Ms. 508.]³⁷³

It is perhaps this silence and opacity that is experienced as so unbearable, so impossible to bear with, by many readers of the allegedly ‘cryptic’ or ‘hermetic’ poetry of — for instance — Paul Celan, who has himself denied that it is a question of hermeticism: “*Ganz und gar nicht hermetisch.*”³⁷⁴ This opacity that is not hermetic is a dialogue with that which is opaque, an encounter with the *manifest* opacity of the other, with the singularity and untransportability, the uniqueness of the other, *every* other, *wholly* other (“*Tout autre est tout autre*”), in the antitypous, counter-figurative resistance that belongs to every single being or every “creature”, and that is, to every single “figure [*Gestalt*]” in which we encounter the otherness, or in which *the poem* encounters it, to every figure assumed by the otherness of the wholly other: “*Jedes Ding, jeder Mensch ist dem Gedicht, das auf das Andere zuhält, eine Gestalt dieses Anderen.*”³⁷⁵ And this is why *every authentic encounter takes place in the memory of the secret of the poem*, as Celan writes. This inversion of the order of representation, or in other words, of the order of prescription and description, or let us say the order of ‘literature’ and ‘reality’, is also what defies the notion of metaphor. This chiasmatic inversion crosses through the tropes. Such an overturning has also been called “inverted metaphoricity” or “quasi-metaphoricity”;³⁷⁶ but with respect to Celan’s insistence on anti-metaphoricity, I

³⁷³ Date of the fragment: “ab 5.10.60”. Cf. Ms. 507: “In jedem Gedicht wartet die Sprache als Stimme / das Stimmlos-stimmhafte des Gedichts – / → Anrufen” (Date: “ab 5.10.60”).

³⁷⁴ Reported by Michael Hamburger in the introduction to his volume of English translations (in an earlier edition by the title *Poems. A Bilingual Edition*, 1980; I only had the revised 2002 edition at hand when writing this, with a different preface, and therefore could not look for the exact page of the famous quote in the preface I have earlier read).

³⁷⁵ TCA/Meridian, Endf. 35b.

³⁷⁶ Cf. Axel Schmitt, “Poetik der Beschneidung ...”, already cited above, and Derrida, “Le retrait de la métaphore”, in *Psyché — inventions de l’autre*, pp. 63-93. Heidegger’s and Derrida’s deconstructive critique of

would rather call it *pseudo-metaphoricity*, *merely apparent* metaphoricity that is no longer compatible with the doctrine of metaphor.³⁷⁷

I would not designate the poematic dialogue with silence and opacity in terms of lending language to silence, or giving voice to the unspeakable, at least not without reservations rising from Celan's poetry and poetics themselves.³⁷⁸ Rather, it would be a question of paying heed to silence *as* silence, engaging in conversation *with* silence. The poet, insofar as I have understood Celan's view of poetry as conversation, is not a representative of those who have fallen silent, but speaks always from the limited perspective of his own existence (*"unter dem Neigungswinkel seines Daseins"*), even when he would include all creatures within the scope of his attentiveness, like Kafka did, according to Benjamin, "as saints include them in their prayers".³⁷⁹ And speaking from within this kind of limited sphere of immanence is perhaps the only authentic possibility of opening up to a conversation with the transcendent other. An egological perspective that cannot be simply surpassed in a phenomenology of poetry, even when the limits of this perspective, such as *the other's time* which is a central theme in Celan's poetics, are called into question.

So the resistance to metaphor is motivated not only by the phenomenal character of the poetic images, but also by the non-phenomenality that inhabits the very heart of phenomena. The apparition or appearance (*Erscheinung*), the phenomenality of the poetic "object [*Gegenstand*]" has its opposite, its counter-figure, to which it bears witness in its very figure (*Gestalt*), just as the term *scheinbar* (usually understood as 'merely apparent') has its own antonym (*Gegenwort*) when we are speaking of poetry:

Das Gegenwort zu »scheinbar« ist nicht, wie man zunächst denken möchte, »real« oder »sinnfällig«; es ist im »Unscheinbaren«, nicht Erscheinenden, nicht zu Tage tretenden zu suchen; es ist das Verborgene, das erst erwacht, wenn es unser Auge offen und unterwegs und dadurch auch nahe weiß. →

the concept of metaphor would have to be guided by this figure of inversion or chiasmus — but this will be done elsewhere.

³⁷⁷ In a fragment probably dating from 1961, Celan writes: "Das Gedicht, wo es wirklich überträgt (und keineswegs transponiert): nicht Metapher, sondern Metabasis (μετάβασις εἰς ἄλλο γένος) – ins Andere... als in Dasselbe." (*Mikrolithen*, p. 30, No. 46.2.; cf. Wiedemann's commentary on p. 337.) Celan's source for the Platonic term here, μετάβασις εἰς ἄλλο γένος (sometimes reformulated as "category mistake"), is probably a text by Lev Shestov that he read around the time of writing the note, "Cur Deus homo?" (Leo Schestow, *Auf Hiobs Wage*, trans. H. Ruoff, R. von Walter [Berlin: Verlag Lambert Schneider, 1929], pp. 260-268, here p. 265).

³⁷⁸ Cf. William Franke, "The Singular and the Other at the Limits of Language in the Apophatic Poetics of Edmond Jabès and Paul Celan", in *New Literary History*, 2005, 36: 621-638, here p. 621: "Edmond Jabès and Paul Celan, [...] [w]riting as post-Holocaust Jews, each in a different way lends language to silence in order to give voice to the unspeakable."

³⁷⁹ "Dieses Immer-noch des Gedichts kann ja wohl nur in dem Gedicht dessen zu finden sein, der nicht vergißt, daß er unter dem Neigungswinkel seines Daseins, dem Neigungswinkel seiner Kreatürlichkeit spricht." (*TCA/Meridian*, Endf. 33.) On "attention as a natural prayer of the soul" (*TCA/Meridian*, Endf. 35d), cf. Walter Benjamin, "Franz Kafka", in *Schriften 2* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1955), p. 222 (En. trans. Harry Zohn, in Benjamin, *Illuminations* [London: Fontana Press, 1992], p. 130). Cf. *TCA/Meridian*, Endf. 35: "Die Aufmerksamkeit, die das Gedicht allem ihm Begegnenden zu widmen versucht, [...] ist vielmehr eine aller unserer Daten eingedenk bleibende Konzentration."

»Ne nous reprochez pas l'obscurité, das ist ein Wort von Pascal, [...] [«Ne nous reprochez pas le manque de clarté puisque nous en faisons profession!»]³⁸⁰

The opposite to apparent is not the real but the non-apparent, the non-apparent in the reality of the real, the non-phenomenal in the heart of the phenomena themselves.

MILLS OF DEATH

Celan's probably most famous so-called metaphor — pseudo-metaphor — is the one that opens "Todesfuge", written in Bucharest in May 1945 and first published in Vienna in 1948, in Celan's first collection of poems *Der Sand aus den Urnen*, namely the words "*Schwarze Milch der Frühe*" ("Black milk of daybreak"):

SCHWARZE Milch der Frühe wir trinken sie abends
wir trinken sie mittags und morgens wir trinken sie nachts
wir trinken und trinken
wir schaufeln ein Grab in den Lüften da liegt man nicht eng³⁸¹

According to the poet's own testimony, this "black milk of dawn" is no metaphor, no "genitive metaphor" and no figure of speech at all, not even an oxymoron *any longer*, it is *reality*; and from this "no longer [*keine ... kein ... mehr*]" we may infer that it has *become* reality:

Schwarze Milch der Frühe: Das ist keine jener Genitivmetaphern, ~~die~~ {wie sie} uns {von} unseren sogenannten Kritikern vorgesetzt bekommen, damit wir nicht mehr zum Gedicht gehen; das ist keine Redefigur und kein Oxymoron mehr, das ist Wirklichkeit.

Genitivmetapher = Nein, ein unter Herzensnot Zueinander-Geboren-Werden der Worte³⁸²

"Black milk" is no metaphor, no mere figure of speech, not even oxymoron. The primary contraindication for applying the usual tropological terms is what Celan in this fragment calls *Herzensnot*: in this apparent "genitive metaphor", the words are brought together by necessity, by heart's destitution, the privation which still has the heart's strength to call forth itself.³⁸³

³⁸⁰ *TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 153 ("1.6.60"); the citation from Pascal is retained, in its correct form, in the final version (Endf. 27).

³⁸¹ *GW* 1:41; *GW* 3:63; *DGKG*, p. 40. Trans. Felstiner: "Black milk of daybreak we drink it at evening / we drink it at midday and morning we drink it at night / we drink and we drink / we shovel a grave in the air where you won't lie too cramped" (*Selected Poems and Prose*, p. 31).

³⁸² *TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 588. The typography of the edition is here retained as well as possible. Barbara Wiedemann re-edits the fragment as follows: "Schwarze Milch der Frühe: Das ist keine jener Genitivmetaphern, wie sie uns von unseren sogenannten Kritikern vorgesetzt [wird], damit wir nicht mehr zum Gedicht gehen; das ist keine Redefigur und Oxymoron mehr, das ist Wirklichkeit. | Genitivmetapher = Nein, ein unter Herzensnot Zueinander-Geboren-Werden der Worte" (cit. by Wiedemann in her "Einzelkommentar", in *DGKG*, p. 608).

³⁸³ Cf. *DWB*: "*HERZENSNOTH*, f.: // mitten im getümmel mancher freuden, / mancher sorgen, mancher her-

“*Die Todesfuge ist ein Grabmal*”, Celan wrote in 1959.³⁸⁴ The only monument for those who sing and dig the grave in the air, in the poem, for those who drink the black milk of the dawn that will not be a dawn anymore, not as we know it anyhow, their only grave is *in their song*, in the air, in the black ink. This is what Celan wrote to Ingeborg Bachmann the same year:

die Todesfuge auch dies für mich ist: eine Grabschrift und ein Grab. [...] Auch meine Mutter hat nur dieses Grab.³⁸⁵

zensnoth, / denk ich dein, o Lottchen. // *GÖTTE* 1, 84.” If Celan here ‘cited’ Goethe by using the word *Herzensnot* (of course we do not know whether he thought of this as a citation at the time of using the word), this would imply a remarkable irony, if we take into account the allusions, in “Todesfuge”, to Goethe’s *Faust* and the apostrophes: “dein goldenes Haar Margarete” — “o Lottchen”. Goethe’s poem “An Lottchen” also contains the verse “Ganz den Herzensausdruck in dem Munde”, and these: “Lottchen, wer kennt unsre Sinnen? / Lottchen, wer kennt unser Herz? / Ach, es machte gern gekannt sein, überfließen / In das Mitempfinden einer Kreatur.” (<http://www.textlog.de/18390.html>. Accessed Jan. 2007.) — There are also several other ways to understand “black milk”, when detached from the context of the poem, either as metaphor or as something other than metaphor. For instance, as a metonymic condensation of the expression “black market milk” — which was another item belonging to the reality of the camps. In her commentary, Barbara Wiedemann cites *Frankfurter allgemeine Zeitung*, one of the articles on the Frankfurt Auschwitz trials and concerning the accused Wilhelm Boger, an article entitled “Boger hatte Angst vor Gift” by Kurt Ernenputsch (June 15th, 1964[?]; I could not locate the article in the *FAZ* of that day). The article cites one of the other main accused of the trial, Josef Klehr, and interprets his laconic words: “‘Meine Milch war schwarz’, antwortet Klehr, womit er offenbar sagen will, er habe sich die Milch organisiert, obwohl sie ihm als Leiter des Versagungskommandos nicht zugestanden habe.” Among Celan’s papers there is a clipping of this article, in which he has emphasized Klehr’s words by strokes in the margin. — This remark does of course not mean to suggest that the inmates of concentrations camps in general or those in Celan’s poem had black market milk to drink! But even when we do not know what Celan exactly meant by “black milk”, the reference to a specific jargon (an officer’s talk of his black milk) might be enough to make it questionable whether we can overrule the possibility of an idiom referred to in the poem and its turns of phrase by generalizing and aestheticizing “black milk” into a metaphor. — On the other hand, “black milk” could always be a citation from a poem. “Schwarze Milch der Frühe” is actually one of the expressions that Claire Goll accused Celan of plagiarizing from her husband’s poetry. “Nous buvons le lait noir / De la vache misère”: this is how Yvan Goll begins his poem “Chant des invaincus”. On the other hand, “black milk” is almost something like a poetic archetype, and it is no wonder that it has imposed itself on many poets, either knowing of each other’s use of this “oxymoron” or not. The “secret blackness of milk [*la noirceur secrète du lait*]” that Merleau-Ponty mentions as Paul Valéry’s phrase (*Le visible et l’invisible* [Paris: Gallimard, cop. 1964, repr. 2006], p. 195) is actually Jacques Audiberti’s and has also been cited by Gaston Bachelard (cf. Claude Zilberberg, “L’élégie de la noirceur”, *Protée*, Volume 31, numéro 3, hiver 2003, pp. 43-55, here p. 48; URL: <http://www.erudit.org/revue/pr/2003/v31/n3/008436ar.html>). In any case, the image of “black milk” in a poem could always be a citation, either conscious or an unconscious reminder (anamnesis, as it could be called) of some other poem. The verse “Ein Mann wohnt im Haus der spielt mit den Schlangen” seems like an obvious allusion to the verse in Trakl’s “Psalm”: “In seinem Grab spielt der weiße Magier mit seinen Schlangen.” Celan himself seems to have considered this as an unconscious reminder of his own reading of Trakl, and told Walter Jens that such a discovery sheds light on something truly decisive: “daß erst Wiederbegegnung Begegnung zur ... Begegnung macht.” ([Paul Celan an Walter Jens] Paris, am 19. Mai 1961”, in *Paul Celan – Die Goll-Affäre* [2000], p. 533. Cf. p. 532: “Es gibt also – Anamnesis! – da, wo wirkliche Begegnungen stattfinden, im Grunde ... Wiederbegegnungen.”) Cf. also: “Leichtfertige Vorwürfe gegen einen Dichter”, *Die Zeit* 9.6.1961, repr. in *Paul Celan – Die Goll-Affäre*, p. 368 (doc. No. 85); and Rainer Kabel, “Unpublizierter Leserbrief an ‘Christ und Welt’”, repr. in *Paul Celan – Die Goll-Affäre*, p. 337 (doc. 79); cf. *passim*.

³⁸⁴ In a letter to Rolf Schroer, dated 25.10.1959; cit. Wiedemann, “Kommentar”, in Celan, *DGKG*, pp. 607-608.

³⁸⁵ In a letter to Ingeborg Bachmann, 12.11.1959; cit. Wiedemann, “Kommentar”, p. 608.

The mother's name is literally inscribed in this monument, albeit in an encrypted form: *Sulamith*, a name out of the Song of Songs as Celan pointed out, alludes to 'peacefulness' and is thus more or less equivalent to the German name *Friederike*, which was his mother's.³⁸⁶

The contraindication for applying tropological terms is here called reality: *Wirklichkeit*. Even the song, even the text have their reality. A reality which is not simply, or only, the link with the 'external', historical reality of which the poem speaks. And certainly not only the material concreteness of the empirical text-object present-at-hand. But instead of these, or alongside these, this reality is also the reality *to* which the poem speaks, as well as the reality of the heart: *Herzensnot*. Applying tropological terms, such as the term metaphor, would be an attempt to make the *necessary* combinations of words harmless, mere art, mere 'art of poetry' or mere rhetoric:

Topoi: / Mühlen des Todes – Todesmühlen, – es zeugt allerdings von ganz anderem, wenn man die Todesmühlen zur bloßen Metapher verharmlosen will. Das ist ein wichtiger Punkt. –³⁸⁷

"*Mühlen des Todes*" is a citation from Celan's early book *Mohn und Gedächtnis* (1952), from the thematically important poem "Spät und Tief" — important in regard to its explicit thematization of blasphemy which is so central to Celan's poetry.³⁸⁸ These words belong to the fol-

³⁸⁶ Cf. Wiedemann, "Kommentar", p. 609. In the commentary, and again in *Mikrolithen*, Wiedemann also quotes the following notes that Celan made on "Todesfuge" between 1958 and 1960 (the poem itself was written in 1945): "in der Edda = Midgardschlange → Weltuntergang / Faszination // Frühe (der Anbruch des Anderen [...]) / Ein Gedicht mit dem Tod und »zum Tode« / Milch der Frühe – das Nährende des Anderen / Es sprechen die Sterbenden, sie sprechen nur als solche – der Tod ist ihnen sicher – sie sprechen als Gestorbene und Tote. Sie sprechen mit dem Tode, vom Tode her. Sie trinken vom Tode (sie trinken und trinken) sie trinken und trinken: dieses Trinken dauert fort, – es hört auch am Ende des Gedichts nicht auf. // Ein Mann wohnt im Haus = die andern – wir – sind draußen." (Cit. Wiedemann, "Kommentar", p. 607; *Mikrolithen*, p. 109, No. 185.)

³⁸⁷ Paul Celan — *Die Goll-Affäre*, p. 461 (doc. 123).

³⁸⁸ Cf. "Zürich, zum Storchen" (*GW* 1:214-215):

ZÜRICH, ZUM STORCHEN

Für Nelly Sachs

Vom Zuviel war die Rede, vom
Zuwenig. Von Du
und Aber-Du, von
der Trübung durch Helles, von
Jüdischem, von
deinem Gott.

Da-
von.
Am Tag einer Himmelfahrt, das
Münster stand drüben, es kam
mit einigem Gold übers Wasser.

Von deinem Gott war die Rede, ich sprach
gegen ihn, ich
ließ das Herz, das ich hatte,
hoffen:

lowing line: “*Ihr mahlt in den Mühlen des Todes das weiße Mehl der Verheißung*” (“You grind in the mills of death the white meal of the Promise”). The reference to Luther’s use of the word *Verheiszung*, as the promise inherent to the pledge of bread and wine, as cited in the Grimm dictionary, is clear.³⁸⁹ Here is the poem, written and published for the first time in 1948 with the Ovidian title “Deukalion und Pyrrha”; we shall only concentrate on the apparent metaphor whose metaphoricity is denied by Celan:³⁹⁰

SPÄT UND TIEF

Boshaft wie goldene Rede beginnt diese Nacht.
Wir essen die Äpfel der Stummen.
Wir tun ein Werk, das man gern seinem Stern überläßt;
wir stehen im Herbst unsrer Linden als sinnendes Fahnenrot,
als brennende Gäste vom Süden.
Wir schwören bei Christus dem Neuen, den Staub zu vermählen dem Staube,
die Vögel dem wandernden Schuh,
unser Herz einer Stiege im Wasser.
Wir schwören der Welt die heiligen Schwüre des Sandes,
wir schwören sie gern,
wir schwören sie laut von den Dächern des traumlosen Schlafes
und schwenken das Weißhaar der Zeit . . .

Sie rufen: Ihr lästert!

auf
sein höchstes, sein umröcheltes, sein
haderndes Wort –

Dein Aug sah mir zu, sah hinweg.
dein Mund
sprach sich dem Aug zu, ich hörte:

Wir
wissen ja nicht, weißt du,
wir
wissen ja nicht,
was
gilt.

³⁸⁹ “VERHEISZUNG, *f. versprechen, zusicherung* [...] es kan auch nicht Paris, aller irrthum ein mutter und ursprung anders sagen, denn das dis wort der verheiszung seien, in sich schliszen das pfand der verheisung, den leichnam und das blut Christi im brot und wein. LUTHER 2, 24” (*DWB*, Bd. 25, Sp. 558).

³⁹⁰ In a letter to Walter Jens, Celan wrote: “Auch hier wird etwas (ach wie) Konkretes evoziert: die – das Wort war nach Kriegsende in allen Zeitungen zu lesen – Todesmühlen Auschwitz, Treblinka usw. Hier bin ich, mit dem Gedicht und durch das Gedicht – Anamnesis! – an etwas erinnert worden: das geht nicht nur aus dem Kontext, sondern schon aus den beiden überschritten ›Deukalion und Pyrrha‹ bzw. ›Spät und Tief‹ hervor.” (The letter is dated 9.5.1961; cit. Wiedemann, “Kommentar”, in Celan, *DGKG*, p. 606, cf. pp.605-606. Also in *Paul Celan — Die Goll-Affäre*, pp. 372-373.) The alternative title “Deukalion und Pyrrha” was that of the first publication of this poem in Celan’s first book, *Der Sand aus den Urnen* (1948).

Wir wissen es längst.
 Wir wissen es längst, doch was tuts?
 Ihr mahlt in den Mühlen des Todes das weiße Mehl der Verheißung,
 ihr setzt es vor unsern Brüdern und Schwestern –

Wir schwenken das Weißhaar der Zeit.

Ihr mahnt uns: Ihr lästert!
 Wir wissen es wohl,
 es komme die Schuld über uns.
 Es komme die Schuld über uns aller wandernden Zeichen,
 es komme das gurgelnde Meer,
 der geharnischte Windstoß der Umkehr,
 der mitternächtige Tag,
 es komme, was niemals noch war!

Es komme ein Mensch aus dem Grabe.³⁹¹

³⁹¹ GW 1:35; trans. Felstiner, in *Selected Poems and Prose*, p. 27:

LATE AND DEEP

Spiteful like golden speech this night begins.
 We eat the apples of the mute.
 We do a thing that is gladly left to one's star;
 in our linden's autumn we stand, a flag's pensive red,
 ardent guests from the south.
 We swear by Christ the New to wed dust to dust,
 birds to a wandering shoe,
 our hearts to a stair in the water.
 We swear to the world the sacred oaths of the sand,
 we swear them gladly,
 we swear them aloud from the rooftops of dreamless sleep
 and flourish the white hair of time...

They cry: Blasphemy!

We've known it long since.
 Known it long since, but who cares?
 You grind in the mills of death the white meal of the Promise,
 you set it before our brothers and sisters —

We flourish the white hair of time.

You warn us: Blasphemy!
 We know it full well,
 let the guilt come on us.
 Let the guilt of all forewarning signs come upon us,
 let a gurgling sea,
 an armored windblast of conversion,
 a day of midnights,
 let come what never yet was!

Let a man come forth from the grave.

To call the mills of death a metaphor is, according to Celan, to make this image harmless. To call it metaphor is a sort of euphemism, and it can always be an excuse for saving oneself the trouble of thinking what else it could be than metaphor. I have no final answer to this question, of course, but the line in question appears to be rather metonymical, and thus more faithful to reality than metaphor: this possibility is suggested by the composition of “the white meal of the Promise”, a metonymized citation from a canonical text. Metonymized, since “the Promise” is, according to Luther, inherent to what is here called “white meal”, the bread of the Communion. *The Promise perfectly coincides with the white meal*. They are inseparable: no Promise without meal, no meal without the Promise, no wafer without both these ingredients. The “mill of death” could be associated, metonymically and by no means metaphorically, with the final line of the poem: “*Es komme ein Mensch aus dem Grabe.*”

The Mill of Death grinds a Promise out of the Flesh and Blood and White Bones of *this* Man, Son of Man, grinds and grinds. It is a Verbal Mill, a Conceptual Mill, and as such it appears to be a Metaphorical Mill, but since for the Consecrated Wafer we need both Meal and Promise, there must surely also be a Mill that grinds this Speech Act, the White Meal of the Promise. But this Mill of Life is a Mill of Death. In the eyes of the blasphemer or counter-blasphemer, the Promise is never fulfilled, never in Flesh. The Man never comes, even though the Hands of Faith just turn the Handmill and the Fabrication of Corpses yields Provision. The grinding continues, physically and verbally. Physically and verbally, inasmuch as these are linked as an Invisible Bond: the Economical Miracle and the Spiritual Recovery go hand in hand.

Knowing the metonymical relation of reference that belongs to the noun *Verheißung* makes the bitter critique of religion, or the blasphemy that is also a prayer of sorts (*Es komme...*), in this poem quite clear, even when certain lines of the poem, especially in the first strophe, remain unclear to us — and yet, they anticipate the reaction: “You slander!” This slander in the first strophe consists of apparently surrealistic audacity, poetry in its most recognizable form of artistic practice, making one odd couple after another, marrying “dust to dust, / birds to a wandering shoe”. What is, for instance, the “white hair of time”? What is it, if not the individuation of time in the white hair of an old person? And the individuation of the time of waiting for that which never comes... *Es komme...*

The poem “Spät und Tief” consists of a *counter-blasphemy* of sorts. And as such, it is a counter-figurative gesture as it addresses *both* the extermination camps *and* the religious practice of the Eucharist with a single turn of speech, and it also addresses the incommensurability between the speech act of mixing the white meal of the Promise (i.e. mixing white meal with the Promise) to make consecrated wafer, to be “set before our brothers and sisters” (the verb *vorsetzen* means also ‘to prefer’, to ‘set before’ in estimation), and the industrial “fabrication of corpses” in the other deathmills. A metonymical bond is established

between these death mills (theological & necro-tropho-logical)³⁹² by virtue of this very incommensurability, the one between the metaphorical bond (of the flesh of the Son of Man and the consecrated bread) and the reality of producing commodities out of human corpses (which does not have to mean *only* the concrete industrial use of human hair and gold teeth — even if the “soap made of human fat” is just a rumour, the extermination of the Jews certainly also had its economic aspects).³⁹³

Such mock-metaphor of sorts, a juxtaposition which is by no means simply metaphorical, may be blasphemy or counter-religious, but as the second voice in “Zürich, zum Storchen” (a poem which consists, as it seems, of a reminiscence of Celan’s conversation with Nelly Sachs), says, we just don’t know what counts as what anymore:

Wir
wissen ja nicht, weißt du,
wir
wissen ja nicht,
was
gilt.³⁹⁴

³⁹² On the “fabrication of corpses in the gas chambers”, cf. Heidegger, “Das Ge-Stell” (GA 79:27). This is an example of an often wilfully misunderstood passage in Heidegger: he does not *compare* the Holocaust with “motorized agriculture” as if these were identical or proportionate things or events, but maintains that both are related to the same ‘principle’, so to say, the one and the same *essence* (of technology — which is nothing technological any more than it is agricultural or nihilistic or genocidal or fabrication in itself) — we shall not discuss this pseudo-comparison here any further. — On *vorsetzen* as *preferre*, cf. *DWB*, Bd. 26 Sp. 1559: “(7) *übertragen, etwas vor ein anderes setzen, es höher schätzen, vorziehen; so natürlich auch von personen: anteporre ... ein ding dem andern vorziehen, vorsetzen [...]; vorsetzen, vorziehen, preferer FRISCH nouv. dict. (1730) 648; 'ein im hochdeutschen ungewöhnlicher gebrauch' [...]; dasz sie die todten den lebenden, oder das vergangene dem gegenwärtigen vorsetzen solten BESSER (1732) 1, 122; [...]*”. Cf. also OED, entry “set, v.”: “[88]b. To place (a person or thing) *before* or *after* another in estimation. Now *poet.* / c1383 in *Eng. Hist. Rev.* Oct. (1911) 747 Religious possessioneris..shulden sette before [*preferrent*] þe comaundementis of god. [...] c1400 *Rule St. Benet* (Verse) 2475 So þat þai set non erthly þing Be-for þe luf of crist. 1592 *HUES Treat. Globes* Pref. (Hakl.) 16 These Globes. may justly bee preferred before all other that have been set before them. [...] 1671 [MILTON] *Samson* 1375 Venturing to displease God for the fear of Man, and Man prefer, Set God behind.” — The term coined here, “necro-tropho-logical”, is a combination of three roots: necrology, of course, and also necrotroph (“necrotroph, *n.* / *Plant pathol[ogy]* / A plant parasite, esp. a fungus, that feeds on dead tissue of its host.”), and trophology (“tropho- [...] trophology [...], that department of physiology which deals with nutrition”) (OED). In stead of “theological”, I might have also used “theo-tropho-logical”, but perhaps that would have been hypertrophied.

³⁹³ For example, whatever the raw material of the notorious RIF soap was, it can be in any case considered a by-product of the Shoah, and there is no piece of soap that could wash away the quasi-metonymic link between the German wartime industry on the one hand and the death camps on the other. On the “RIF soap” being symbolically buried by Romanian Jews, cf. Petru Weber, “The Public Memory of the Holocaust in Postwar Romania”, in *Studia Hebraica* 4/2004, pp. 341-348 (electronic version in <http://www.cceol.com>). For example: “During the commemoration [in Bârlad, in March 1946], seven bags containing 5.000 pieces of RIF soap and shoelaces manufactured [from] torn Torah pieces were buried in the Jewish cemetery. [...] At the remembrance ceremony of those killed during the ‘legionary rebellion’, held in the city’s Choral Temple, the propaganda minister, Constantinescu-Iași, asserted that ‘the overwhelming majority of the Romanian people played no part in the outrages committed by the Iron Guard.’ He admitted however [that] ‘all that happened will be a spot of shame in the history of our people, which will never be cleaned’.” (P. 345.) The collective guilt is not only that of the actual perpetrators but also that of the survivors, even though the difference between these types of guilt is irreducible.

³⁹⁴ *GW* 1:214-215 (*loc. cit.*). Cf. also Celan and Sachs, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Barbara Wiedemann (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1996), pp. 40-42 (letters 38-39).

Perhaps the worst blasphemy would be *not* to slander. Good conscience, an untroubled relationship with that which is often called God, with oneself and with the wholly other, might be the worst kind of slander.

When we remember how certain theorists consider “Death the Baker” an inapt metaphor, we may see the force of these lines perhaps even better —

Ihr mahlt in den Mühlen des Todes das weiße Mehl der Verheißung,
ihr setzt es vor unsern Brüdern und Schwestern —

SEA-MILLS, MILLS OF ICE

Another mill and, according to Celan, another non-metaphorical image is the sea-mill, *Meermühle*, on the last lines of the poem “Weiß und Leicht” (*Sprachgitter*, GW 1:165):

Meermühle geht,
eishell und ungehört,
in unsern Augen.

Clemens Podewils has reported what Celan once said to him of this compound word, *Meermühle*:

Das Gespräch war auf die Frage nach den Metaphern, nach deren Notwendigkeit, gekommen, aber auch auf den Einwand, den Friedrich Georg Jünger einmal formuliert hat: »Ich möchte das Eigentliche sagen, unmittelbar sagen.« Fällt dieser vermeintliche Gegensatz aber nicht in sich zusammen, da dieses Eigentliche der Bilder bedarf, um im Gedicht zu erscheinen? Dem dienen Celans Wortfügungen, Wortzusammenführungen. »Man hat mir diese substantiva composita vorgehalten, zum Beispiel Meermühle. Sind aber Kiesel, Felsen, Klippen denn nicht vom Meer zu dem gemahlen worden, was sie sind?« (Und hat nicht lange vor Celan die Sprache, ob es der Volksmund oder die Erkenntnis eines Geologen war, in Gletschermühle ein gleiches getan?) »Meine Wortbildungen sind im Grunde nicht Erfindungen. Sie gehören zum Allerältesten der Sprache. Worum es mir geht? Loszukommen von den Worten als bloßen Bezeichnungen. Ich möchte in den Worten wieder die Namen der Dinge vernehmen. Die Bezeichnung isoliert den vorgestellten Gegenstand. Im Namen aber spricht sich uns ein jegliches in seinem Zusammenhang mit der Welt zu.«³⁹⁵

As Podewils’ remark on the term *Gletschermühle* suggests, here Celan seems to cite an original linguistic possibility of combination rather than an already extant compound word; actually Celan leaves it unmentioned in the reported conversation that *Meermühle* is in fact an extant term and thus a citation (once again, this has been confirmed studying the poet’s ‘reading traces’).³⁹⁶ Even if the term would not have been extant before its appearance in the

³⁹⁵ Clemens Podewils, “Namen / Ein Vermächtnis Paul Celans”, in Clemens Graf Podewils & Heinz Piontek, eds., *Ensemble: Lyrik — Prosa — Essay 2* (München: Oldenbourg, 1971), pp. 68-69.

³⁹⁶ Cf. Wiedemann, “Einzelkommentar”, in Celan, *DGKG*, p. 652.

poem, the image of the sea-mill is quite ‘concrete’, since the rocks are ground by the movement of the sea.

Celan’s objection to description (*Bezeichnung*) inasmuch as it *isolates the object* is utterly important with respect to his antimetaphoric poetics (in a moment we shall consider Podewil’s words on the “necessity of metaphors”). We might recall Derrida’s paraphrase of Heidegger, already cited: “First of all, *Dasein* never relates to *an* object, to a sole object. If it does, it is always in the mode of abstraction or abstention from other beings which always co-appear at the same time.” (Cf. Heidegger: “*Das Dasein verhält sich als existierendes nie je nur zu einem Objekt, und wenn, dann nur in der Weise des Absehens von zuvor und zugleich immer miterscheinenden anderen Seienden.*”)³⁹⁷ The description of an isolated object is an abstraction from the structure of co-appearing (*Miterscheinen*) without which there would be neither objects nor a world in which they appear for a subject — and this structure of interrelatedness or interpenetration that precedes the subject-object-opposition is the world, *equiprimordial* with what Heidegger calls *das Dasein*. I would venture to call this ontological structure, this constellation of co-appearance, *quasi-metonymical*.³⁹⁸ Quasi-metonymical, since within *this* world at least, there is no object (*Gegenstand*) without contiguity with other objects and their totality.

Someone might object that it is another question whether the concrete image of the “sea-mill” does not become metaphorical when it “goes ... in our eyes” — when the sea-mill becomes a *see-mill*, if we may say so.

But how does this happen? How do the words become an image? And I do not mean here only the graphic form, *Schriftbild*, that we see in reading. In the *Meridian* notes, Celan refers a couple of times to Marion’s words to Danton in Büchner’s *Dantons Tod* (I.v.9): “*Danton, deine Lippen haben Augen.*”

Danton, deine Lippen haben Augen: keine Metapher / ein Wissen / – Dein Mund spricht sich dem Aug zu –³⁹⁹

In the poem “Zürich, zum Storchen” (*GW* 1:214) we meet with the construct Celan quotes here:

³⁹⁷ “*Geschlecht I*”, p. 163/393-394 (*loc. cit.*). Cf. Heidegger, *GA* 26:173 (*loc. cit.*).

³⁹⁸ Cf. *OED*, entry “co-appear, v.”: “*rare / intr.* To appear together or in conjunction. So co-appearance, co-apparition. // [...]1655-60 STANLEY *Hist. Philos.* (1701) 64/1 The Co-apparition of wandering Stars. *Ibid.* 464/2 The co-apparition of Planets. 1697 J. SERJEANT *Solid Philos.* 228 The Co-appearance, Co-existence, and..the Competition of the Contrary Motives.” (*OED*, 50042450. 12 Jan, 2007.)

³⁹⁹ *TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 439: typography modified. Cf. Ms. 593: “»Danton, deine Lippen haben Augen«: das ist keine »moderne« Metapher, das ist Wissen, von weither, um das Wissen eines Mundes – “Celan has added the adjective *seherische* into this note, after the word *Wissen*, so that the sentence can be also reconstructed as follows: “»Danton, deine Lippen haben Augen«: das ist keine »moderne« Metapher, das ist Wissen, von weither, um das [seherische] Wissen eines Mundes.”

Dein Aug sah mir zu, sah hinweg,
 dein Mund
 sprach sich dem Aug zu, [...]

Let us leave these questions open for the moment and return to the conversation reported by Podewils. When he speaks of the “necessity of metaphors”, it seems to me that he has not grasped the differentiations Celan perhaps attempted to make in their conversation. These “necessities” are juxtaposed with that which is *not* a novel invention or coinage (*Erfindungen*), *not* mere description (*bloßen Bezeichnungen*), but *naming* as something primordial and archaic (*Allerältesten der Sprache*); in the composite nouns appearing in his poems, it is not a question of describing something by adding an epithet or a ‘genitive metaphor’, but of *nam-ing* the thing, the phenomenon.

Yet another way of not being metaphorical in spite of appearances to the contrary, or at least of not making up words, not coining neologisms, is a citation of an already extant, but rare word, which is a well-known ‘technique’ of Celan’s. The word *Gletschermühle*, mentioned by Podewils, would be a good example: the glacial mill, or glacier-mill, synonym to the use of the French loan word *moulin* in English, is “[a] deep, nearly vertical circular well or shaft in a glacier, formed by surface water falling through a crack in the ice and gradually carving out a hole” (*OED*, entry “moulin”). We find examples that are very close to the ‘semantic field’ of *Gletschermühle*, also in Celan’s poems themselves:

WEGGEBEIZT vom
 Strahlenwind deiner Sprache
 das bunte Gerede des Anerlebten
 – das hundertzüngige
 Meingedicht,
 das Genicht.

Ausgewirbelt,
 frei
 der Weg durch den menschengestaltigen
 Schnee,
 den Büßerschnee, zu
 den gastlichen
 Gletscherstuben und -tischen.

Tief
 in der Zeiteinschrunde,
 beim
 Wabeneis
 wartet, ein Atemkristall,
 dein unumstößliches
 Zeugnis.⁴⁰⁰

⁴⁰⁰ *Atemwende*, *GW* 2:31. Trans. Felstiner: “ETCHED AWAY by the / radiant wind of your speech, / the motley gossip of pseudo- / experience — the hundred- / tongued My- / poem, the Lie-noem. // Whirl- / winded, / free, / a path through human- / shaped snow, / through penitent cowl-ice, to / the glacier’s / welcoming

The vocabulary of this poem consists, to name some examples, first of all, of a few apparent (at least probable) neologisms: *das Genicht*, *Zeitenschrunde*, *Atemkristall*. Then there are some rare but lexical words used in an unusual connection in an equivocal or multifaceted way, one in which the ‘transferred signification’ is indeed ‘carried along with’ the other aspects,⁴⁰¹ but only as one of them, for instance the verb *wegbeizen*: “*WEGGEBEIZT vom / Strahlenwind deiner Sprache*”.⁴⁰² There are historical or literary allusions, whether to the more remote past (*hundertzüngige*)⁴⁰³ or to more contemporaneous issues (*Meingedicht*).⁴⁰⁴ And then there are the numerous borrowings from technical or scientific terminologies as well as local idiolects: here the words *ausgewirbelt*, *Büßerschnee*, *Gletschertisch*, *Gletscherstuben* are not metaphors in themselves, they are not words coined by the poet, but belong originally to very specific contexts, all of them bearing reference to the formation of ice, snow and stone by water, superficial melting and other weather conditions, natural phenomena that are familiar to people living in snowy and mountainous areas.⁴⁰⁵ We might think that Celan’s choice of such rare but lexical terms is not only related to the poetic principles of language being historically determined, formulated already in the 1948 Jené essay, namely the “ashes of extinguished sense-giving”⁴⁰⁶ sedimented in language, but their function would also be to furnish a partial safeguard against the accusations and insinuations of plagiarism and the notion of “ambulant metaphors”: when the exact source of a word could be shown to be somewhere else than in the head of one poet or several, or somewhere else than in other-worldly speculations, these accusations and insinuations and the all too lightly used instru-

chambers and tables. // Deep / in the time crevasse, / by honeycomb-ice / there waits, a Breathcrystal, / your unannullable / witness.”

⁴⁰¹ Cf. *TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 71 (*loc. cit.*), and below: “Mehrdeutigkeit ohne Maske”.

⁴⁰² Cf. *DWB*, sub-entries ‘wegbeissen’ and ‘wegbeizen’; the former is sometimes used as a ‘parallel form’ of the latter; for example: “[...] die von fiebern weggebaizte lebensfarbe J. PAUL [...]” (*DWB*, entry “Weg”, Bd. 27, Sp. 2931ff.)

⁴⁰³ Cf. *DWB*: “*HUNDERTZÜNGIG*, *adj. und adv. mit hundert zungen*: o sie müssen noch alle hervor, all die götter, die in mir verstummen, hervorgehen hundertzüngig, ihr dasein in die welt zu verkündigen. *FR. MÜLLER* 2, 35”. (Bd. 10, Sp. 1929.)

⁴⁰⁴ This word alludes to the series “Mein Gedicht” in the weekly magazine *Die Zeit* and Claire Goll’s translations of Yvan Goll’s poems in that series, omitting the indication that they were her translations and not original poems by her late husband who wrote both in French and German. Cf. Wiedemann, “Einzelkommentar”, in *DGKG*, p. 726, and *Paul Celan — Die Goll-Affäre* (2000), pp. 778-779.

⁴⁰⁵ Cf. Wiedemann, “Einzelkommentar”, *DGKG*, p. 726. We are speaking, for instance, of the formations of snow which have taken on the form of man or pilgrim, “penitent snow” resembling white-cowled pilgrims and found especially in the Chilean Andes (*Büßerschnee*, *nieve penitente*, penitent). Cf. *OED*, entry “penitent, *a. and n.*”: “5. *Physical Geogr.* A spike or pinnacle of compact snow or ice left standing after differential ablation of a snow [field] or ice field exposed to the sun, esp. in high mountains, and often occurring in large groups containing specimens of similar size and orientation. Also *attrib.* Cf. *PENITENTE n.* [...] 2.1954 *Jrnl. Glaciol.* 2 336 When the snow field lies directly upon the ground, the channels between the penitents often succeed in reaching the ground, and the penitents, detaching themselves from one another, assume the vague appearance of an Easter procession of white-cowled Spanish penitents.” (*OED*, 50174573; last accessed Dec. 2006.)

⁴⁰⁶ “[...] die Asche ausgebrannter Sinngebung [...] und nicht nur diese!” (*GW* 3:157.)

mental notion of metaphor might show themselves as incorrect, and perhaps through this negative moment a certain poetics of ‘citation’ would also become more comprehensible.

But on the other hand, it is not only a question of established meteorological terminology, and not only terms relating to the formations of snow and ice. It is also a question of another kind of formation and another kind of materiality, the formation of names and concepts, *Nennkraft* as part of the materiality of language. Naming power, the force of catachresis, a non-figurative trope in Fontanier’s terms.⁴⁰⁷ And it is indeed this force of naming (*Nennen*) that is, for Celan, an anti-metaphoric force.

DETACHED...

... but contiguous: against quasi-identification, quasi-metonymy

In addressing the resistance to metaphor and tropes, the *reductio ad absurdum* of metaphors and other tropes in the poem, and the crossing-through of tropes by the counter-trope whose name is “the meridian”, it might seem paradoxical that we still take advantage of a more or less major classical distinction between two kinds of tropes or figures: metaphor and metonymy.

Against the metaphoric relation of quasi-identification, we take quasi-metonymic contiguity. Only *quasi*-, in both cases, because 1) the relation of resemblance does not imply complete identification, and therefore literary metaphors may be seen as comprising within themselves the “counter-metaphorical thrust” (Krieger) that resists identification or assimilation, and because 2) metonymy is also a trope, and often a rhetorical figure of speech. Yet the structure of metonymy, as a trope of “contiguity and / or inclusion”, can often be considered as a trope that is *less figurative* than metaphor, and one that is more often than metaphor characterizable as a pseudo-figure (“*non-vraie figure*”, says Fontanier).⁴⁰⁸ It is closer to being ‘literal’ or ‘proper’, although it is precisely the dichotomy between figurative and literal,

⁴⁰⁷ “Non-vraie figure”, says Fontanier (*Les figures du discours*, pp. 213ff). Another thing that has already been noted is that *Nennkraft* is a word that appears at least in Heidegger’s “Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes”, in *Holzwege* (GA 5:32), and *Einführung in die Metaphysik* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1953), p. 38; cit. in Celan, *La bi. phi.*, p. 351, No. 153.

⁴⁰⁸ *Sens extensif* is another one of Pierre Fontanier’s terms characterizing catachresis, in contradistinction to *sens figuré*. Cf. *Les figures du discours* (Paris: Flammarion, 1999 [cop. 1977; originally 1821-1830]), pp. 213ff. — Instead of Fontanier’s characterization of metonymy as a trope of *correspondance* and synecdoche as a trope of *connexion*, these two separated in several respects from the trope of *ressemblance*, namely metaphor, we simplify the structure into the bipolar, Jakobsonian opposition of metonymy as a trope of contiguity and metaphor as a trope of resemblance — although Jakobson’s extension of these tropological terms is rather problematic, as he has himself been the first to observe. (This has already been briefly discussed above, in the “Prolegomena”.) For the relation of metonymy and synecdoche to catachresis, cf. e.g. p. 214 in Fontanier’s “Supplément à la théorie des tropes” (in *op. cit.*).

or figurative and proper, that should be called into question. It remains closer to the earth and its atmosphere, “the air we have to breath”.⁴⁰⁹

In Derrida’s *Le toucher* — Jean-Luc Nancy (2000) we read the following, laconic but important characterization of metonymy: “*Une métonymie porte au moins le deuil d’un sens propre ou d’un nom propre.*”⁴¹⁰ We might add something that Derrida’s sentence, with the expression *au moins*, already seems to imply: *unlike metaphor*, metonymy at least mourns the proper name and proper sense. It bears the trace of singularity and worldliness, instead of the abstraction that can be associated with metaphor, which in certain traditional discourses tends toward otherworldliness or a “higher reality” detached from the earth and its atmosphere (“*das Wirkliche sinnbildlich überhöhende »zweite« Wirklichkeit*”).

During the last few years, the publication of both primary literature by Paul Celan and secondary literature on his life and work has been abundant. For example, a two-volume correspondence with his wife, Gisèle Celan-Lestrange, of which the second tome contains a commentary and her illustrations; a volume of prose fragments and other manuscripts carefully preserved by Paul Celan himself, containing a very detailed commentary; another volume containing documents on the so-called Goll Affair; poems and their variants in not only one critical edition but several; and even a catalogue listing the philosophical literature in his personal library as well as the reading traces in the volumes therein. All these have been published during the last ten years, as well as the separate commentaries of the books *Die Niemandsrose* and *Sprachgitter*, the first to have appeared so far. Not to mention all the doctoral theses and other dissertations, monographs and articles, and internet publications; virtually all of the poems published in print, except some of the posthumous ones and the translations composed by him, are available also electronically (whether the copyright laws have been observed or not), and therefore easily searchable for concordances and so on.

But while attentiveness (which includes also the scholarly work, the indispensable interpretative effort, the encyclopaedic detour) is a necessary prerequisite for the “encounter” (*Begegnung*), for the secret of the encounter, it is not its guarantee (*Gewähr*); the willingness to “study the other” is a necessary but not sufficient condition.⁴¹¹ It can only be guidance, after which one is again “alone with the lamp”:

Stimmen vom Nesselweg her:

Komm auf den Händen zu uns.
Wer mit der Lampe allein ist,
hat nur die Hand, draus zu lesen.⁴¹²

⁴⁰⁹ “Der Meridian”, *GW* 3:192; trans. Felstiner, *Selected Poems and Prose*, p. 405.

⁴¹⁰ *Le toucher* — Jean-Luc Nancy (Paris: Galilée, 2000), p. 29.

⁴¹¹ Cf. *TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 429 (*loc. cit.*); cf. Hugo Huppert, “Spirituell”, p. 320; and below.

⁴¹² In *Sprachgitter* (*GW* 1:147). Cf. below.

If we speak for instance of the *Meridian* speech and the very rich and inspiring draft material published by the side of this beautifully composed, ambivalently artistic speech (“against art”), we may note that these manuscript and typescript fragments bear testimony to a *hand*. ‘Hand’ means, among other things, *handwriting*. ‘Hand’ is short for ‘handwriting’, and both of these ‘hands’, the corporeal organ (of prehension) and its material trace, are metonymies for each other, contiguous with each other. But contiguity is not always *continuity*, it rather divides ‘the hand’, marks the separation between the organ (i.e. the part of the body called ‘hand’) or organism (the body as a whole, composed of cells, organs, limbs, etc., the whole singularity of a corporeal, animate, and spiritual life of an individual) and its trace. This reference to a handwriting, life and person, is not as banal as it might first seem, and does not aim to promote naïvely biographical interpretation. “*Echte Dichtung ist antibiographisch*”, Celan writes in a two-part note from around 1953-54. The first half of the note speaks of the infinite distance between the I and the Thou of the poem, but also of the hope to cross this distance, and the note’s second half speaks of the poem as a paradox: “*Gedichte sind Paradoxe*.”⁴¹³ The paradox here is, at least, that the anti-biographical trait does not abolish the *personal* trait.

Antimetaphoric, antibiographic, anti-computer: ““Every poem is the anti-computer, even the one the computer writes [*Jedes Gedicht ist das Anti-Computer, auch das vom Computer Geschriebene*]”.”⁴¹⁴ This remarkable sentence has been ascribed to Paul Celan — P. C. himself. Even a poem written by a computer — not only ‘by computer’ but by *a* computer — remains a poem, that is, the anti-computer: even such a poem bears the trace of a hand, even such a computerized anti-computer remains the “speech of an absent one”.⁴¹⁵ Jacques

⁴¹³ Cf. Celan, *Mikrolithen*, pp. 95-96, No. 156.

⁴¹⁴ This is what Esther Cameron states in her “Hypertext Commentary on Paul Celan’s ‘Meridian’ Speech” (which seems unfortunately to have been left as a fragment, and the print version of the whole text, privately printed [Jerusalem, 1988], seems to be inaccessible): “Paul Celan was, to say the least, ambivalent about computer technology, which in his lifetime had barely gotten started. His poems contain at least one clearly negative reference to computers, and in the ‘Meridian’ speech, too, with its discussion of automata, there are signs of misgivings about the implications of artificial intelligence. / Yet as a poet of infinite resourcefulness and playfulness, he could not help being intrigued by anything that opened new possibilities. In 1968 I heard at third hand — and startled as I was by it, the story seems credible to me — that on a tour of Germany he had said that the proliferation of advertising was interesting because it had invented many new words. And on the one occasion when I was privileged to speak with him (August 4, 1969), he pronounced, more or less out of the blue, the following sentence: ‘Every poem is the anti-computer, even the one the computer writes [*Jedes Gedicht ist das Anti-Computer, auch das vom Computer Geschriebene*].’ He then repeated the sentence, it being evidently his intention that I should write it down.” (*The Impossible Way: A Hypertext Commentary on Paul Celan’s “Meridian” Speech*, electronic text, <http://polyglot.lss.wisc.edu/german/celan/cameron/index.html>. Accessed March 22nd, 2006.)

⁴¹⁵ “Freud, Unbehagen S. 49: »Die Schrift ist ursprüngl. die Sprache des Abwesenden« – im Gedicht wird ein abwesendes nahe, tritt es an dich {einen noch Abwesenderen} heran = / Im Gedicht, und das Gedicht ist, als Schrift, »Sprache eines Abwesenden«, tritt ein Abwesender an dich, den {noch} Abwesenderen, heran. / Der Gedanke, die Begegnung der Abwesenden könnte ausbleiben, liegt nahe.” (*TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 458. The editorial typography has been modified. The text from “Im Gedicht, und...” forward has been emphasized by Celan by a double stroke in the margin.)

Derrida, in whose later work there is an unmistakable imprint, even when not explicitly designed, of his intensive reading of Celan's poetry and poetics, has written:

Tout ce que je fais, surtout quand j'écris, ressemble à un jeu de colin-maillard : celui qui écrit, toujours à la main, même quand il se sert de machines, tend la main comme un aveugle pour chercher à toucher celui ou celle qu'il pourrait remercier pour le don d'une langue, pour les mots mêmes dans lesquels il se dit prêt à rendre grâce.⁴¹⁶

This comes very close to what Celan has written, in the drafts for the *Meridian*, of language as an encounter with the invisible.⁴¹⁷

In a famous letter, a few months before the Büchner Prize ceremony, Celan replies to Hans Bender's repeated invitation to participate in an anthology of poets writing on writing poetry, which was to be the second augmented edition of the book bearing the "horrible title" *Mein Gedicht ist mein Messer*.⁴¹⁸

Ich erinnere mich, daß ich Ihnen seinerzeit [1954] sagte, der Dichter werde, sobald das Gedicht wirklich da sei, aus seiner ursprünglichen Mitwisserschaft wieder entlassen. Ich würde diese Ansicht heute wohl anders formulieren bzw. sie zu differenzieren versuchen; aber grundsätzlich bin ich noch immer dieser – alten – Ansicht. Gewiß, es gibt auch das, was man heute so gern und so unbekümmert als Handwerk bezeichnet.⁴¹⁹

The "differentiation" begins by mentioning this — at that time obviously fashionable and perhaps light-hearted — designation of poetry as "handicraft", but it continues by determining what Celan himself would mean by approaching poetry by that name, *Handwerk* — and with no metaphor whatsoever:

Handwerk – das ist Sache der Hände. Und diese Hände wiederum gehören nur einem Menschen, d.h. einem einmaligen und sterblichen Seelenwesen, das mit seiner Stimme und seiner Stummheit einen Weg sucht. / Nur Wahre Hände schreiben wahre Gedichte. Ich sehe keinen prinzipiellen Unterschied zwischen Händedruck und Gedicht. [...] Gedichte, das sind auch Geschenke – Geschenke an die Aufmerksamen. Schicksal mitführende Geschenke.⁴²⁰

There is a fragment among the drafts for the *Meridian* which associates the handicraft of the poem — and thus the handshake — with *congruency*: "*Handwerk: das von der Hoffnung auf Kongruenz begleitete Werk von Händen.*"⁴²¹ Congruency associated with hands and their

⁴¹⁶ *Le monolinguisme de l'autre ou prothèse de l'origine* (Paris: Galilée 1996), p. 122.

⁴¹⁷ *TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 241, 242. We shall return to this.

⁴¹⁸ "My poem is my dagger": "*entsetzlichen Titel*", as Celan designated it in another letter, addressed to Otto Pöggeler the same day, May 18th, 1960. (Cited by Barbara Wiedemann in her commentary on the letter, in *Paul Celan – Die Goll-Affäre* [2000], p. 406. Cf. Thomas Schestag, "Men Schen – Schnitte durch ein Gedicht Paul Celans", *MLN* 119, 2004, pp. 580–607, here p. 580.)

⁴¹⁹ *GW* 3:177. Also in *Paul Celan – Die Goll-Affäre* [2000], p. 404.

⁴²⁰ *GW* 3:177–178. Cf. also e.g. *TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 32: "Gedichte [...] sind Geschenke an den Aufmerksamen."

⁴²¹ *TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 444. Cf. Ts. 546: "[...] es geht um dieses Einssein, es geht um diese Kongruenz. [...] Es geht um die Aufhebung einer Dualität; mit dem Ich des Gedichts ist auch das Du gesetzt; es geht um ein solches In-eins-Sehen; es geht um Kongruenz; der Begriff des Künstlerischen reicht hier nicht mehr aus;

work obviously relates to geometry: but solid material bodies, let alone the parts belonging to a living body, unlike triangles and other non-material objects, cannot coincide in the sense of occupying the same space at the same time. The congruency of hands is opposite to the incongruence between the right hand and the left hand, which could meet in the solitude of prayer (you can't write with your hands folded, as Celan remarks),⁴²² or the hand and its mirror image — the right hand and the left as well as an object and its reflection in the mirror are Kant's examples of incongruence.⁴²³ One does not possess two right hands, but when two right hands meet in a handshake and thus embrace each other, they remain absolutely separate. The time and space of the other are not properly appropriable. The hands meet and then, they part, but each can also carry the warmth of the other, the warmth of the other's heart transmitted into one's own, mediated by the *Herzfingern*,⁴²⁴ namely through the hand's quasi-metonymical contiguity with the heart. To speak of a "hearty hand-shake" is no metaphor.⁴²⁵

In Celan's hand, we find these words in a draft for a letter to René Char, dated March 22nd, 1962, but never sent:

La poésie, vous le savez bien, n'existe pas sans le poète, sans sa personne — sans *la* personne — [...]. Vous — on vous exile dans le pays des ci-devant, mais il vous reste votre vrai pays ; quant à moi, on me redistribue, puis, on s'amuse à me lapider avec ... les pièces détachées de mon moi. [...] Voyez-vous, j'ai toujours essayé de vous *comprendre*, de vous *répondre*, de serrer votre parole comme on serre une main ; et c'était, bien entendu, *ma* main qui serrait la *vôtre*, là où elle était sûre de ne pas manquer la rencontre. Pour ce qui, dans votre œuvre, ne s'ouvrait pas, — ou pas encore — à ma compréhension, j'ai répondu par le respect et par l'attente : on ne peut jamais prétendre à saisir entièrement — : ce serait irrespect devant l'Inconnu qui habite — ou vient habiter — le poète ; ce serait oublier que la poésie, cela se respire ; oublier que la poésie vous aspire. (Mais se souffle, ce rythme — d'où nous vient-il?)⁴²⁶

auch der des Artistischen nicht." The hand-work whose principle is not different from a handshake is an *art-less* gesture: "es gibt sich dir, kunstlos, in die Hand" (*TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 480).

⁴²² Cf. *TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 60/582, and elsewhere in the present dissertation.

⁴²³ "Ich nenne einen Körper, der einem anderen völlig gleich und ähnlich ist, ob er gleich nicht in eben demselben Grenzen kann beschlossen werden, sein incongruentes Gegenstück. Um nun dessen Möglichkeit zu zeigen: so nehme man einen Körper an, der nicht aus zwei Hälften besteht, die symmetrisch gegen eine einzige Durchschnitsfläche geordnet sind, sondern etwa eine Menschenhand. Man fälle aus allen Punkten ihrer Oberfläche auf eine ihr gegenüber gestellte Tafel Perpendikellinien und verlängere so eben so weit hinter derselben, als diese Punkte vor ihr liegen, so machen die Endpunkte der so verlängerten Linien, wenn sie verbunden werden, die Fläche einer körperlichen Gestalt aus, die das incongruente Gegenstück der vorherigen ist, d. i. wenn die gegebene Hand eine rechte ist, so ist deren Gegenstück eine linke. Die Abbildung eines Objects im Spiegel beruht auf eben desselben Gründen." (This excerpt from Kant's "Von dem ersten Grunde des Unterschiedes der Gegenden im Raum" [1768] is copied from the *Projekt Gutenberg* electronic text, in the following URL: <http://gutenberg.spiegel.de/kant/1grund/1grund.htm>; accessed April 8th, 2006.)

⁴²⁴ "Das Aug, dunkel: / [...] magnetisch / ziehts, mit Herzfingern, an / dir, Erde:" ("Hüttenfenster", in *Die Niemandrose*, *GW* 1:278).

⁴²⁵ Cf. *OED*: "1873 TRISTRAM *Moab* xviii. 344, I gave him a hearty hand~shake." (Entry "handshake, *n.*"; *OED*, 50102264; last accessed Jan. 2007.)

⁴²⁶ "[Paul Celan an René Char] 78 rue de Longchamp / Paris, le 22 mars 1962", in Barbara Wiedemann, ed., *Paul Celan – Die Goll-Affäre* [2000], p. 574.

A darkly, painfully comical piece of writing: “*quant à moi, [...] on s’amuse à me lapider avec ... les pièces détachées de mon moi*”. It has a biographical referent, of course: the letter campaign waged by Claire Goll against the former friend and translator of her late husband Yvan. The younger poet, who had travelled from Czernowitz through Vienna to Paris, where he acquainted himself with Yvan Goll in 1949 and was asked by the dying emigrant from Alsace to render his French poems into German, was accused of plagiarism by the widow; by the same person who first did not consent to publish the three collections of translations, because “they bore”, as she claimed, “too clearly the ‘signature’ of Paul Celan”.⁴²⁷ In this sad affair, the concept of metaphor was frequently used by those who took to investigate the veracity of Claire Goll’s claims, including some of the well-meaning critics and philologists who preoccupied themselves with the “genitive metaphors”, the “ambulant metaphors”, and the poetical techniques of citation.

The phrase we just extracted from the unsent letter is also a metaphorical piece of writing, no doubt. But on the other hand, it is one that concerns tropes returning to their source, deformed, disfigured, thrown back at the dealer as second-hand metaphors. Back at the monger of used metaphors, *Altmetaphernhändler*: this is the mock-signature of another letter by Celan, still relating to the campaign.⁴²⁸ Deformed and disfigured, second-hand — but the hand that signed them never meant them to be mere metaphors in the first place. Rather, the place they were aimed at, the place they were destined to (like a message in a bottle or delivered by a carrier pigeon), is where the tropes and metaphors would be carried *ad absurdum*. A u-topic place, perhaps.

Is the poetical corpus only *analogical* with the body of the person? And, *vice versa*, is the severing of pieces from the body proper, when we are actually speaking of detaching metaphorical expressions from poems, only metaphorical?

We shall *neither* try to reconstruct a voice or a person, *nor* act as if the pieces detached out of the poetic corpus had no “connexion” with a person, with *the* person who once wrote them and furthermore, to *the* person in general, singularity in general. We shall not act as if the poems were *not contiguous* with the hand that wrote them. But of course, the figure of *prosopopoeia*, assigning a voice to the absent, as well as the violence of fragmentation and the projection of its outcome, these metonymies *pars pro toto*, the severed and deformed splinters, projectiles whirled back at the residue of their source,⁴²⁹ namely the figure repre-

⁴²⁷ John Felstiner, *Paul Celan — Poet, Survivor, Jew* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), p. 60, cf. pp. 72, 95, *passim*. The volume of documents relating to the “Goll Affair”, collected, edited and commented on by Barbara Wiedemann, is indispensable also with regard to Celan’s poetics: *Paul Celan – Die Goll-Affäre* (2005).

⁴²⁸ *Paul Celan – Die Goll-Affäre* [2000], No. 186, p. 533.

⁴²⁹ Cf. the late and unmistakably very personal poem “Warum dieses jähe Zuhause” (*Schneepart*, *GW* 2:363):

WARUM DIESES JÄHE ZUHAUSE, mittenaus, mittenein?
Ich kann mich, schau, in dich senken, gletschrig,
du selbst erschlägst deine Brüder:

sented by the major metonymy, the proper name *whom* we are to read, are inevitable, to an extent.

This is what Jacques Derrida told Évelyne Grossman in an interview on December 12th, 2003:

Comme tout corps propre, il est unique. Ce poème, une fois publié, il faut le respecter comme unique. Il n'a lieu qu'une fois. Même si on peut mettre en réseau certains de ses éléments avec tout le corpus de Celan, le corpus de Hölderlin, le corpus de Nelly Sachs et tant d'autres, le poème, lui, est unique. Donc, ce que j'appellerai ici « corps du poème » c'est cette unicité qui est incorporée, incarnée, dans ce qu'on appelait naguère les « signifiants », dans des graphèmes qui en eux-mêmes ne peuvent pas être traduits. Traduire c'est perdre le corps. La traduction la plus fidèle est une violence : on perd le corps du poème qui n'existe qu'en allemand et une seule fois. C'est un corps à corps, c'est une attaque. Elle est évidemment désirée par le poète — il veut qu'on le lise, qu'on le traduise — mais je reconnais qu'il y a de l'aggression et du corps à corps. J'essaie d'écrire un texte qui, lui aussi, toute proportion gardée, devrait rester unique, d'une certaine manière. C'est une certaine lecture, cela m'est arrivé une fois, je l'ai fait une fois, c'est un texte de moi. À quoi j'ajouterai, s'agissant du corps, que quand je dis « le poème de Celan appartient à la langue allemande », c'est déjà une simplification. La langue de Celan est elle-même un corps à corps avec la langue allemande qu'il déforme, qu'il transforme, qu'il aggresse lui-même, qu'il incise. Il s'en prend au corps de la langue allemande. À ma manière et modestement, je fais la même chose avec le français. C'est un corps à corps non seulement entre deux langues mais entre deux langues qui sont elle-mêmes chacune dans une guerre intestine. Il y a du corps à corps « à l'intérieur » de chaque langue nationale. Chaque fois qu'il y a de l'écriture. Il n'y a pas d'écriture qui fraye un passage sans cette violence du corps. Comment expliquer autrement la charge — d'autres diraient l'investissement —, la charge libidinale voire narcissique que chacun apporte à ses propres textes ?

eher als sie
war ich bei dir, Geschneete.

Wirf deine Tropen
zum Rest:
einer will wissen,
warum ich bei Gott
nicht anders war als bei dir,

einer
will drin ersaufen,
zwei Bücher an Stelle der Lungen,

einer, der sich in dich stach,
beatmet den Stich,

einer, er war dir der nächste,
geht sich verloren,

einer schmückt dein Geschlecht
mit deinem und seinem Verrat,

vielleicht
war ich jeder.

C'est mon corps, ceci est mon corps. Chaque poème dit : « Ceci est mon corps » et ce qui suit : buvez-le, mangez-le, gardez-le en mémoire de moi. Il y a une Cène dans chaque poème qui dit : ceci est mon corps, ici est maintenant. Et vous savez ce qui suit alors : les passions, les crucifixions, les mises à mort. D'autres diraient aussi des résurrections...⁴³⁰

Derrida's improvised reply to Évelyne Grossman's question concerning "a physical wounding of the words of the poem", a question which obviously bears in mind the theme of *circumcising the word* in a poem by Celan ("Einem, der vor die Tür stand") and Derrida's reading of it in *Schibboleth*, is in my view one of the most accurate responses to Celan's poetry and poetics ever written.⁴³¹

"... TROPES AND METAPHORS ... AD ABSURDUM"?

Let us return to the quotation with which we opened the present discussion:

Und was wären dann die Bilder?
Das einmal, das immer wieder einmal und nur jetzt und nur hier Wahrgenommene
und Wahrzunehmende. Und das Gedicht wäre somit der Ort, wo alle Tropen und
Metaphern ad absurdum geführt werden wollen.⁴³²

John Felstiner translates the words "*ad absurdum geführt*" by the correspondingly ambiguous expression "carried *ad absurdum*". This could imply something like carrying tropes and metaphors to an excess, beyond all moderation, far from the golden mean recommended by Aristotle and his followers in the classical rhetorical tradition. This exuberance in figuration, this *euphuism* beyond all measure is indeed one way of *mocking* metaphor, and Lautréamont is perhaps the most obvious master of this sort of *reductio ad absurdum* or "*décalage de la comparaison*" as Michel Deguy has called it.⁴³³ For reduction it is; even this counter-reduction is a way to reduce metaphor *ad ridiculum*, whether the mocked metaphor be of religious or literary origin. This is how Deguy defines this discrepancy (*décalage*):

⁴³⁰ "La vérité blessante. Ou le corps à corps des langues. Entretien avec Jacques Derrida", *Europe*, No. 901 (May 2004), pp. 8-27, here pp. 26-27. An English translation of pp. 22-27 of this interview can be found in "The Truth that Wounds (From an Interview)", trans. Thomas Dutoit, in *Sovereignities in Question. The Poetics of Paul Celan* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), pp. 168-169.

⁴³¹ Some of the poems and poetic statements that, in my view, very well correspond to — or correspond *with* — this response shall be quoted and discussed later on. The term of correspondence is rather suspect with regard to Celan's poetics, while he expressly denies that it is a question of "correspondence", *Entsprechung*; however, he also speaks of poetry both as a "dialogue" [*Gespräch*] and, paradoxically enough, as "bottle post". (Cf. *TCA/Meridian*, *passim*, and below.)

⁴³² *Der Meridian* (1960 = *TCA/Meridian*, Endf. 39a). Trans. John Felstiner: "And then what would the images be? / Something perceived and to be perceived only now and only here, once, again and again once. And so a poem would be the place where all tropes and metaphors will be carried ad absurdum." (*Selected Poems and Prose of Paul Celan*, pp. 410-411.)

⁴³³ Michel Deguy, "Citations de Maldoror", in *Figurations : Poèmes – propositions – études* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), pp. 233-268, here p. 237. Celan possessed a copy of this book and highlighted some of its content in 1969 (cf. *La bi. phi.*) — *Décalage* is, in other words, "manque de correspondance" (*Petit Robert*), or: "Manque de concordance entre deux faits, deux choses" (*Trésor de la Langue Française*).

Il consiste à prendre à la lettre une comparaison, une tournure métaphorique inscrite dans la langue, un schéma où l'*imaginaire* se déploie *en* langue, et à en développer la logique jusqu'aux dernières conséquences. [*Figurations*, p. 237.]

Reductio ad absurdum is of course yet another Aristotelian tradition, and Aristotle himself often both recommends and exercises “reduction to absurdity of metaphors”⁴³⁴ in an opponent’s discourse or argument. This form of reduction to absurdity occurs for instance when Aristotle scorns Plato for using “empty words and poetic metaphors” in speaking of the sensible things as being ‘modelled after’ the paradigm of the ideas, and then asks: “For what is it that fashions things on the model of the Ideas?”⁴³⁵

We may often recognize something more or less similar happening in Jacques Derrida’s work,⁴³⁶ for instance in his late texts on forgiveness, such as *Pardonner : l’impardonnable et l’imprescriptible*,⁴³⁷ where the deconstructibility of a certain similarity, or of certain alleged analogies between gift and forgiveness is announced, but in favour of an *undeconstructible* gift and true forgiveness, only in view of a “proper meaning” that could be assigned to both gift and forgiveness, “if there is one”:

And more than once we would have to carry over the problems and aporias of the ‘gift’ (such as I have tried to formalize them, for example, in *Given Time* and in particular in the last chapter of this book, entitled ‘The Excuse and Pardon’), to transfer them, so to speak, to the problems and non-problems that are the aporias of forgiveness, aporias that are analogous and, what is more, linked. But one must neither yield to these analogies between the gift and forgiveness nor, of course, neglect their necessity; rather, one must attempt to articulate the two, to follow them to the point where, suddenly, they cease to be pertinent.⁴³⁸

⁴³⁴ Cf. Julia Annas, in *Aristotle’s Metaphysics, Books M and N* [1976], p. 217 [notes to *Met.* 1092a29-b3], *passim*; cf. above.

⁴³⁵ *Met.* I, 9, 991a20-23; tr. Tredennick; cf. above. Paul Celan was actually familiar with this passage, through Lev Shestov at least, having emphatically underlined (probably in September 1959), among others, the words *κενολογείν ἐστὶν καὶ μεταφοράς λέγειν ποιητικὰς* in his copy of the French translation *Le pouvoir des clefs*. (Cf. Celan, *La bi. phi.*, p. 616 [nos. 163, 164-165; for the Russian original, cf. p. 702, nos. 734-736]; the source quoted is Celan’s personal copy of Leon Chestov, *Le pouvoir des clefs* (*Potestas Clavium*), trans. Boris de Schloezer, J. Schiffrin [Paris: Pléiade, 1928], p. 421; in a 1967 edition [Paris: Flammarion, 1967] the pages are 315-316.)

⁴³⁶ For example, a certain important part of “La double séance” consists of demonstrating that what he calls “the position of the supplementary mark” in Mallarmé is not rigorously metaphorical or metonymical, in spite of its being “always represented by metaphor or metonymy”, an extra trope or figure which is no longer metaphor, (no) more metaphor (*plus de métaphore*) (*La dissémination*, Paris: Seuil, cop. 1972 [repr. 1997, pp. 307 ff]).

⁴³⁷ The text was first presented in a conference in 1997 and appeared first in English: “To Forgive: The Unforgivable and the Imprescriptible”, trans. Elizabeth Rottenberg, in John Caputo et al., ed., *Questioning God* (Bloomington: Indiana U.P., 2001), pp. 21-51. Just a day before his death it also appeared in French, in the special issue of *Cahiers de l’Herne*; this French version was reprinted in the series “Carnets de l’Herne” as *Pardonner — l’impardonnable et l’imprescriptible* (Paris: L’Herne, 2005).

⁴³⁸ “Et nous aurons plus d’une fois à reporter les problèmes et les apories du « don » (telles que j’ai tenté par exemple de les formaliser dans *Donner le temps* et notamment dans le dernier chapitre de ce livre, intitulé « L’excuse et le pardon »), pour les transférer, si je puis dire, sur des problèmes et ces non-problèmes que sont des apories analogues et d’ailleurs liées du pardon. / Mais il ne faudra ni céder à ces analogies entre don et pardon, ni bien sûr, en négliger la nécessité. Nous devrions plutôt tenter de les articuler ensemble, de les suivre jusqu’au point où, d’un coup, elles cessent d’être pertinentes.” (*Pardonner* [2005], p. 8.)

This procedure that would show the expression “the gift of forgiveness” to be *merely* metaphorical, an *impertinent* analogy or composed of several analogies which turn out, in the final analysis, to be insufficiently grounded, could then be applied to any metaphor in principle, to any analogy or resemblance as principles of metaphor. Indeed, as the English translation helps us to observe, here it is a question of “carrying over”, “transferring” the problems and aporias from one domain to another. Yet again, there is not only an analogy between gift and forgiveness but they are “linked” with each other (“*des apories analogues et d’ailleurs liées*”). Not only analogous but also linked. The connection between these analogues is not only the fanciful image of resemblance but the link of contiguity; neither the trans-generic carrying-over, nor a solid continuity within a common genus, nor pure heterogeneity without any link, but a relation of contiguity, which also allows for breaches and ruptures between the analogues.

Gift and forgiveness have affinities that make it possible to “carry over”, to “transfer” the analogous problems and aporias from one domain to the other, namely their “unconditionality of principle” and their “essential relation to time”, but they are also irreducible to each other by virtue of their different relations to time:

Between giving and forgiving there is at least this affinity or this alliance that, beside their unconditionality of principle — one and the other, giving and forgiving, giving for giving [*don par don*] — have an essential relation to time, to the movement of temporalization; even though what seems to bind forgiveness to a past, which in a certain way does not pass, makes forgiveness an experience irreducible to that of the gift, to a gift one grants more commonly in the present, in the presentation or presence of the present. [“To Forgive”, p. 22; cf. pp. 21-22.]

So gift and forgiveness are analogous to each other, but there are points where these analogies “suddenly [...] cease to be pertinent” (cf. *ibid.*). The “carrying over”, the “transfer” between them must be accompanied by a counter-move, a *reductio ad absurdum* of sorts. A little like the tropes and metaphors in a poem, as Celan suggests in the *Meridian*, tropes and metaphors which *would be* carried *ad absurdum* and crossed over by “the meridian”, in the secret of the encounter.⁴³⁹

⁴³⁹ But a poem, such as the poem “Todtnauberg”, might also be the place where gift and forgiveness meet, as Derrida claims, where they meet with all their analogous problems and aporias, not only analogous with regard to each other but also linked in a strange relation of contiguity. — In Derrida’s text, the complexities multiply themselves from the outset. He continues: “I have just said ‘experience’ of forgiveness or the gift, but the word ‘experience’ may already seem abusive or precipitous here, where forgiveness and gift have perhaps this in common, that they never present themselves as such to what is commonly called an experience, a presentation to consciousness or to existence, precisely because of the aporias that we must take into account”. (“To Forgive”, p. 22.) — I will consider elsewhere, in a forthcoming article (“‘Undecidably Equivocal’: On ‘Todtnauberg’ and Forgiveness”), some of these aporias, with respect to the pores, euporetics and aporetics of the poem “Todtnauberg”, also with regard to the antimetaphoric poetics of “ambiguity without a mask [*Mehrdeutigkeit ohne Maske*]” (cf. below).

A striking example of reducing metaphorical or quasi-metaphorical resemblance *ad absurdum* can also be recognized among the draft material for the *Meridian*.

»Schreiben als Form des Gebets«, lesen wir – ergriffen – bei Kafka. Auch das bedeutet zunächst nicht *Beten*, sondern *Schreiben*: man kann es nicht mit gefalteten Händen tun.⁴⁴⁰

By pointing to a certain affinity that does *not* exist between writing and praying, by making the assimilation between these two less obvious (if there ever *was* anything obvious in it), by refusing one of the attributes of praying to the practice of writing and thus perhaps suggesting other incompatibilities, this apparently ambivalent response to Kafka's striking fragment is not its refutation, but rather makes way for the more interesting implications in it: perhaps it is not prayer that determines writing after all, 'prayer' as an unorthodox predicate metaphorically determining the subject 'writing', but, inversely and paradoxically, rather writing that solicits prayer in a profound manner?⁴⁴¹

But to say that one cannot write with one's hands folded seems itself metaphorical. A metaphor juxtaposed with another, a figure against figure, a counter-figure and a certain — benevolent, as it seems — sort of *reductio ad absurdum* of Kafka's apparent metaphor. But against the identification of these figures with metaphor, Celan's as well as Kafka's figure, juxtaposed here with each other, both of these writers being so very critical of metaphor and its concept, and even if someone would quibble against Celan's objection that one can indeed hold a pen in one's folded hands and scribble, and that therefore his phrase is indeed metaphorical, we might remark that the folding of hands is not merely a matter of clasping one's hands together, of joining one's fingers across each other, but a gesture indicative of prayer which involves not only the body but the soul too, as believers would say. Even the jocular mocking of this gesture bears reference to prayer at least in its Christian outward appearance and form. The bodily gesture is not innocent,⁴⁴² so to say, it is not exempt from being interpretable as an indication of a certain 'spiritual' activity — it is as much exposed to interpretation as the alleged metaphor is. But writing is not just a matter of tracing one's pen across paper, either. Neither one of these activities is just a five-finger exercise, nor is their combination (judged impossible by Celan, at least with regard to some of the incompatible features or missing analogies between writing and praying) a question of an acrobatic performance.

When Celan affirms Kafka's fragment, that writing *is* a form of prayer, but affirms it with reservations, or when he suggests that there is *no difference of principle* between a poem and a handshake, he does not portray one through the image of the other, the less well-known

⁴⁴⁰ *TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 60/582. "Writing as a form of prayer", we read – seized – in Kafka. Though this does not mean praying in the first place, but writing: that cannot be done with folded hands." (My translation.)

⁴⁴¹ Cf. my article "Schreiben als Form des Gebets" – An Impossible Form of Apostrophe? ('P.S.' on a Fragment by Kafka as Adapted by Celan)" (forthcoming).

⁴⁴² Cf. Celan, "Edgar Jené und der Traum vom Traume" (*GW* 3:155-161).

phenomenon through the better known, through a “filter” or in a “stereoscopic vision”.⁴⁴³ Instead, thinking of the principle common to a poem and a handshake, or to writing and praying, requires an *eidetic reduction* of sorts; the different representations are to be bracketed and yet, the differences are by no means to be effaced or forgotten. This does not mean killing metaphors by abstraction, but paying attention to language, manifestation and the “conversance” we are having with the world and with each other.⁴⁴⁴

A WORD ON LUCILE’S COUNTER-WORD. THE INVISIBLE IMAGE

Paying attention to language can be paradoxical through and through. Lucile’s figure in Büchner’s play *Danton’s Tod* and in Celan’s *Meridian* speech is a ‘counter-figure’ in a way that resembles Antigone:⁴⁴⁵ she too defies the inhuman order by her uncanny ‘speech act’, her “counter-word”. Let us read only a few of the many passages dedicated to Lucile in the *Meridian* speech:

[...] da ist Lucile, die Kunstblinde, dieselbe Lucile, für die Sprache etwas Personhaftes und Wahrnehmbares hat, noch einmal da, mit ihrem plötzlichen »Es lebe der König!« Nach allen auf der Tribüne (es ist das Blutgerüst) gesprochenen Worten – welch ein Wort! Es ist das Gegenwort, es ist das Wort, das den »Draht« zerreißt, das Wort, das sich nicht mehr vor den »Eckstehern und Paradegäulen der Geschichte« bückt, es ist ein Akt der Freiheit. Es ist ein Schritt.⁴⁴⁶

⁴⁴³ “Filter” is Max Black’s term (“Metaphor”, in *Models and Metaphors* [1962]). Another popular metaphor for metaphor, “stereoscopic vision”, comes from W. Bedell Stanford’s *Greek Metaphor. Studies in Theory and Practice* (Oxford, 1936), p. 105; cit. Douglas Berggren, “The Use and Abuse of Metaphor” (1962), p. 243. This is how Berggren unravels this notion: “[T]he perspectives prior to and subsequent to the transformation of both referents, moreover, interacting with their normal meanings, which makes it ultimately impossible to reduce completely the cognitive import of any vital metaphor to any set of univocal, literal, or non-tensional statements. For a special meaning, and in some cases even a new sort of reality, is achieved which cannot survive except at the intersection of the two perspectives which produced it.” (pp. 243-244.) — But what are normal meanings? If the intersection results rather from some primordial equivocality of “co-intended [*mitgemeint*]” but mostly non-thematized aspects even belonging to the “normal meanings” (conceptual grasp, namely comprehension, apprehension, always already involved in grasping something with the hands, and so on), or rather from the radical, disseminal openness of such co-intendedness (the inexhaustibility of poetic language as an indeterminacy of horizons out of which its constituents are experienced), the view of the “stereoscopic vision” might also be called into question. — On the principal affinity between a handshake and a poem, cf. Celan’s famous letter to Hans Bender (*GW* 3:177-178), and below.

⁴⁴⁴ As we have already noted, the term “conversance” is a very fortunate translation, by Warnek and Brogan, for the Greek λόγος and Heidegger’s translation of this term by *Kundschaft*; “conversance” far surpasses “discourse” also as a translation of *Rede* as used in *Sein und Zeit*. (Cf. Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* Θ 1-3: *On the Essence and Actuality of Force* [Bloomington: Indiana U.P., 1995], i.e. the translation of Heidegger, *GA* 33.)

⁴⁴⁵ “I began to think about Antigone a few years ago as I wondered what happened to those feminist efforts to confront and defy the state. It seemed to me that Antigone might work as a counterfigure to the trend championed by recent feminists to seek the backing and authority of the state to implement feminist policy aims. The legacy of Antigone’s defiance appeared to be lost in the contemporary efforts to recast political opposition as legal plaint and to seek the legitimacy of the state in the espousal of feminist claims.” (*Antigone’s Claim: Kinship Between Life and Death* [New York: Columbia University Press, 2000], p. 1.)

⁴⁴⁶ *TCA/Meridian*, Endf. 6-7. Trans. Felstiner: “here comes Lucile, blind to art, the same Lucile for whom language is something personal and perceptible, once again with her sudden ‘Long live the King!’ / After all those words uttered on the rostrum (it’s the scaffold) — what a word! / It is a counter-word, a word that

Speech is perceivable, of course, but not only in one sense. And perceiving speech is not just perceiving an object. In the *Meridian*, speaking of *Danton's Tod*, Lucile is one who perceives speech, pays attention to speech. Paradoxically enough, she is also someone who, “when the talk concerns art, [...] is present and ... not really listening [...] someone who hears and listens and looks ... and then doesn't know what the talk was about.” So, she perceives but does not listen, she pays attention without really paying attention. But she is the one who, in the third scene of the second act of Büchner's play, “hears the speaker, ‘sees him speak’, perceives language and form [*Gestalt*] and, at the same time [...] perceives Breath as well, that is, direction and destiny.”⁴⁴⁷ She is “blind to art”, *die Kunstblinde*, and she perceives, *nimmt wahr*, perceives and has perceived, *wahrgenommen hat*. A little like another woman in Büchner's play (I.v.9), Marion, who says — without metaphor as Celan maintains:

»Danton, deine Lippen haben Augen«: das ist keine »moderne« Metapher, das ist Wissen, von weither, um das Wissen eines Mundes –⁴⁴⁸

Lucile sees and hears without really listening, she ‘perceives’ breath, direction and destiny. In the sublime eloquence of the moribund revolutionaries, Danton and Camille and their comrades, who are about to be executed, it is a question of such words that already stand in their “last-thingliness” (*Letztendlichkeit*), and this is also how these “vocal things” stand in the poem. *In extremis*.⁴⁴⁹

Lucile herself is blind to art. To the art of speaking well, including the art of speaking well about art. Instead of art, she perceives, sees and hears speech as form or figure, *Gestalt* (“*Das Gedicht ist als Figur der ganzen Sprache eingeschrieben*”).⁴⁵⁰ She perceives ‘blindly’, blind to art, and hears without always listening to what is said, and thus, paradoxically enough, she is the one in whose figure we may encounter poetry, she is *like* poetry:

snaps the ‘wire,’ a word that no longer bows to ‘history’s loiterers and parade-horses,’ it is an act of freedom. It is a step.” (*Selected Poems and Prose of Paul Celan*, pp. 402-403.)

⁴⁴⁷ “Aber es gibt, wenn von der Kunst die Rede ist, auch immer wieder jemand, der zugegen ist und ... nicht richtig hinhört. / Genauer: jemand, der hört und lauscht und schaut... und dann nicht weiß, wovon die Rede war. Der aber den Sprechenden hört, der ihn »sprechen sieht«, der Sprache wahrgenommen hat und Gestalt, und zugleich auch – wer vermöchte hier, im Bereich dieser Dichtung, daran zu zweifeln? –, und zugleich auch Atem, das heißt Richtung und Schicksal.” (*TCA/Meridian*, Endf. 5a-b / trans. Felstiner, p. 402.) In *Dantons Tod*: “CAMILLE. Was sagst du, Lucile? / LUCILE. Nichts, ich seh dich so gern sprechen. / CAMILLE. Hörst mich auch? / LUCILE. Ei freilich. / CAMILLE. Hab ich recht? Weißt du auch, was ich gesagt habe? / LUCILE. Nein, wahrhaftig nicht.” (Georg Büchner, *Sämtliche Werke* [Berlin: Deutsche Buch-Gemeinschaft, 1963], p. 38.) Celan had underlined this last line by Lucile in his personal copy of the play (*TCA/Meridian*, Anmerkungen, p. 225).

⁴⁴⁸ *TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 593. Celan has added the adjective *seherische* into this note, after the word *Wissen*, so that the sentence can be also reconstructed as follows: “»Danton, deine Lippen haben Augen«: das ist keine »moderne« Metapher, das ist Wissen, von weither, um das [seherische] Wissen eines Mundes.”

⁴⁴⁹ Cf. *TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 517, 518, 519, 524.

⁴⁵⁰ *TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 239: “Das Gedicht ist als Figur der ganzen Sprache eingeschrieben; aber die Sprache bleibt unsichtbar; das sich Aktualisierende – die Sprache – tritt, kaum ist das geschehen, in den Bereich des Möglichen zurück. [...]”

Ich habe bei Lucile der Dichtung zu begegnen geglaubt, und Lucile nimmt Sprache als Gestalt und Richtung und Atem wahr –: [...] ⁴⁵¹

Figure and direction and breath — it is a question of mortality, and yet, also of spirituality: the figure (*Gestalt*) perceived when we perceive language is, as Celan says, a “spiritual figure [*geistige Gestalt*]”. This spirituality to be perceived, to be seen when we perceive language as a figure and direction and breath — or when Lucile, like poetry, sees it — remains invisible:

Das Gedicht entsteht durch den Umgang mit einem uns unsichtbar bleibenden: im Umgang mit der Sprache.
Begegnung mit der Sprache ist Begegnung mit Unsichtbarem. [*TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 241, 242.]

This is to say, on the one hand, that language, as a whole, remains invisible to us, immediately recedes from its actualization in the poem which is written, as Celan writes in yet another fragment, as a figure of language as a whole. ⁴⁵² This recession, this retreat belongs to the figure itself, as what makes it possible while remaining invisible, while receding into invisibility. On the other hand, it means that even while we — like Lucile — may perceive someone’s speech, even while we — like Marion — may see eyes, our own perhaps (our visible or invisible eyes), on the lips that speak, we are always dealing with something invisible when we are dealing with speech. Even when we are dealing with the “speech of the absent”, namely writing. ⁴⁵³ This invisibility — while it is something spiritual, *ein geistiges Phänomen* as Celan writes — belongs to the body, the verbal body and the corporeal body and their “*corps à corps*”, and the whole of language resonates in the singular and untranslatable timbre of that bodily struggle.

In one of the fragments, we may read this definition of poetic imagery as a “spiritual phenomenon”:

Zu Metapher, Bild etc:
Bildhaftes, das ist keineswegs etwas Visuelles; es ist, wie alles mit der Sprache Zusammenhängende, ein geistiges Phänomen. Sprache: ist das nicht Begegnung mit Unsichtbarem[?] Es ist, noch im Stimmfernten, eine Frage an den des Akzents; zum wahrgenommenen Bild im Gedicht gehört das Wahrnehmen auch seines Schallbilds. An den Atemhöfen, in denen es steht, erkennst du’s; an den Kammzeiten[.] Das ist keineswegs dasselbe wie irgendeine billige impressionistische Lautmalerei, Klangfarbe etc. Es ist, auch hier, eine Erscheinungsform der Sprache, eine aus dem Geschriebenen, also Stummen, herauszuhörende Sprechart (Sprachgitter, das ist auch das Sprachgitter macht das sichtbar.) [*TCA/Meridian*, Ts. 256.] ⁴⁵⁴

⁴⁵¹ *TCA/Meridian*, Endf. 23. Trans. Felstiner: “I believe I have encountered poetry in Lucile, and Lucile perceives language as form and direction and breath” (p. 406).

⁴⁵² *TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 239.

⁴⁵³ *TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 458. (*loc. cit.*).

⁴⁵⁴ This note has been dated “9.10.60”. The word *Kammzeiten* is explained in the editors’ notes (*TCA/Meridian*, “Anmerkungen”, p. 236): “Bei der Definition der metrischen Zeit einer Dichtung unterscheidet Franz Saran zwischen Lautzeit, Silbenzeit, Kammzeit und Abstandszeit. Die Kammzeit bezeichnet die Dauer, die der Silbenkamm, d.h. der sprachliche Schwerpunkt einer Silbe mit nachfolgender Konsonanz benötigt.”

Writing, and the visible speaking or the visibility of speaking, as well as gestures and so on, are the visibility of the invisible. But this invisibility, this ‘spirituality’, “a spiritual phenomenon [*ein geistiges Phänomen*]” is nothing other-worldly; it is temporal rather than supratemporal. It is voiceful and voiceless, embodied and disembodied, both at once.⁴⁵⁵ Verbal figurativity or poetic imagery (*Bildhaftes*) is nothing visual, as Celan here writes, except to the extent that it is indeed a question of *writing* as a phenomenal form of language (*Erscheinungsform*).⁴⁵⁶ Writing is one of the forms that make language — speech (*Sprache*) — visible; but this visibility of writing or of speaking in the colloquial sense is something else than, for instance, mental imagery in the mind of the writer or the reader.

⁴⁵⁵ *TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 55: “Anfang: / die Sprache ist, {zumindest ihrer Intention nach,} nicht mehr Wortmusik, das Gedicht ist das Gedicht dessen, der weiß, daß er unter dem Neigungswinkel seiner Existenz spricht, daß die Sprache seines Gedichts nicht Sprache schlechthin, sondern {sich freisetzende und sich} aktualisierende Sprache ist, stimmhaft und stimmlos zugleich [...]/ Der Ort, wo solches sich vollzieht, ist ein menschlicher Ort – »ein Ort im All« gewiß, aber hier, auf Erden, in der Zeit */ *) Das Gedicht: ein terrestrisches, ein kretürliches Phänomen, {es steht in die Zeit hinein} ein poröser, zeitoffener Gegenstand von Menschenmund dorthin gesprochen, {körperhaft und körperlos zugleich,} auffindbar – wann aufgefunden? / Symbolik und Metaphorik treten zurück, die Poesie ist ein irdisches, terrestrisches Phänomen, das Hieratische beginnt dem Demotischen zu weichen, das Gedicht öffnet sich der Zeit,” (the note ends with this comma).

⁴⁵⁶ We can of course also consider *Schriftbild*, the graphic image in the poem, as a concrete element of its ‘imagery’; Sandro Zanetti has given very acute attention to this aspect in Celan’s poetry in his dissertation »zeitoffen«. *Zur Chronographie Paul Celans* (2006), pp. 19, 126-7, *passim*.

THE PHENOMENAL – METEORIC – IMAGE

“And what, *then*, would the images be?”, Celan asks, and part of his reply is this: “And the poem would *then* be the place where all tropes and metaphors are developed *ad absurdum*.” These then’s and the so’s, accompanied by the would-be’s, indicate that the reduction, or developing or carrying tropes and metaphors *ad absurdum*, follows as a consequence of something. In the immediate context, the question “And then what would the images be?” follows the paragraph speaking of “this unavoidable question, this unheard-of demand”, the open and endless question concerning the “whence and whither” of the things dealt with in the poem and the address (perhaps address rather than demand: *Anspruch* means both address and demand, a demand being a sort of address, of course) in which the thing addressed is named and its otherness is brought along into this presence, into the here and now in which the other’s time participates in the conversation. The place of the poem, the place where all tropes and metaphors are “developed” or “carried *ad absurdum*” — or where they *would be* reduced *ad absurdum*, as I would say — is the singular “here and now”, “this one, unique, limited present”, this “one time, one time over and over again, and only now and only here” in which the other’s time participates, the other’s time as an irreducibly other time.⁴⁵⁷

TIME-FRINGES (ZEITHÖFE)

Among the contraindications against applying the doctrine of metaphor to poetry we find, in Celan’s notes, such characterizations as the *phenomenality* of the poetic image and “perception” — *Wahrnehmung, sprachliche Wahrnehmung*. In the final version of the speech, a few lines before the rhetorical question rises for the first time explicitly, “The poem with its images and tropes?”, we can read the following:

Das Gedicht wird – unter welchen Bedingungen! – zum Gedicht eines – immer noch – Wahrnehmenden, dem Erscheinenden Zugewandten, dieses Erscheinende Befragenden und Ansprechenden; es wird Gespräch – oft ist es verzweifelter Gespräch.

Erst im Raum dieses Gesprächs konstituiert sich das Angesprochene, versammelt es sich um das es ansprechende und nennende Ich. Aber in diese Gegenwart bringt das Angesprochene und durch Nennung gleichsam zum Du Gewordene auch sein Anderssein mit. Noch im Hier und Jetzt des Gedichts – das Gedicht selbst hat ja immer nur diese eine, einmalige, punktuelle Gegenwart –, noch in dieser Unmittelbarkeit und Nähe läßt es das ihm, dem Anderen, Eigenste mitsprechen: dessen Zeit.⁴⁵⁸

⁴⁵⁷ The translations quoted in this paragraph are by Jerry Glenn, in “Appendix: The Meridian”, in Derrida, *Sovereignities in Question* (2005), p. 182-183 (emphases added). The notion of “participation” as a translation of the verb *mitsprechen* appears in Glenn’s translation: “only in this immediacy and proximity does it [i.e. the poem] allow the most idiosyncratic quality of the Other, its time, to participate in the dialogue” (p. 182); this is a good choice, because Celan himself uses the verb *partizipieren* often in his working drafts (cf. *TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 59, *passim*).

⁴⁵⁸ *TCA/Meridian*, Endf. 36 (GA 3, 198-199). Trans. Jerry Glenn: “The poem becomes — and under what con-

The phenomenological terminology of this passage (especially the verbs *erscheinen*, *zuwenden*, *konstituieren*) of the *Meridian* speech is not merely incidental. If we just take a glimpse at the index of names in the Tübingen edition of the *Meridian*, we find confirmation of Celan's interest in phenomenology: in the manuscript notes he refers not only to Heidegger, whose position as Celan's interlocutor (*Gegenüber*) has often been noticed, and to several works by Husserl, but also such important phenomenologists as Franz Brentano, Edith Stein and Max Scheler are featured. The fact that Celan has in his poems borrowed the word *Zeithof* from Husserl's *Lectures on the Phenomenology of Internal Time Consciousness* of 1905 is well known, and we find both this Husserlian coinage and direct references to this work among the manuscript material. For example in this draft for the radio essay on Mandelstam, which is one of the earliest occurrences of the Husserlian neologism *Zeithof* in Celan's texts:

sprachliche Wahrnehmung, Gespräch mit dem ihm Gegenüber-, dem ihm Entgegenstehenden, Gespräch mit dem Anderen und Fremden, Gespräch mit Menschen und Dingen, Gespräch mit dem Erscheinenden, mithin auch Gespräch {, fragendes Gespräch} mit sich selbst – inmitten eben dieses Erscheinenden.

2. Sprecher:

Dieses Erscheinende hat, wie der es mit seiner Sprache Wahrnehmende, seine eigene Zeit. So kommt es auf einen zu: noch in seiner Nähe spricht seine Ferne mit, spricht seine eigene Zeit mit; im Gedicht verklammern sich diese – verschiedenen – Zeiten, spricht die Stunde und der Äon, der Herzschlag und die Weltuhr.

1. Sprecher:

Sie sprechen zueinander, treten zueinander – sie bleiben inkommensurabel. Dadurch entsteht im Gedicht jene Bewegtheit und Spannung, an der wir es erkennen: noch immer tritt Zeit hinzu, partizipiert Zeit. In einem solchen Zeit h o f stehen die Gedichte Ossip Mandelstamms. Daher noch in der substantivischen Reihung jenes Vibrato der Worte, das (auch) semantische Relevanz hat. Daher noch im Lapidaren – und nicht wenige dieser Gedichte haben den Charakter einer Inschrift – das Zittern der sterblichen Hand. In diese »Versteinerung« nimmt das Gedicht Mandelstamms seine Hoffnung mit, die Hoffnung auf das – nahe oder ferne – Auge.⁴⁵⁹

In a memorandum referring to Mandelstam, Celan also directly refers to Husserl's time consciousness lectures:

Zu Kamen: Er spricht — er schweigt
EH Vorl Zb, S. 400 unterstr

ditions! — a poem of one who — as before — perceives, who faces that which appears. Who questions this appearing and addresses it. It becomes dialogue — it is often despairing dialogue. / Only in the realm of this dialogue does that which is addressed take form and gather around the I who is addressing and naming it. But the one who has been addressed and the one who, by virtue of having been named, has, as it were, become a thou, also brings its otherness along into the present, into this present. — In the here and now of the poem it is still possible — the poem itself, after all, has only this one, unique, limited present — only in this immediacy and proximity does it allow the most idiosyncratic quality of the Other, its time, to participate in the dialogue.” (P. 182.)

⁴⁵⁹ *TCA/Meridian*, Ts. (Ms.) 59; cf. Ms. 104, Ms. 280, Ms. 518, and below.

Wahrnehmung — {das bedeutet im Gedicht} nicht sprachliche Wiedergabe, sondern
 Vergegenwärtigung durch Sprache —
 {Erst} indem die Dinge Zeit, d.h. Jetzt Vorher Nachher zeitliche Extension haben,
 haben sie Individualität
 Erst im wahrnehmenden Auge konstituiert sich der Gegenstand
 Zum Zeitbewußtsein gehört Erinnerung und Erwartung: (im Zeitfeld dieser⁴⁶⁰

But if we compare Husserl's lectures with the context in which Celan refers to them attentively enough, it soon becomes evident that here "an entirely different concept of perception is in question": Husserl's discourse, which restricts itself to the perception of such temporal objects as melodies, and which strictly distinguishes present perception from all forms of representation (*Vergegenwärtigung*), is not really compatible with, or sufficient to account for, the kind of "verbal perception [*sprachliche Wahrnehmung*]" of which Celan speaks. Here is the passage referred to in Celan's memorandum, underlined in his personal copy of Husserl's book:

Auch in bloßer Phantasie ist jedes Individuelle ein zeitlich irgendwie Extendiertes, hat sein Jetzt, sein Vorher und Nachher, aber das Jetzt, das Vorher und Nachher ist ein bloß Eingebildetes wie das ganze Objekt.⁴⁶¹

It is clear that Husserl reserves the term "perception [*Wahrnehmung*]" for original presentation (including primary memory, i.e. retention) and refuses to call the modes of "re-presentation [*Vergegenwärtigung, Re-Präsentation*]", recollection, secondary memory,

⁴⁶⁰ *TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 486; the parenthesis at the end of the fragment is not closed. The typography of the Tübingen edition has been only slightly modified; the completion of the reference to Husserl has been left out. *Kamen*, "The Stone", is the title of Mandelstam's collection of poems. Besides the word *Zeithof*, also *Zeitfeld* is part of Husserl's vocabulary: "Das »ursprüngliche Zeitfeld« ist nicht etwa ein Stück objektiver Zeit, das erlebte Jetzt ist, in sich genommen, nicht ein Punkt der objektiven Zeit usw." (*Hua X*, p. 6 [370]; cf. pp. 62 [418], 70 [425-426].) The word *Zeithof* appears in § 14, pp. 35-36 [395-396], underlined by Celan and marked also by a double stroke in the margin (*La bi. phi.*, p. 422, No. 30); I cite here the English translation (pp. 37-38): "Let us consider a case of secondary memory: We recall, say, a melody that we recently heard at a concert. It is obvious in this case that the whole memory-phenomenon [*Erinnerungsphänomen*] has exactly the same constitution, *mutatis mutandis*, as the perception of the melody. Like the perception, it has a privileged point: to the now-point of the perception corresponds a now-point of the memory. We run through the melody in phantasy; we hear, 'as it were' [*»gleichsam«*], first the initial tone, then the second tone, and so on. At any particular time there is always a tone (or tone-phase) in the now-point. The preceding tones, however, are not erased from consciousness. Primary memory of the tones that, as it were, I have just heard and expectation (protention) of the tones that are yet to come fuse with the apprehension [*Auffassung*] of the tone that is now appearing and that, as it were, I am now hearing [*des jetzt erscheinenden, gleichsam jetzt gehörten Tones*]. The now-point once again has for consciousness a temporal fringe [*hat für das Bewußtsein wieder einen Zeithof*], which is produced in a continuity of memorial apprehensions; and the total memory of the melody consists in a continuum of such continua of temporal fringes [*in einem Kontinuum von solchen Zeithofkontinuen*] and, correlatively, in a continuum of apprehension-continua of the kind described."

⁴⁶¹ *Hua X*, p. 41; Celan cites the first edition of the 1905 lectures, edited by Heidegger in 1928, p. 400 (this original pagination is henceforth given in square brackets); cf. Celan, *TCA/Meridian*, p. 239. Trans. John Barnett Brough: "Even in mere phantasy every individual is extended in time in some way, having its now, its before, and its after; but the now, before, and after are merely imagined, as is the whole object." (Husserl: *Collected Works, Vol. 4: On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time (1893-1917)* [Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1991], p. 43.)

phantasy, and imagination by the name of “perception”.⁴⁶² So has Celan just been careless in connecting perception with representation, *Wahrnehmung* with *Vergegenwärtigung*?

Husserl speaks in terms of objects and objectivation, and this requires that the process of temporal perception must be restricted into the limits of certain *ideal* borders of the object — and he is quite sensitive to the proximity of ideality and *fiction* (“*idealisierenden Fiktionen*”).⁴⁶³ But in any case, the *place* in which the now, the just-before and the soon-to-be form a continuum, in which a temporal object, such as a melody, becomes what it is, an indi-

⁴⁶² Let us quote the passage from the beginning of § 17 a little more extensively, in order to make this clear as economically as possible: “Der Wahrnehmung oder Selbstgebung der Gegenwart, [addition in the English translation: ‘and primary memory’,] die ihr Korrelat hat im gegebenen Vergangenen, tritt nun ein anderer Gegensatz gegenüber, der von Wahrnehmung und Wiedererinnerung, sekundärer Erinnerung. In der Wiedererinnerung »erscheint« uns ein Jetzt, aber es »erscheint« in einem ganz anderen Sinne, als in dem das Jetzt in der Wahrnehmung erscheint. Dieses Jetzt ist nicht »wahrgenommen«, d h. selbst gegeben, sondern vergegenwärtigt. Es stellt ein Jetzt vor, das nicht gegeben ist. Und ebenso stellt der Ablauf der Melodie in der Wiedererinnerung ein »soeben vergangen« vor, g i b t es aber nicht. Auch in bloßer Phantasie ist jedes Individuelle ein zeitlich irgendwie Extendiertes, hat sein Jetzt, sein Vorher und Nachher, aber das Jetzt, das Vorher und Nachher ist ein bloß Eingebildetes wie das ganze Objekt. Hier steht also e i n g a n z a n d e r e r W a h r n e h m u n g s b e g r i f f in Frage. Wahrnehmung ist hier der Akt, der etwas als es selbst vor Augen stellt, der Akt, der das Objekt u r s p r ü n g l i c h k o n s t i t u i e r t. Das Gegenteil ist V e r g e g e n w ä r t i g u n g, Re-Präsentation, als der Akt, der ein Objekt nicht selbst vor Augen stellt, wenn auch nicht gerade in der Weise eines eigentlichen Bildbewußtseins. Hier ist von einer kontinuierlichen Vermittlung der Wahrnehmung mit ihrem Gegenteil gar keine Rede. Vorhin war das Vergangenheitsbewußtsein, nämlich das primäre, keine Wahrnehmung, weil Wahrnehmung als der das Jetzt originär konstituierende Akt genommen war. Das Vergangenheitsbewußtsein konstituiert aber nicht ein Jetzt, vielmehr ein »soeben gewesen«, ein dem Jetzt intuitiv Vorangegangenes. Nennen wir aber Wahrnehmung den A k t, i n d e m a l l e r » U r s p r u n g « l i e g t, d e r o r i g i n ä r k o n s t i t u i e r t, s o i s t d i e p r i m ä r e E r i n n e r u n g W a h r n e h m u n g. Denn nur in der primären Erinnerung s e h e n wir Vergangenes, nur in ihr konstituiert sich Vergangenheit, und zwar nicht repräsentativ, sondern präsentativ.” (*Hua X*, pp. 40-41; emphases by letter-spacing in the original.) Trans. J. B. Brough (pp. 42-43.): “In addition to the contrast between perception, or the giving of the present itself, [and primary memory], which has its correlate in the given past, there is another opposition: between perception and recollection or secondary memory. In recollection a now ‘appears’ to us, but it ‘appears’ in an entirely different sense in which the now appears in perception. This now is not ‘perceived’ — that is, given itself — but represented. It represents a now that is not given. And so too the running-off of a melody in *recollection* represents a ‘just past’ but does not *give* it. Even in mere phantasy every individual is extended in time in some way, having its now, its before, and its after; but the now, before, and after are merely imagined, as is the whole object. Here, therefore, *an entirely different concept of perception* is in question. Perception in this case is the act that places something before our eyes as the thing itself, the act that *originally constitutes* the object. Its opposite is *re-presentation* [*Vergegenwärtigung*, *Re-Präsentation*], understood as the act that does not place an object itself before our eyes but just *re-presents* it; that places it before our eyes in image, as it were, although not exactly in the manner of a genuine image-consciousness. Here we do not say anything at all about the continuous mediation of perception with its opposite. Up to this point, the consciousness of the past — the primary consciousness of the past, that is — was not <called> perception because perception was taken as the act that originally constitutes the now. But the consciousness of the past does not constitute a now; it rather constitutes a ‘just past,’ something that has preceded the now intuitively. But if we call perception the *act in which all ‘origin’* lies, the act that *constitutes originally*, then *primary memory* is *perception*. For only in primary memory do we see what is past, only in it does the past become constituted — and constituted presentatively, not representatively.” (Emphasis in the original translated text. Additions in brackets as in the translation by J.B. Brough; “Added according to the sense of the original manuscript.” [p. 42n25.]

⁴⁶³ “Erst als zeitlich gedehnter ist der Ton c ein konkretes Individuum.” (*Hua X*, p. 86 [439].) This — that it is the temporal extension that constitutes the concrete individual, here the note ‘c’ for instance — is of course quite close to the passage Celan has highlighted and commented on in his notes, cited above (*TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 486; Husserl, *Hua X*, pp. 40-41 [400]). However, a few lines later Husserl continues: “Im übrigen operieren wir bei solchen Beschreibungen schon ein wenig mit idealisierenden Fiktionen.” (*Hua X*, p. 86 [439].)

vidual object, this place is named by Husserl with the neologism *Zeithof*, and this word is adopted by Celan and used on many occasions, both in his poetry and in the drafts for the *Meridian*.⁴⁶⁴

For example, *Zeithof* appears in a six-verse poem (written in October 1967) that has not a single verb in it and also therefore seems to deny the individualizing temporal continuum, the *now-before-after* that belongs to all temporal objects, to the creature it names:

SCHWIMMHÄUTE zwischen den Worten,
ihr Zeithof –
ein Tümpel,

Graugrätiges hinter
dem Leuchtschopf
Bedeutung.⁴⁶⁵

By the word *Zeithof* Husserl refers to the ‘halo’ of retentions and protentions that belong to each present punctual moment of a temporal object. A melody is an illuminating example. Also the memorized or phantasied temporal objects have the structure of “now before after”, which has caught very specific attention by Celan as a reader of the lectures.⁴⁶⁶

But here, in this poem, we seem to have some sort of a creature with shining feathers and interdigital webs, paddling on something like a pool of stagnant water. According to the Grimm dictionary, *Tümpel* has originally meant any deep pool of water (this corresponds to an obsolete acceptation of the word “pool”: “A deep and still place in a body of water”), even abysmally deep, and this is indeed how another poem, “Flimmerbaum”, speaks of “*ein Tümpel*”: “*Es war der unendliche Teich.*”⁴⁶⁷ But here it is a question of a word-digitated creature: it has webs between words. Therefore we may be inclined to say: the strange creature, this *syn-dactyl*, appears to be some kind of metaphor for some kind of verbal creature, *word-digitated*

⁴⁶⁴ Cf. *Hua X*, p. 105 [457 in the 1928 ed.]: “Jede Wahrnehmung hat ihren retentionalen und protentionalen Hof. Auch die Modifikation der Wahrnehmung muß – in modifizierter Weise – diesen doppelten Hof enthalten, und was die ‘bloße Phantasie’ von der Erinnerung unterscheidet, ist, daß dieser ganze intentionale Komplex einmal den Charakter der Aktualität hat, das andere Mal den der Inaktualität.” En. trans., p. 111: “Every perception has its retentional and protentional halo. The modification of perception must also contain — in modified fashion — this double halo; and what distinguishes ‘mere phantasy’ from memory is that in memory’s case this entire intentional complex has the character of actuality, while in the case of mere phantasy it is characterized by the absence of actuality.” By “memory”, Husserl refers here to “primary memory”, the retention immediately involved in the present perception of a temporal object (*Zeitobjekt*, *Zeitgegenstand*; cf. e.g. *Hua X*, p. 108 [459]) (such as a melody presently heard, with those phases that have already passed retained as belonging to the present perception of the melody as a whole).

⁴⁶⁵ *TCA/Lichtzwang*, p. 125 (*GW* 2:297). “WEBS between the words, // their time-fringe —/ a pool, // grey-spined behind / the luminous tuft / meaning.” (My translation.)

⁴⁶⁶ *Hua X*, p. 30: “Kometenschweif von Retentionen” [391] (Celan has marked a passage that immediately precedes this expression, but not this one); on p. 61 “Hof von Intentionen” [418]; and on p. 105 [457] (the last of Celan’s highlightings is on p. 404 of the 1928 ed., which we have already cited).

⁴⁶⁷ *GW* 1:233. Cf. *DWB*: “TÜMPEL, m.[...] A. tiefe wasserstelle. / 1) tiefe stelle eines baches, flusses oder meeres. / a) meist mit der vorstellung des abgründigen [...] 2) tiefes stehendes gewässer (s. auch u. tümpelchen). / a) kleiner see, teich: lacuna [...]” (Bd. 22, Sp. 1757f.) Cf. OED, “pool, n.¹”: “2. a. A deep and still place in a body of water, esp. a river or stream; †a deep part of the sea (*obs.*). In early use (chiefly *Sc.*) also: †a river, a stream (*obs.*).” (OED, 50183967.)

creature. There would be a resemblance between webbed feet and these words mentioned, words whose time-halo (is) a puddle and whose meaning, behind the glistening tuft of feathers (*Leuchtschopf*) as it seems, (is) grey-spined — or then the meaning consists of this luminous tuft (inasmuch as *Bedeutung* is understood as an apposition to *Leuchtschopf*), behind which there is the grey-spined realm of the puddle, the time-court of the web-digitated word-creature — the ambiguous syntax allows for both of these options: “behind the luminous tuft[:] meaning”, or, “behind the luminous tuft [of] meaning.” Between the two last lines, the two last words of the poem, “*Leuchtschopf/Bedeutung*”, there is an inaudible, ‘diaphanous’ or invisible hymen (*Schwimmhaut*), a moment of indecision — a break and transition (*Umbruch*) — accounting for the ambiguity. In his detailed analysis of this poem, which does not really pay much attention to the Husserlian reference apart from mentioning it twice, Roland Reuß nevertheless grasps the peculiar sense of temporality that the poem manifests, with regard to the thematics of “actualization” and the time-fringe (*Zeithof*: the retentional-protentional aureole that surrounds every individual temporal object conceived as a punctual present) as evoked in the *Meridian* fragments:

[...] das Gedicht nicht einfach von Syntax und Lexikon Gebrauch macht, um *Etwas* diesem Gebrauch mental Vorausliegendes nur noch auszusprechen. Es *aktualisiert* Sprache, und d.h. das Zu-Sagende ist nur in der Äußerung selbst, genauer: an den Umbrüchen des je und je Gesagtes zu gewahren.⁴⁶⁸

To the individual, singular time-fringe of a poem and its “verbal perception [*sprachliche Wahrnehmung*]” belong also the hiatus, the line-breaks and the *enjambment* that may be broken apart, the breathers so to say (*Zeithöfe* are also *Atemhöfe*).⁴⁶⁹ And if we see in the poem primarily the use of a metaphorical technique of bringing together the abstract (*Zeit*) and the concrete (*Hof*), we should try to relate this apparent dialectic to the discourse *against* metaphor in which this word *Zeithof* occurs, to the phenomenology of “verbal perception [*sprachliche Wahrnehmung*]” drafted by Celan, a phenomenology of *actualization* as a phenomenology of *individuation*. Reuß criticizes the commonplace strategy of interpreting the unfamiliar and the not-quite-understood as metaphor and this metaphor as a combination, often an unknown compound word, of the already familiar concepts, such as in the case of *Kluftrose* as if this flower of the mouth was just a surprising neologism composed of *Kluft* (chasm, cleft) and *Rose*, even though it is an established geological term, “joint rosette”. The word should not, according to Reuß, be interpreted *only* as a metaphor, but the lexical meaning must be allowed to contribute, and the philologists as well as philosophers (Gadamer’s report of having originally read the cycle *Atemkristall* in the middle of Dutch dunes, without lexica or other auxiliaries, “until [he] believed to have understood them”, as he says in the

⁴⁶⁸ Roland Reuß, *Im Zeithof: Celan-Provokationen* (Frankfurt a.M.: Stroemfeld, 2001), pp. 105-106. Besides “Umbruch”, the word “diaphanous [*diaphan*]” in the preceding paragraph is also quoted from Reuß, and we owe also the earlier reference to “Flimmerbaum” to him (cf. pp. 107-108).

⁴⁶⁹ Cf. *TCA/Meridian*, Ts. 256 (*loc. cit.*), and Ms. 280: “Zeithöfe, durchatmet, umatmet”.

revised edition of *Wer bin ich und wer bist du?* [1986] which is the published result of these readings on the beach, serves as a warning example for Reuß) should resist the temptation to reduce the unfamiliar into the familiar by the way of metaphorical interpretation (*“Das Ethos nicht nur des Philologen, sondern auch des Philosophen sollte jedem Automatismus der Zurückführung von Unbekanntem auf Bekanntes von Anfang an widerstehen”*). However, the concept of metaphor remains strongly and positively featured throughout Reuß’s reading of “Schwimmhäute”.⁴⁷⁰ Celan’s resistance to metaphorical interpretation is obviously more unconditional than that, although one of its motivations is indeed the tendency to use metaphor as a shortcut to knowledge, which is actually just insolent pseudo-knowledge.⁴⁷¹ He does not only point out that many of the compound terms in his poems are *also* lexical, but precisely that the apparently metaphorical combinations, even when they are citations of technical terms from various specific discourses, are at the same time citations of the original *possibilities* of concept formation, archaic possibilities as in the case of *Meermühle*, or naming power (*Nennkraft*) which is, strictly speaking, *not* metaphorical.

The absence of verbs would emphasize the stagnated motionlessness of the puddle, the timeless time of this word-creature. The fact that the webs are between words would imply that we are dealing with metaphor here. The words (*Worte*) would be the ‘focus’ of the metaphor and the rest would be the ‘frame’, except for the word *Bedeutung* which doubles the ‘focus’. The frame — the images of the webs (*Schwimmhäute*), of the pool (*Tümpel*), of the glimmering tuft of feathers, as it seems (*Leuchtschopf*), and of the grey spines (*Graugrätiges*) — would be focused on words and meaning. But let us not make this the meaning of the poem yet.

This poem alludes to Husserl, at the very least through borrowing the word *Zeithof*, but perhaps also by an implicit reference to the constant *fluvial* ‘rhetoric’ used in the time-consciousness lectures. Actually, whether it is appropriate to call it a ‘rhetoric’ is a question in its own right, since Husserl so vehemently resists the “seductions of language”,⁴⁷² also by marking the unavoidable spatial analogies in his discourse on time and the ‘images’ for the

⁴⁷⁰ *Im Zeithof*, pp. 8-9: “Eine der am meisten verbreiteten Strategien, sich und anderen seine eigene Unzulänglichkeit an »dunklen« Stellen zu verbergen, ist, das Unverstandene als Metapher zu deuten, und d. h. letztlich es aus Bekanntem kombinatorisch herzuleiten: »Kluftrose« = Kluft + Rose. Daran ist weniger zu kritisieren, daß der Ausdruck »Metapher« überhaupt im Zusammenhang von Celan-Gedichten fällt; zu kritisieren ist vielmehr, daß das Nicht-Verstehen nicht zunächst dazu führt, der Unabgeschlossenheit seines eigenen Wortschatzes innezuwerden und in der Konsequenz den langen Weg über Wörterbücher, Lexika oder andere Bücher einzuschlagen.” The term “Metapher” and its derivatives appear without any explicit reservations at least on pp. 98, 99, 100, 102, 103, 104, 105, 107, 108, 110, 113. — Cf. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Wer bin Ich und wer bist Du? Ein Kommentar zu Paul Celan’s Gedichtfolge »Atemkristall«*; revidierte und ergänzte Ausgabe (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1986), pp. 137-138.

⁴⁷¹ Cf. *Mikrolithen*, p. 46, No. 67.7 (*loc. cit.*)

⁴⁷² “[...] the originally intuitive life which creates its originally self-evident structures through activities *on the basis of sense-experience* very quickly and in increasing measure falls victim to the *seduction of language*. Greater and greater segments of this life lapse into a kind of talking and reading that is *dominated purely by association* [...]” (*The Origin of Geometry* / cit. Outi Pasanen, *Writing as Spacing: Philosophy, Literature, and the Work of Jacques Derrida*, diss., Binghamton, 1992, p. 11n20.)

time-constituting phenomena such as “stream [*Fluß*]” and all the related names for that which we have no names: “Für all das fehlen uns die Namen.”⁴⁷³ But necessity is the mother of invention and the muses are not frightened by namelessness. For example ‘depth’ can be temporal, as we see from Husserl’s use of the term *Zeittiefe* (*Hua X*, p. 109 [461]).

In his essay “*Zeitgehöft et Anwesen. La dia-chronie du poème*” (1986), Jean Greisch sees the poem “*Schwimmhäute*” as “something like a variation of the Husserlian image of the ‘comet’s tail’ of protentions and retentions”, and continues:

Pour s’orienter dans une temporalité aussi « flottante », peut-être faut-il effectivement des mots comparables à des palmes.⁴⁷⁴

But could the poem bear some more precise reference? Roland Reuß points out that the word *Schopf*, here designating perhaps the bright and coloured plumage of a web-footed bird (inasmuch as we refer it back to the word *Schwimmhäute*), is sometimes also a synonym for a comet’s tail. This image (*Kometenschweif*) appears also in Husserl’s text, designating the retentional aspect of every present perception of temporal objects (which is indeed characterized as a “temporal fringe”, *Zeithof*); Reuß himself only mentions this, without really trying to relate the poem to the phenomenology of temporality.⁴⁷⁵

Now we may also see the word *hinter* from a new perspective. Could it be that meaning (*Bedeutung*) lags behind the comet’s tail (*Leuchtschopf*), namely the retentional-protentional halo? Or that it is left behind, as a grey residue, grey and spikey? Or that this residue is actually left behind by *Leuchtschopf Bedeutung* — as that which is behind (or beyond) the glistening plumage of meaning? One thing that tends to be forgotten in interpreting such semantically and syntactically dense poems is to *listen* to the idiom, to pay attention to the sonority and pauses — *Atemhöfe* — or in other words: to how it arrives through the troposphere and soon disappears. How *Bedeutung* refers itself back to *Leuchtschopf* and behind it, *Graugrätiges* — onomatopoesis of the voice itself in its idiomaticity, in its *timbre*, the phenomenal appearance and disappearance of untranslatable singularity. As Reuß observes, the etymology of *grau* refers paradoxically to beams of light and indeed, what is gray consists of different mixtures of black and white, light and darkness (in German, *grau* applies also to

⁴⁷³ Cf. *Hua X*, pp. 26, 75, *passim*.

⁴⁷⁴ “[...] comme une variation sur l’image husserlienne de la « queue de comète » de protentions et de rétentions”. (In Martine Broda, ed., *Contre-jour : Études sur Paul Celan* [Paris: Cerf, 1986], pp. 167-183, here p. 175.) For the image of the comet, see *Hua X*, p. 30 [391]: “[Die] Jetzt-Auffassung ist gleichsam der Kern zu einem Kometenschweif von Retentionen, auf die früheren Jetztpunkte bezogen.” And a few pages later: “Wir bezeichnen die primäre Erinnerung oder Retention als einen Kometenschweif, der sich an die jeweilige Wahrnehmung anschließt.” (P. 35 [395].)

⁴⁷⁵ Reuß, *Im Zeithof*, pp. 113, 116n12, 119n43. Cf. DWB, entry “Schopf, m.”: “1) ursprünglich bezeichnet schopf vermutlich, wie das reimwort zopf, eine bestimmte haartracht, wobei die haare in ein büschel zusammengefasst sind: cirrus [...] 2) das haupthaar überhaupt: cesaries [...] 6) weitere übertragungen. / a) federbüschel auf dem kopfe mancher vögel [...] e) vom schweife eines cometen: sieht man ze stunden ainen neuen stern, der ainen schopf hât oder ainen sterz. MEGENBERG 74, 21; der stern bedäut hungerjâr in dem land, dâ er den schopf hin kêrt. 75, 22.” (Bd. 15 Sp. 1530).

other mixtures, as the Grimm dictionary explains, and therefore generally to all the “grey zones” between determinate hues of colours); thus we might see in *Graugrätiges* the thin beams of (reflected) light gradually disappearing into the darkness,⁴⁷⁶ fringes of the time-fringe sinking into the darkness of the deep pool. Perhaps this is a description of how the web-footed creature became a word-digitated creature: how the imaginal glimmering of the moment became flickering sound and then receded into the darkness, in a motion that is both direct (the web-footed creature swims upon a pool) and retrograde (the word that means meaning, *Bedeutung*, is apposited equivocally and undecidably to both *Leuchschopf* and *Graugrätiges hinter / dem Leuchtschopf*), forward and backward towards the break between the strophes, “*ein Tümpel, // Graugrätiges*”.⁴⁷⁷ In the apparent metaphor which turns out to be ‘mixed’ (the zoological and the astronomical brought together, which is of course far from being extraordinary), we see the phenomenal image mixed with non-phenomenal darkness against the surface of the pool whose depth remains unfathomable.

There is a *syndactyl* — a web-footed animal — rapidly diving for fish by still ponds and pools and sluggish streams, the kingfisher, also called halcyon, after Alcyone whose metamorphosis the kingfisher is. This bird is associated with many legends and not only Ovid’s tale of Alcyone and Ceyx. More prosaically, the kingfisher is known to regurgitate pellets of indigestible fishbones. Taking this into account, we may have already dealt with two creatures in the poem “Schwimmhäute”: not only the beast of prey, the kingfisher perhaps, but also the prey of this beast, the spiny, spikey catch, the spinous rest. The meaning — *Bedeutung* either apposited to *Leuchtschopf* or to what we are supposed to find *under* this shining surface — or the image is divided into an image and *another*, second image.

The kingfisher, the charmer of winds and waves during the winter’s *halcyon days*, appears elsewhere explicitly in Celan’s poetry, twice to my knowledge with its German name *Eisvogel*. I will only cite the opening poem of the cycle *Stimmen*, from *Sprachgitter* (1959) (*GW* 1:147):

Stimmen, ins Grün
der Wasserfläche geritzt.
Wenn der Eisvogel taucht,
sirrt die Sekunde:

⁴⁷⁶ “GRAU, adj. *h e r k u n f t u n d f o r m . / ahd. grāo (pl. grāwe), as. grā, grê, afries. grē, ae. græg (engl. gray), anord. grār, mhd. grā (pl. grāwe), mnl. gra, grau, nl. grau. -- mit anderen farbbezeichnungen wie blau, gelb als wa-stamm, germ. *grēwa-, wobei in ae. græg lt. SIEVERS in PBB 9, 204 und JELLINEK ebda 14, 584 auch mit einem wja-stamm gerechnet werden musz. auszergerm. stellt sich lat. rāvus am nächsten, dessen ā freilich noch der erklärung bedarf. zur gleichen idg. wz. *gher-, *ghrē- 'strahlen, glänzen' gehören lit. žerīù, žerėti 'im glanze strahlen', aksl. zarja, zorja 'glanz, strahl', pl. 'morgenröte' u. a. [...] A. als farbbezeichnung im eigentlichen sinne. grau bezeichnet verschiedengradige mischungen von schwarz und weisz, aber auch stark verblichene andere farbtöne [...]” (*DWB*, Bd. 8, Sp. 2072-2073.) Cf. Reuß, pp. 110, 119n34, n35.*

⁴⁷⁷ “Retrograde” is both the movement characterizing certain comets (“1853 HERSCHEL *Pop. Lect. Sci.* iii. §13 (1873) 106 Retrograde comets, or those whose motion is opposite to that of the planets, are as common as direct ones. “) and denied to the natural movement of fish (“1880 GÜNTHER *Fishes* 44 Retrograde motions can be made by fish in an imperfect manner only.”) (OED, entry “retrograde, *a.* and *n.*”, 50205030.)

Was zu dir stand
 an jedem der Ufer,
 es tritt
 gemäht in ein anderes Bild.

There is a brilliant reading of this poem in Werner Hamacher's duly famous essay, which appeared for the first time as an English version (translated by William D. Jewett), entitled "The Second of Inversion: Movements of a Figure through Celan's Poetry" (1985). The figure of inversion is not just rhetorical, it is one of the "master tropes" of philosophy, if not *the* master trope; Hamacher takes the "idea of a transcendental semantics", the "*ordo inversus* engineered by Kant's critique — [...] the figure of totalized subjectivity", and especially Hegel's talk of man "center[ing] himself on his head (*sich auf den Kopf ... stellen*), i.e. in thought, and to construct reality according to it", and juxtaposes the philosophical inverted world "stood on its head" with Celan's reference, in the *Meridian*, to Büchner's Lenz who "walked through the mountains on the 20th of January [...] but now and then [...] experienced a sense of uneasiness because he was not able to walk on his head."⁴⁷⁸ In its own way, the figure of inversion appears not only in the second poem of the *Stimmen* cycle ("*Komm auf den Händen zu uns*") but also in the first, which we just cited; I cite the third, revised English version of Hamacher's essay, translated by Peter Fenves (1996):

This transformation — a metamorphosis like the one Alcyone undergoes when she is turned into a "kingfisher" during her dive after her drowned husband [Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, XI, ll. 720-748] is occasioned by a cut [*Schnitt*]: what is trusted and familiar is "mowed" into another image — mowed, that is, by the cut of the *Sekunde* understood now in its etymological sense, as the *secare* of time. Time transforms the voices into the writing of the water-mirror [*Wasserspiegelschrift*] and turns the trusted image of the objective world into the averted, inverted, and afflicted [*abgewandten, verkehrten und verletzten*] images of the literary text, which no longer offers them a ground beyond that of an *unda* in which they sink. But the same displacement underlies the language in which the poem articulates this transformation of a stable image into one that is overturned. Not only is the metaphor of reaping drawn from a metaphor lying dormant in a foreign word [*aus der latent gewordenen Metapher im Wort*

⁴⁷⁸ Cf. Hamacher, "The Second of Inversion", trans. Jewett (1985; cf. below), pp. 276ff. The translation from the *Meridian* containing the excerpt from Büchner's "Lenz" is by Jerry Glenn ("Appendix" to Derrida's *Sovereignities in Question*), p. 179. Cf. *Der Meridian*: "Meine Damen und Herren, ich habe vor einigen Jahren einen kleinen Vierzeiler geschrieben – diesen: »Stimmen vom Nesselweg her: / *Komm auf den Händen zu uns*. / Wer mit der Lampe allein ist, / hat nur die Hand, draus zu lesen.« / Und vor einem Jahr, in Erinnerung an eine versäumte Begegnung im Engadin, brachte ich eine kleine Geschichte zu Papier, in der ich einen Menschen »wie Lenz« durchs Gebirg gehen ließ. / Ich hatte mich, das eine wie das andere Mal, von einem »20. Jänner«, von meinem »20. Jänner«, hergeschrieben. / Ich bin ... mir selbst begegnet." (*TCA/Meridian*, Endf. 45b-f.) — *Inversion* has of course its properly rhetorical meaning too — actually at least four distinct rhetorical, grammatical, logical and topological significations among the rich polysemy of this word, briefly delineated here after the *OED*: "[2.]b. *Rhet.* The turning of an opponent's argument against himself; = ANTISTROPHE 3b. *Obs.* [...] c. *Gram.* Reversal of the order of words; = ANASTROPHE [...] e. *Logic.* A form of immediate inference in which a new proposition is formed whose subject is the negative of that of the original proposition. [...] 6. = METAPHOR *Obs.*" (*OED*, entry "inversion", accessed March 24th, 2006.) All these come to English from Latin, through the ancient works on grammar, logic and rhetoric, of course.

einer fremden Sprache] (in the *secare* of *Sekunde*) — a procedure Celan abundantly employs — but this word, *die Sekunde*, is itself cut and read as *diese Kunde*, “this message,” “this conduit of communication.” The possibility of reading *die Sekunde* in this way is suggested by the phonetic combination of *s* and *i* in *sirrt*, which provokes a corresponding contamination of the *ie* and *Se* that follows, and is also suggested by the very colon after *Sekunde*, which allows the second quatrain to appear as the content of a message, indeed as a conduit. *Die Sekunde* — *diese Kunde*; the second — this conduit: it is time, the cutter, that conducts its message in the inversion of the world of images, but this message accomplishes the inversion only by subjecting the second itself — the temporal atom — to its own principle of fission, by splitting the unity of the message, cutting off the conduit. The very principle of separation by which “another image” is generated brings together whatever stands on separate banks — “on each of the banks” — and so *dieSeKunde* is not simply a metamorphosis but also a metaphor, the very moment of metaphorization: conducting across and carrying over [*Übertritt und Übertragung*]. All images and all turns of speech in Celan’s text follow the alteration dictated by its eccentric center — *dieSeKunde*, the second, this conduit: they are not metaphors for representations but metaphors for metaphorization, not images of a world but images of the generation of images [*Bilderzeugung*], not the transcription of voices but the production of the etched voices of the poem itself [*nicht die Niederschrift von Stimmen, sondern die Produktion der geritzten Stimmen des Gedichts selbst*]. They inscribe themselves as the script of alteration when they let themselves be exposed to this very alteration: they write, they are *dieSeKunde*, this second, this conduit; the incisive word-exchange in which the phenomenal and linguistic world is opened onto a caesura that not a single shape of this world can exorcize, since each of these shapes results from it. The second — this conduit — of Celan’s poem is the self-interrupting, self-dismembering, distributing and redistributing, communicating and imparting speaking of language. [...] Whatever steps into it, into this interval, this speaking, becomes other than it is. / This conduit — *ordino inverso* — is not one [*ist keine*]; it has no message to impart. It asserts nothing more than this: that it has nothing to assert but its own secession from itself and is, as self-revocation, the movement of turning about. In so turning, it does not turn toward an empirical or transcendent other [*transzendenten Anderen*] but rather steps, itself “mowed,” into another image, one that no longer stands in for a You and no longer belongs to anyone. Nothing could be more foreign, for it is the etched image of a fundamental alteration, the alteration of every basis into an abyss [*das geritzte Bild einer fundamentalen Alteration, der Alteration des Grundes zum Abgrund*].⁴⁷⁹

So there is no simple metaphor on the lines of the poem, but it rather consists of a meta-metaphor. Not metaphors for thoughts or representations (*Vorstellungen*), or for the sake of representing something else, but rather metaphors for metaphorizing; not images of a world, but images of the production of images, and so on. In the first *Yale French Studies* version of

⁴⁷⁹ Werner Hamacher, “The Second of Inversion: Movements of a Figure through Celan’s Poetry”, trans. Peter Fenves, in Hamacher, *Premises: Essays on Philosophy and Literature from Kant to Celan*, trans. Peter Fenves (Cambridge, MA: Harvard U.P., 1996), pp. 358-361; I have corrected the erroneous term “transcendental” into “transcendent” here. Fenves’s translation is a revised version of his earlier translation of a new version of the essay, in Aris Fioretos, ed., *Word Traces* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U.P., 1994). The first German version was written in 1984 and appeared four years later as “Die Sekunde der Inversion: Bewegungen einer Figur durch Celans Gedichte”, in Hamacher and Winfried Menninghaus, eds., *Paul Celan* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1988), here pp. 98-99. The first English translation, published before the German version, had the same title as Fenves’s rendering and was translated by William D. Jewett, in *Yale French Studies* 69 (1985), The Lesson of Paul de Man, pp. 276-311. I use alternately both of these translations. — Unfortunately, I have had no access to the new German version, in *Entferntes Verstehen* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1988).

the essay (1985), the translator William D. Jewett clarifies the use of the term ‘metaphor’ here with regard to its “strict sense”, namely its etymological origin (or latently metaphorical origin, as it seems): “*DieSeKunde* is not just a metamorphosis but also metaphor in its strict sense; it is the motion of metaphorizing itself: stepping across and carrying over.” (Trans. Jewett, p. 291.) But with respect to the production of images, the term “metaphorizing” may speak *too* strictly here. It may be too specific with respect to the more extensive term, *Bilderzeugung*. As the translation says: “This impartment, *ordine inverso* — has nothing to impart [*Diese Kunde* – *ordine inverso* – *ist keine*].”⁴⁸⁰ This impartment has nothing to impart, no image, except the stepping-mowed-into-another-image of the unspecified “What stood to you”. In order to make a metaphor out of this, something seems to be missing: the message (“*diese Kunde*”) is nothing, no message, in this respect, no content is carried over except the stepping-into-another-image itself. It is precisely the content of this “What” that is “mowed”.

Hamacher takes up a poem by Rilke that has tremendous force also for understanding Celan’s poetics, perhaps Rilke’s most famous poem:

ARCHAISCHER TORSO APOLLOS

Wir kannten nicht sein unerhörtes Haupt,
 darin die Augenäpfel reiften. Aber
 sein Torso glüht noch wie ein Kandelaber,
 in dem sein Schauen, nur zurückgeschraubt,

sich hält und glänzt. Sonst könnte nicht der Bug
 der Brust dich blenden, und im leisen Drehen
 der Lenden könnte nicht ein Lächeln gehen
 zu jener Mitte, die die Zeugung trug.

Sonst stünde dieser Stein entstellt und kurz
 unter der Schultern durchsichtigem Sturz
 und flimmerte nicht so wie Raubtierfelle;

und bräche nicht aus allen seinen Rändern
 aus wie ein Stern: denn da ist keine Stelle,
 die dich nicht sieht. Du mußt dein Leben ändern.⁴⁸¹

Hamacher notes that, according to the observation offered by this poem, “what still survives of Greek plastic art changes into precisely what time has taken away from it: into eyesight

⁴⁸⁰ “The Second of Inversion”, trans. Jewett, p. 292; “Die Sekunde der Inversion” (1988), p. 99.

⁴⁸¹ “Archaischer Torso Apollos”, in *Der Neuen Gedichte anderer Teil* (1908), in *Die Gedichte* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1998), p. 503. This is one of the many extant English translations, by H. Landman, “Archaic Torso of Apollo”: “We never knew his fantastic head, / where eyes like apples ripened. Yet / his torso, like a lamp, still glows / with his gaze which, although turned down low, // lingers and shines. Else the prov of his breast / couldn’t dazzle you, nor in the slight twist / of his loins could a smile run free / through that center which held fertility. // Else this stone would stand defaced and squat / under the shoulders’ diaphanous dive / and not glisten like a predator’s coat; // and not from every edge explode / like starlight: for there’s not one spot / that doesn’t see you. You must change your life.”

(*Augenlicht*).⁴⁸² It is the fragmentation that gives shape to the imperative: “You must change your life.” And we find something similar in Celan’s poetic fragments: “*Du mußt hier hindurch, Leben*” (*TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 352).

Image, *Bild*, is not always metaphor, and the production of images — *Bilderzeugung* as Hamacher puts it, and also *Einbildung* or imagination in an etymological sense — is not always metaphorization, a production of metaphors. Yet, the second of transition, *dieSeKunde* as Hamacher names it, between time and language could indeed be a moment of transition *into* language, the translation of images, external or interiorized, into names; the process described by Hegel in his “philosophy of spirit”, namely the third part of the *Enzyklopädie* (1830). The inversion of which Hamacher speaks in this remarkable essay is indeed *also* the Hegelian world of philosophy as a world turned upon its head, an inverted world. This is a peculiar inversion, since its outcome is not *second* with regard to the world itself, it is not an outcome at all in the first place. It is an “originary secondariness”, as Hamacher puts it.⁴⁸³ He discusses the Hegelian movement of negativity and the Kantian formal condition *a priori* of all phenomena: by one word, time. The understanding of time as negativity is the precondition for the oxymora, paradoxes and inversions we meet in Celan’s poetry. “Time,” says Hamacher, “as the formal unity of contradictory predicates, supplies the transcendental-esthetic ground for the figure of inversion.” In using the term “esthetic” here, Hamacher refers indeed to Kant’s transcendental aesthetics and not just to an artistic principle of creation. Here are only a couple of Hamacher’s examples, perhaps the most telling ones: “*rostgeborenen Messern*” (“rust-born knives”), and “*gesteinigte Stein*” (“lapidated stone”).⁴⁸⁴ Time is the formal unity of contradictory predicates, as Hamacher points out, and thus indeed, in the unique and punctual present of the poem, of which Celan speaks in the *Meridian*, one can always “stand on the carpet of withered hours [*Ich steh im Flor der abgeblühten Stunde*]”.⁴⁸⁵ The rhetoric of inversion is the rhetoric of temporality, says Hamacher.⁴⁸⁶ The co-presence of the contradictory predicates in the poem seems therefore often not so much due to metaphor (a notion which seems to bear reference to temporal differences, if at all,

⁴⁸² “The Second of Inversion”, trans. Jewett, p. 280; cf. Fenves’s trans., p. 342: “the remains of Greek plastic art [etc.]”.

⁴⁸³ “»Die Sekunde« diktiert das Gesetz der »ursprünglichen« Sekundarität, sie ist der Schnitt, der jedem Primus vorangeht, der Reiß, der sich in jedem Prinzip – und zwar auch in dem der universellen Sprachlichkeit – auftut, sie zerteilt jede Einheit und allen voran die mit sich selbst. DieSeKunde ist Sekunde zuerst im Verhältnis zu sich: »Sekunde« – sie »sirt« – im musikterminologischen Sinn des Intervalls, Intervall zwischen verschiedenen Bedeutungen, Intervall zwischen verschiedenen Sprachen, Intervall in der Sprache selbst, das ihrem Sprechen erst Raum und Zeit gibt. Was es betrifft, dies Intervall, dies Sprechen, wird anders.” (“Die Sekunde...”, p. 99.)

⁴⁸⁴ “All diese Oxymora, Paradoxien und Inversionen haben – und auch darin nehmen sie radikalisiert die Probleme der Subjektivitätsphilosophie und der großen Literatur seit der Romantik auf – die Bewegung der Zeit zum Sujet. In der Zeit als der formalen Einheit kontradiktorischer Prädikate ist der transzendental-ästhetische Grund der Inversionsfigur gegeben.” (“Die Sekunde” [1988], p. 91. Cf. En. trans. Jewett, p. 285; Fenves, p. 349.)

⁴⁸⁵ “Ich bin allein”, in *Mohn und Gedächtnis*, *GW* 1:55. This, too, is one of Hamacher’s examples.

⁴⁸⁶ “Die Rhetorik der Inversion ist die Rhetorik der Zeitlichkeit.” (“Die Sekunde” [1988], p. 91.)

then as their sublation into some sort of timeless or supratemporal unity — this is of course a caricature, a hypothesis based for instance on the mentioned readings of Proust, by de Man, primarily) than to the distance between times that can be traversed in language; traversed and not transcended, as we may say, following Celan's own words.⁴⁸⁷

One of the most striking examples of inversion in Hamacher's sense is this poem from 1950:

DER Tauben weißeste flog auf: ich darf dich lieben!
Im leisen Fenster schwankt die leise Tür.
Der stille Baum trat in die stille Stube.
Du bist so nah, als weiltest du nicht hier.

Aus meiner Hand nimmst du die große Blume:
sie ist nicht weiß, nicht rot, nicht blau – doch nimmst du sie.
Wo sie nie war, da wird sie immer bleiben.
Wir waren nie, so bleiben wir bei ihr.⁴⁸⁸

Hamacher writes on this, among other things, the following:

In the language of this flower, which is certainly not metaphorical in any traditional sense, but surely rather meta-metaphorical, which lays bare in its extremity the imagistic language's mechanism of translation [*die den Übertragungsmechanismus bildlichen Sprechens an seinem Extrem bloßlegt*] — trope, turning and reversal par excellence — in the language of this flower, what is divided has been reassembled and what never was has been reversed into subsisting being [*in der Sprache dieser Blume ist das Getrennte zusammengetreten und das Niegewesene hat sich durch sie in bleibendes Dasein umgekehrt*], because this language itself is brought from a nothingness to the status of something that remains [*weil diese Sprache selbst aus einem Nichts zu einem Bleibenden wurde*].⁴⁸⁹

The image of the flower in the second strophe could be related, inasmuch as its attributes are “negative throughout” (albeit the attribute “large” is an exception), to a process which would hardly be called metaphor or metaphorization by the tradition which has first defined and then declined metaphor, from Aristotle to Hegel and Kant. The process of ideation or, on the other hand, the originary schematization, corresponds to reducing the multiplicity of images or sensible qualities (here colours) into a *name* — here the name of the flower, to which the three colours of France are denied, as it seems, but which is also juxtaposed with the “whitest

⁴⁸⁷ “Denn das Gedicht ist nicht zeitlos. Gewiß, es erhebt einen Unendlichkeitsanspruch, es sucht, durch die Zeit hindurchzugreifen – durch sie hindurch, nicht über sie hinweg.” (GW 3:186.) Trans. Felstiner: “For a poem is not timeless. Certainly it lays claims to infinity, it seeks to reach through time — through it, not above and beyond it.” Cf. e.g. the documents 140-143 in *Paul Celan – Die Goll-Affäre* (2000), pp. 476-477 = *TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 301, 305, 325, 328. *Et passim*.

⁴⁸⁸ *Mohn und Gedächtnis*, GW 1:61. Trans. Fenves, in Hamacher, “The Second of Inversion” (1996), p. 346: “The whitest dove flies off: I can love you! / In the soft window swings the soft door. / The still tree stepped into the still room. / You are so near as though you did not linger here. // From my hand you take the great flower: / it is not white, not red, not blue — yet you take it. / Where it never was, it will always remain. / We never were, so we remain with it.”

⁴⁸⁹ “The Second of Inversion”, trans. Jewett, p. 283; “Die Sekunde ...”, p. 90; cf. Fenves, p. 347.

of doves” ascending (which is not only a “late romantic metaphor of elevation”, but implies also the opposite of “we” who “remain”) — and to this outcome, idea or schema, or the *name* of “the large flower”, no particular image, no particular instantiation corresponds.⁴⁹⁰ While the second and third verse of the first stanza seem to speak of what is seen through the window (*leise Fenster*: soft, gentle, quiet window?) and reflected in it (*die leise Tür*), in the window that is (“*Im leisen Fenster schwankt die leise Tür*”), the irreality of the reflection seems to extend itself also to the more ‘abstract’ lines: “You are as close as if you were not lingering here. [...] Where it was not, there will it ever remain. / We never were, so we remain with it.” The poem speaks its own giving: the reaching of the present, “the large flower [...] not white, nor red, not blue”, is the gift of that which “was not” — was not, until this speech act of sorts — and “will [...] remain”, and it is the gift of inexistence (which means not only “non-existence” but also: “The fact or condition of existing in something” [*OED*]): “We never were, so we remain with it.” In a later poem from *Die Niemandsrose*, “Flimmerbaum”, which also contains the word *Tümpel*,⁴⁹¹ Celan writes:

⁴⁹⁰ Imagination, or *force* of imagination (*Einbildungskraft*) is, for Kant, the faculty which “has to bring the manifold into the form of an image [*Bild*]”; thus it is “a necessary ingredient of perception [*Wahrnehmung*] itself”, and “a fundamental faculty [*Grundvermögen*] of the human soul” (Kant, *KrV* A 120, A 124; the translation is cited by John Sallis, *Force of Imagination: The Sense of the Elemental* [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000], p. 67). It is “a blind but indispensable function of the soul, without which we would have no knowledge whatsoever, but of which we are scarcely ever conscious” (*KrV* A 78 / B 103; cit. Sallis, p. 66). This metaphor of blindness, if we can call it that, is reduced *ad absurdum* by John Sallis, in the following sentence from his remarkable book *Force of Imagination* (pp. 143-144): “As configuring the self-showing of things, imagination is, as Kant says, blind; or rather, it is neither sighted nor blind, for only what can be sighted, what is capable of sight, can be blind.” The configuring itself can never present itself to vision, internal or external. The force of imagination is also “the faculty of representing in intuition an object *that is not itself present*” (*KrV* B 151; cit. Sallis, p. 73), and to the extent that it produces *transcendental schemata* it is indeed also the faculty which offers the necessary *resistance* to the multiplicity of images and figures — but as their very condition of possibility (cf. *KrV* A 141-142 / B 180-181). — As Sallis writes, “a certain move beyond the [visible, sensible] image, an exceeding of what is present to sense, comes into play from the moment one speaks, indeed from the moment one assumes the very opening to speech” (p. 102); it is indeed the schemas, figures without figure, imageless images, which correspond to general names. — On the other hand, Sallis also points to the fact that “each image remains not only of the thing but also one’s own, so that what it presents of the thing is always correlative to one’s perspective of the thing” (p. 109). And this is, furthermore, correlative to the inaccessibility to the other’s images, as we might add, to the singular vision of the other. — So while the schemas that correspond to words or names (of general concepts) are untranslatable into images, the other’s vision, the other’s sight, or interior, mental images, cannot be conveyed as such by words, and the visible in general resists being grasped by language (p. 122): “If speech always exceeds what one sees, the visible resists being carried over into something said, persisting in an untranslatability that one would like to call — were it not itself untranslatable — the sense of the sensible.”

⁴⁹¹ Cf. later lines of the poem: “Der Flimmerbaum schwamm. // Schwamm er? Es war / ja ein Tümpel rings. Es war der unendliche Teich. / Schwarz und unendlich, so hing, / so hing er weltabwärts.”

Ein Wort,
an das ich dich gerne verlor:
das Wort
Nimmer.

How is the “gift of nothing transformed into substantial being”, then? Hamacher discovers in Celan’s early texts, such as the one from the cycle “Gegenlicht”, in *Mohn und Gedächtnis* (1952) we already cited (“Der Tauben weißeste”), and “Spät und Tief” which we also have already cited (“*Es komme, was niemals noch war!*” — but in the context, the irony of this line is unmistakable, I think), a danger: “that of rendering nothingness positive, of letting in absence merely as the negative of presence, of wanting to transform it to everlasting being by the power of language.” (Trans. Jewett, p. 283.) However, as Hamacher himself observes (p. 284), “Were this taking-up to fail to come about, were the gift not to arrive at its destination, there would be no language, no transformation, no remaining.” In the early poems, as Hamacher sees them, and he certainly has a point inasmuch as we consider the “large flower”, the perception (*Vernehmen*), the taking-up of this verbal flower, “establishes the unity of the giver and receiver”; but there is also a “hole in the tropological system of Celan’s poem [‘Der Tauben weißeste’]”, marked by the graphic pause, the dash before the word *doch* (“still”), signalling “the mute hesitation of receiving and perceiving”. This small hole — I would see the unfathomable pool of the later poems opening up here — marks a possibility of impossibility (“*Diese Möglichkeit der Unmöglichkeit ihrer eigenen Existenz*”), which is an easily recognizable Heideggerean figure, of course: “This possibility of its denial in the face of nonbeing [...] opens in Celan’s poem only in the dash before ‘*doch*,’ in the interruption of the language of tropes, [...]. It opens a spacing that cannot be reversed into nearness, a difference that cannot be turned into unity, a deaf place that cannot be reversed into the topos of a corresponding signification [*der nicht in den Topos eines sprechenden Bildes verwandelt werden kann*].”⁴⁹² The dash marks an *imminence*, an exposure of the words to themselves, their own dissociation from themselves. The word-things in the poem “stand [...] always in their last-thing-hood”, their last *Zeithof* — this is what Celan writes in one of the notes for the *Meridian*: “*im Gedicht stehen die Dinge – Zeithof! – immer in ihrer letzten Dinglichkeit*.”⁴⁹³ The things perceived in the poem are those that could always be the *last* things. The

⁴⁹² “The Second...”, trans. Jewett, p. 284; “Die Sekunde der Inversion” (1988), pp. 90-91; there is a significant difference between the wording of the German version and the earlier English translation here, as we can see; instead of, for instance, *den Topos eines entsprechenden Bedeutung*, which would correspond to “the topos of a corresponding signification”, the German text reads “den Topos eines sprechenden Bildes”.

⁴⁹³ *TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 518. Cf. Ms. 517: “Die dingfestgemachten Worte, die Wortdinge im Gedicht – in einen einmaligen Prozeß gestellt, sie halten auf ihr Ende zu, eilen ihm entgegen: sie stehen im Licht einer »Letzt Dinglichkeit« – ich sage Licht, ich sage nicht, Dunkel, aber bedenken Sie: der Schatten, den das wirft!” The light surrounding these last things, their last-thingliness revealing them as the last things – while the light that surrounds and gives the thing its contours, the counter-light (*Gegenlicht*) shining from behind the thing, can always also grant the thing its own obscurity and opacity, and is indeed a time-halo. (Cf. also *TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 519, 524, *passim*.) Cf. *Mikrolithen*, p. 110, No. 186: “Jenes die Zeit-zu-Ende-Denken, das seinen dingfest gemachten Worten den Charakter der letzten Dinge gibt” (undated, probably 1959/60; cf. the commentary related to this, pp. 545-546). Cf. also “Entwürfe (Nr. 17)”, to section 36: “jede fremde

unique *Zeithof* could always be the last, at the limits of consciousness and experience and beyond, or one that survives itself, as in the poem “Mapesbury Road” which is related to the assault on Rudi Dutschke on April 11th, 1968, only a week after Martin Luther King had been murdered:

Der volle
Zeithof um
einen Steckschuß, daneben, hirinig.
Die scharfgehimmelten höfigen
Schlucke Mitluft.⁴⁹⁴

As we already observed, *Zeithöfe* are, in the *Meridian* fragments, also *Atemhöfe*. And poems are *Atemwende*, not just turns of speech but turns of breath. They speak, they breath *in extremis*; and what is left behind, as a contour (*Gestalt* — *Umriß*), is a *singable residue* (*GW* 2:36):

SINGBARER REST – der Umriß
dessen, der durch
die Sichelschrift lautlos hindurchbrach,

Is it *writing*, then (“sickle-script”) that mows “What stood to you / on each of the banks [...] into another image”? But what is writing, anyway? One thing that it is, is time: a relation of an absent one to someone who is even more absent; Freud has defined writing as “speech of

Zeit ist eine andere als die unsere; wir sind weit draußen, aber allenfalls doch nur am Rand unserer eigenen Zeit; mit uns sind auch die wahrgenommenen Dinge dort: sie stehen da, wo wir zuletzt stehen: die Dinge im Gedicht haben etwas von solchen »letzten« Dingen[sie] könnten, man weiß es nie, die »letzten« Dinge sein.” (*TCA/Meridian*, p. 36.) — The allusion to Rilke, sometimes associated with the title of the cycle *Zeitgehöft*, seems also pertinent with regard to the fact that for Celan, the ‘semantic field’ of *Zeithof* (if we may say so: ‘semantic field’ is probably not the term Celan himself would have used, and it is used here as a more or less uncomfortable approximation) includes the last abode of the things, the last things as the verbal things, rather than being just the place of the continuity of temporal objects in perception. Rilke’s poem “Ausgesetzt auf den Bergen des Herzens”, written on Sept. 20th, 1914 (*Die Gedichte* [1998], p. 880), reads as follows:

Ausgesetzt auf den Bergen des Herzens. Siehe, wie klein dort,
siehe: die letzte Ortschaft der Worte, und höher,
aber wie klein auch, noch ein letztes
Gehöft von Gefühl. Erkennst du’s? —
Ausgesetzt auf den Bergen des Herzens. Steingrund
unter den Händen. [...]

⁴⁹⁴ In *Schneepart* (1971), *GW* 2:365. Trans. M. Hamburger: “The full / time-yard around / a lodged bullet, next to it, cerebrous.” (Paul Celan, *Poems. A Bilingual Edition*. Selected, trans. and introduced by Michael Hamburger [New York: Persea Books, cop. 1980], p. 285.) Cf. Sandro Zanetti, »zeitoffen« (2006), p. 146n94: “In allen drei Gedichten weitet Celan den Begriff des »Zeithofs« allerdings aus, um mit ihm auch solche Ereignisse zu fassen oder anzusprechen, die in Husserls Fixierung auf »Bewußtsein« nicht zur Sprache kommen können. So bezieht sich etwa »Mapesbury Road« auf das Attentat auf Rudi Dutschke und radikalisiert den »Zeithof« zum Moment der Zerstörung (nicht nur) von Bewußtsein (»Der volle / Zeithof um / einen Steckschuß, daneben, hirinig«). »Schwimmhäute« wiederum verwandelt den »Zeithof« in einen »Tümpel«, der im Gedicht gerade jenen Bereich markiert, der »hinter / dem Leuchtschopf / Bedeutung« liegt [...].”

the absent”, a definition quoted and developed by Celan in one of his *Meridian* fragments. A silent figure, contour, a “form to be filled”?⁴⁹⁵

My words *surprise* myself, in the archaic sense of this verb: “*mes paroles me surprennent moi-même et m’enseignent mes pensées*”, writes Maurice Merleau-Ponty. His essay “Sur la phénoménologie du langage” (1952)⁴⁹⁶ comes strikingly close to Celan’s drafts for a phenomenology of poetry as a phenomenology of perception and language, verbal perception — “*sprachliche Wahrnehmung*”. Let us return for a moment to the poem “Schwimmhäute” and its interdigital webs as interverbal webs, its words concerning words and meaning (*Bedeutung*). We noticed that the last two words have a certain *hymen* between them, a membrane that both connects and separates them: “*Leuchtschopf / Bedeutung*.” It is clear that the question concerning the retrograde reference of the word *Bedeutung* — namely whether it is apposited to the immediately preceding single compound word *Leuchtschopf* or rather the word *Graugrätiges* and the whole clause beginning with this word and ending with *Leuchtschopf* — could be decided by different means of articulation and rhythm that would stress and distribute the sentence and its components differently. The duration of the pause between the two last words, two last lines, comparable to the rapidity of the diastolic and systolic movement of the interdigital membrane of the swimming creature, could already make the decision. Now Merleau-Ponty, in speaking of the “distance action” of language, makes a striking comparison between bodily conscience and the linguistic gesture, one whose texture is more complex than that of a simple comparison:

À condition que je ne réfléchisse pas expressément sur lui, la conscience que j’ai de mon corps est immédiatement significative d’un certain paysage autour de moi, *celle que j’ai de mon doigts d’un certain style fibreux ou grenu de l’objet. C’est de la même manière que la parole, celle que je profère ou celle que j’entends, est prégnante d’une signification qui est lisible dans la texture même du geste linguistique, au point qu’une hésitation, une alteration de la voix, le choix d’une certaine syntaxe suffit à la modifier*, et cependant jamais contenue en lui, toute expression m’apparaissant toujours comme une trace, nulle idée ne m’étant donnée qu’en transparence, *et tout effort pour fermer notre main sur la pensée qui habite la parole ne laissant entre nos doigts qu’un peu de matériel verbal*. [*Signes*, p. 144; emphases added.]

“What we have between our fingers”, in reading the residue that is neither simply material nor simply immaterial, is not only the “trace”, but the trace that *carries over*: carries over not a message or content or a bundle of information, but the verbal materiality, *fibreux ou grenu*, the grainy (“*le grain de la voix*”, as Roland Barthes so appropriately says) and fibrous quali-

⁴⁹⁵ TCA/*Meridian*, Ms. 458 (*loc. cit.*). Cf. Freud, “Das Unbehagen in der Kultur”, in *Gesammelte Werke*, Bd. XIV: *Werke aus den Jahren 1925-1931* (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1999), p. 450: “die Schrift ist ursprünglich die Sprache des Abwesenden”. On the “form to be filled”, cf. TCA/*Meridian*, Ms. 777=504 [”ab 19.8.60”] and below.

⁴⁹⁶ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, “Sur la phénoménologie du langage”, in *Signes* (Paris: Gallimard, cop. 1960, repr. 2001), pp. 136-158, here p. 144. (1st ed. in *Problemes actuels de la phénoménologie*, ed. Herman L. Van Breda [Actes du Colloque International de Phénoménologie. Bruxelles Avril 1951] [Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1952], pp. 89-109.)

ties that belong, and by no means only metaphorically belong,⁴⁹⁷ to the phenomenality of the poem, to the *Zeithof* and *Atemhöfe* inhabited by the words. The materiality which is, *at the same time*, immaterial, a “spiritual phenomenon”: the invisible *in* the visible, the darkness that lets the light appear,⁴⁹⁸ the non-phenomenality *behind* the phenomenal — behind, but in no way fathomable, since it is the other’s time whose trace the poem is, the other’s time that *speaks with* (*mitsprechen*) the poem, the other’s time that the poem *lets participate* in the conversation, in the “verbal perception”.

Whether ‘meaning’ resides in the glowing head or the fading tail of the poematic, comet-like or meteoric phenomenon (one that the poem “Schwimmhäute” not only describes, but, of course, *is*), is perhaps not actually a good question, since the poem describes precisely the movement of meaning *from* the head *toward* the tail and its recession *behind* it into the dark depth that we perceive as the pool, the backdrop for the thread-like, fibrous spines that the tail of the comet consists of (while *Leuchtschopf* seems ambiguously both the “comet’s tail” and still rather the “crest”, the “tuft” of the head — not only the visible form but the etymology of the word ‘comet’, coming from *κομήτης*, “wearing long hair” [*OED*], provides for the association with the ‘tuft’ [*Schopf*]⁴⁹⁹ — of which the actual tail consists of the “grey” mixture of light and darkness behind the “luminous tuft”); here “meaning [*Bedeutung*]” is both the phenomenal apparition and its recession into the non-phenomenal, unfathomable background.

As has already been observed, Celan’s reference to the Husserlian phenomenology of internal time consciousness is not unproblematic. While Husserl restricts his discussion, in the 1905 lectures, to the relatively simple situations of perceiving temporal objects, such as a melody, Celan’s *sprachliche Wahrnehmung* seems to reach far beyond the ideal borders of

⁴⁹⁷ The grain of the voice is no metaphor, or at least no ‘live’ metaphor. The most economical way to prove this is to look at the *OED* and the entry “grainy”: “Of a voice or sound: rough, gritty.” (*OED*, 50097586.) And no human voice is produced without the *fibres* of the body; therefore to call a voice fibrous is metonymic or quasi-metonymic and not metaphorical. And furthermore, the human body and its organs for producing a voice certainly have “grainy” aspects too. But what is perhaps even more important is that the “spatiality of my body” (cf. Merleau-Ponty, *loc. cit.*) and the spatiality of my language are inextricably linked with, contiguous with, the world. The touch of my hand upon the grains of wood and the act of naming that corresponds to ‘it’ is not primarily restricted to the piece of wood as something “present-at-hand” but rather refers to my experience of the grains, and the ‘transferral’ of this experience to other sorts of grains — such as the grain of the voice — is not intrinsically a transferral onto another realm of objects (or from the object onto the subject) but an iterated application of the basic experience that never belonged to the wood alone, as its “property” in the strict Aristotelian sense (i.e. property as *idion*).

⁴⁹⁸ Hamacher cites several of Celan’s early *Gegenlicht* aphorisms (1949), and among them this one: “Täusche dich nicht: nicht diese letzte Lampe spendet mehr Licht – das Dunkel rings hat sich in sich selber vertieft.” (*GW* 3:165.) Both Jewett and Fenves translate this erroneously, I’m afraid; this is Fenves’s rendering (p. 345): “Don’t confuse yourself: this lamp no longer gives off light — the enveloping darkness has absorbed itself into itself.” Jewett’s translation (p. 282): “Don’t fool yourself: not even this last lamp gives off light anymore — the darkness round about has been absorbed into itself.” I think the aphorism should rather be translated as follows: “Don’t fool yourself: this lamp does not give more light — it is the surrounding darkness which has deepened itself.” It would be different if the syntax was the following: “nicht mehr spendet diese Lampe Licht”. But here, in “nicht diese letzte Lampe spendet mehr Licht”, “mehr” must be understood as a comparative, as in Goethe’s reported last words: “Mehr Licht!”

⁴⁹⁹ Cf. also Sandro Zanetti, »zeitoffen«, p. 143.

such *Zeithöfe*. These borders of ideality and objectivation must be overcome if the poetic ‘perception’ consists of letting the time of the other speak, letting the time of the other participate in the very punctuality of the poem’s “here and now”, as Celan says.⁵⁰⁰ But Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s observations on the phenomenology of language, in the concise article we have already cited, come astonishingly close to Celan’s drafts for a phenomenology of poetry, and the necessary move from the sphere of internal time consciousness toward the perception of the other as an *alter ego* — later so many times insisted upon by Derrida, also with reference to Celan’s poetry and poetics⁵⁰¹ — is displayed clearly in “Sur la phénoménologie de langage”. As far as I know, it is not known whether Celan knew the text or not and if he did, when he might have read it, although he did possess a copy of the 1967 edition of *Signes* in his library, containing this conference paper of 1951 which was first published in 1952; the personal volume bears no reading traces.⁵⁰² Let us cite a couple of more passages from Merleau-Ponty’s text:

On dit qu’une pensée est exprimée lorsque les paroles convergentes qui la visent sont assez nombreuses et assez éloquentes pour la désigner sans équivoque à moi, auteur, ou aux autres, et pour que nous ayons tous l’expérience de sa présence charnelle dans la parole. Bien que seuls les *Abschattungen* de la signification soient thématiquement données, le fait est que, passé un certain point de discours, les *Abschattungen*, prises dans son mouvement, hors duquel elles ne sont rien, se contractent soudain en une seule signification, nous éprouvons que *quelque chose a été dit*, comme, au-dessus d’un minimum de messages sensoriels, nous percevons une chose, quoique l’explicitation de la chose aille par principe à l’infini, — ou comme, spectateurs d’un certain nombre de conduites, nous en venons à percevoir quelque’un quoique, devant la réflexion, aucun autre que moi-même ne puisse être vraiment, et dans le même sens, *ego*... Les conséquences de la parole, comme celles de la perception (et de la perception d’autrui en particulier), passent toujours ses prémisses. [*Signes*, p. 148.]

From these ‘comparisons’ (note the presence of the conjunction *comme* here) we may conjecture something concerning the analogical appresentation of the *alter ego*: 1) in the “flesh and blood presence” of meaning, incorporated in the discourse as the “something said”, regardless of whether it is a question of my discourse or that of others, what is thematically given are only the *Abschattungen*, 2) *as* in sensorially perceiving a thing the explication of this thing could go on infinitely and the thematic presence is only that of the *Abschattungen*, 3) and *similarly* we also perceive an *alter ego* although only I can be an *ego* in the strictest phenomenological sense, only I can be the origin of the world. If meaning gains presence, also for myself, only in being thematized by articulating it verbally, and if this thematization never

⁵⁰⁰ TCA/Meridian, Endf. 36 (*loc. cit.*).

⁵⁰¹ Cf. Béliers (2003); “Majesties”, in *Sovereignities in Question* (2005).

⁵⁰² Cf. Celan, *La bi. phi.*, p. 509. I asked Bertrand Badiou whether he knows of another copy of this text in Celan’s possession (or working notes or anything that might suggest that he was familiar with it), and this is part of his kind reply, confirming what I thought might be the case: “En deux mots, Celan, à ma connaissance, ne possédait pas d’autre exemplaire de ce texte de Merleau-Ponty. Mais il pouvait bien sûr en avoir connaissance grâce à des consultations en bibliothèque...” (Electronic mail from B.B., January 11th, 2007.)

totalizes or fully explicates what it indicates, just as sensory perception gives its object without exhaustively unfolding its every aspect and without having to do that, likewise we never fully grasp the presence of the other even when we perceive it. Inversely, just as the other *ego* remains radically other and only attainable through an analogical apperception, also the other in general, including even inanimate objects, is indeed given but never exhaustively, and likewise also my own speech, always the speech of the other, remains for me the speech of the other, something not totalizable: to express is to become conscious but expression is never total.⁵⁰³ My idea is the idea of an other than me, another I. And it is indeed already Husserl's observation that language is the original manner of intending certain objects and rendering thought intersubjective, which is finally also to render the ideal existence to that which would otherwise remain a private phenomenon⁵⁰⁴ — inasmuch as such privacy of ideas is even thinkable. Merleau-Ponty continues:

Je dis que je *sais une idée* lorsque s'est institué en moi le pouvoir d'organiser autour d'elle des discours qui font sens cohérent, et ce pouvoir même ne tient pas à ce que je la posséderais par-devers moi et la contemplerai face à face, mais à ce que j'ai acquis un certain style de pensée. Je dis qu'une signification est acquise et désormais disponible lorsque j'ai réussi à la faire habiter dans un appareil de parole qui ne lui était pas d'abord destiné. [...] C'est précisément cette « déformation cohérente » (A. Malraux) des significations disponibles qui les ordonne à un sens nouveau et fait franchir aux auditeurs, *mais aussi au sujet parlant*, un pas décisif.⁵⁰⁵

The expression “decisive *step*” makes me think of the figure of Lucile, counter-figure Lucile and her “counter-word”, her “step [*Schritt*]”: “»*Es lebe der König!*« [...] — *welch ein Wort! Es ist das Gegenwort, [...] es ist ein Akt der Freiheit. Es ist ein Schritt.*”⁵⁰⁶ Lucile's “step” is

⁵⁰³ “Exprimer, pour le sujet parlant, c'est prendre conscience”; but: “l'expression n'est jamais totale.” (“Sur la phénoménologie du langage”, in *Signes*, pp. 146, 145.)

⁵⁰⁴ Cf. *Signes*, p. 137; Merleau-Ponty refers to and quotes Husserl's late works, *Formale und transzendente Logik* and *Ursprung der Geometrie* (p. 137n1-2). Cf. the quote from Husserl on p. 157: “La subjectivité transcendente est intersubjectivité.”

⁵⁰⁵ “Sur la phénoménologie du langage”, in *Signes*, p. 149. Another text by Merleau-Ponty, first published in 1952 just as “Sur la phénoménologie du langage”, and resonating with Celan's drafts, is the essay inspired by André Malraux, “Le langage indirect et *Les Voix du silence*”, also in *Signes* (repr. 2001), pp. 63-135. (Originally in *Les Temps modernes*, 80 [juin 1952], pp. 2113-44; 81 [juillet 1952], pp. 70-94.) Just to take a few examples: “Beaucoup plus qu'un moyen, le langage est quelque chose comme un être et c'est pourquoi il peut si bien nous rendre présent quelqu'un : la parole d'un ami au téléphone nous le donne lui-même, comme s'il était tout dans cette manière d'interpeller et de prendre congé, de commencer et de finir ses phrases, de cheminer à travers les choses non dites.” (P. 69.) “La volonté de mort, elle n'est donc nulle part dans les mots : elle est entre eux, dans les creux d'espace, de temps, de significations qu'ils délimitent, comme le mouvement au cinéma est entre les images immobiles qui se suivent.” (P. 123.) “La parole n'est pas un moyen au service d'une fin extérieure, elle a en elle-même sa règle de l'emploi, sa morale, sa vue du monde, comme un geste quelquefois porte toute la vérité d'un homme.” (P. 124.) And, a reference to Claudel, reminiscent of what Celan writes in the *Meridian* about “the wholly other” and about obscurity: “Claudel va jusqu'à dire que Dieu n'est pas au-dessus, mais au-dessous de nous, — voulant dire que nous ne le trouvons pas comme une idée supra-sensible, mais comme un autre nous-même, qui habite et authentifie notre obscurité.” (P. 114.)

⁵⁰⁶ *TCA/Meridian*, Endf. 7. To understand what a “step” is here, we must understand also the relation between breath and “was auf den Taubenfüßen kommt” (this is Celan's quote from Nietzsche in one or two of the *Meridian* fragments; from the context, it is clear that this “arriving at dove's feet” is an arrival through the air, and through breath, namely a *verbal* step [cf. Ms. 265; cf. Ts. 10]), and between Lucile's step and

more than irony. It says something else than what it means, in a certain sense, but *not* the opposite: rather, it seems to me that the *Majesty of the Absurd* is for her — for Celan's Lucile, of course, and in the situation in which we meet her for the last time in *Dantons Tod* — the only majesty worthy of that name. But perhaps it is also “*une déformation [in]cohérente*”? It gives “*un sens nouveau*”, perhaps, but neither metaphorically nor just as a conceptual modification with regard to the extant language system; rather, in giving herself death (it is a suicidal ‘speech act’, anyway, resembling Antigone's defiance), she also gives to the word ‘King’ a new meaning — but ‘new’ only with respect to the current acceptation, since with respect to what majesty *should* be, Lucile's is the most archaic, the most majestic ‘meaning’ (while ‘absurd’ is, of course, the very antonym [*Gegenwort*] of ‘meaning’!): “*Gehuldigt wird hier der für die Gegenwart des Menschlichen zeugenden Majestät des Absurden.*” (TCA/Meridian, Endf. 8.)

I will not go into all the intricacies of Celan's adaptation of Büchner's Lucile and Lenz in *Der Meridian* now.⁵⁰⁷ Let us instead follow Merleau-Ponty's article a little further, in order to better understand Celan's borrowing of the word *Zeithof* and his “step further”, as I see it, from the original Husserlian context of this coinage. The limit toward which this step is taken has been often evoked by Jacques Derrida, also with respect to Celan's poetry and poetics (in “Majesties” and toward the end of *Béliers*): it is the encounter with the other as an other *ego*, or with irreducible otherness in general, and this experience can be considered as an internal limit of phenomenology, considered by Husserl himself in the fifth *Cartesian Meditation*. Here is a part of what Merleau-Ponty writes on the problem:

La position d'autrui comme autre moi-même n'est en effet possible si c'est *la conscience* qui doit l'effectuer : avoir conscience, c'est constituer, je ne puis donc avoir

Lenz's step further, namely his wish to walk upon his head and his terrifying silence: “Ich habe bei Lucile der Dichtung zu begegnen geglaubt, und Lucile nimmt Sprache als Gestalt und Richtung und Atem wahr –: ich suche, auch hier, in dieser Dichtung Büchners, dasselbe, ich suche Lenz selbst, ich suche ihn – als Person, ich suche seine Gestalt: um des Ortes der Dichtung, um der Freisetzung, um des Schritts willen. [...] Finden wir jetzt vielleicht den Ort, wo das Fremde war, den Ort, wo die Person sich freizusetzen vermochte, als ein – befremdetes – Ich? Finden wir einen solchen Ort, einen solchen Schritt? / »... nur war es ihm manchmal unangenehm, daß er nicht auf dem Kopf gehn konnte.« – Das ist er, Lenz. Das ist, glaube ich, er und sein Schritt, er und sein »Es lebe der König«. [...] Lenz – das heißt Büchner – ist hier einen Schritt weiter gegangen als Lucile. Sein »Es lebe der König« ist kein Wort mehr, es ist ein furchtbares Verstummen, es verschlägt ihm – und auch uns – den Atem und das Wort.” (Endf. 23, 25, 29.) For a breathtaking discussion of these passages, one that also underlies our discussion here, cf. Derrida, “Majesties”, trans. Outi Pasanen, in *Sovereignities in Question*, pp. 108-134. — On silence, the silence that Celan both thematized and personified in a certain sense (there are several anecdotes telling of his reticence and the awkward pauses that punctuated the conversations with him), as well as, more specifically, the pauses that give the *Meridian* speech its particular rhythm, Esther Cameron has very well remarked, in her fragmentary “hyper-text commentary” on the *Meridian*, that it is a question of something like “those halts in conversation which make one aware of the presence of a fellow-mortal, from which the words often tend to distract us” (*The Impossible Way*, <http://polyglot.lss.wisc.edu/german/celan/cameron/comment.html>; last accessed January 2007). We might say that Lucile observes these halts even when the air is swirling with words.

⁵⁰⁷ Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, in *La poésie comme expérience* (Paris: Bourgois, 1986), and Jacques Derrida, in “Majesties”, trans. Outi Pasanen, in *Sovereignities in Question: The Poetics of Paul Celan* (New York: Fordham U.P., 2005), pp. 108-134, have given very remarkable readings of these two figures or counter-figures.

conscience d'autrui, puisque ce serait le constituer comme constituant, et comme constituant à l'égard de l'acte même par lequel je le constitue. Cette difficulté de principe, posée comme une borne au début de la cinquième *Méditation cartésienne*, elle n'est nulle part levée. Husserl *passé outre* : puisque j'ai l'idée d'autrui, c'est donc que, de quelque manière, la difficulté mentionnée *a été, en fait*, surmontée. Elle n'a pu l'être que si celui qui, en moi, perçoit autrui, est capable d'ignorer la contradiction radicale qui rend impossible la conception théorique d'autrui, ou plutôt (car, s'il ignorait, ce n'est plus à autrui qu'il aurait à faire), capable de vivre cette contradiction comme la définition même de la présence d'autrui. [*Signes*, pp. 152-153.]

I interrupt the quote for a moment, in order to ask whether the ability to “live this contradiction”, to endure the presence of the other as an irreducible other, wholly other, is not precisely what Celan aims at, in speaking of the tyranny of the poem, which some of us experience as unbearable (*unerträglich*) and try to mitigate by having recourse to the doctrine of metaphor: “*aber unter Menschen Sein, das kann auch so verstanden werden: unter Königen sein.*” (*TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 896, *loc. cit.*) The analogical appresentation of the *alter ego* (or even of otherness in general) is neither an inference by analogy⁵⁰⁸ nor a metaphorical analogy. Now let us proceed with Merleau-Ponty's text, skipping a few lines:

Il se trouve que, sur certains spectacles, — ce sont les autres corps humains et, par extension, animaux, — mon regard achoppe, est circonvenu. Je suis investi par eux alors que je croyais les investir, et je vois se dessiner dans l'espace une figure qui éveille et convoque les possibilités de mon propre corps comme s'il s'agissait de gestes et de comportements miens. Tout se passe comme si les fonctions de l'intentionnalité et de l'objet intentionnel se trouvaient paradoxalement permutées. Le spectacle m'invite à en devenir spectateur adéquat, comme si un autre esprit que le mien venait soudain habiter mon corps, ou plutôt comme si mon esprit était attiré là-bas et émigrerait dans le spectacle qu'il était en train de se donner. Je suis happé par un second moi-même hors de moi, je perçois autrui... Or, la parole est évidemment un cas éminent de ces « conduites » [*Gebaren*] qui renversent mon rapport ordinaire avec les objets et donnent à certains d'entre eux valeurs de sujets. [*Signes*, p. 153.]

The whole paradox of encountering the other as encountering oneself, evoked in the *Meridian*, is prefigured, as it were, by this late Husserlian or post-Husserlian paradox. This paradox, this *scandalon* is both Husserlian and post-Husserlian at once; Merleau-Ponty's article is an explication of a certain Husserlian paradox, as we have seen — the paradoxical relation between the experience of otherness, the *irreducible* otherness of the wholly other, and transcendental subjectivity, and the discovery of transcendental subjectivity as intersubjectivity. This is one thing that Merleau-Ponty says on the *scandalon* of the theory of intersubjectivity and of time:

Quand je parles ou quand je comprends, j'expérimente la présence d'autrui en moi ou de moi en autrui, qui est la pierre d'achoppement de la théorie d'intersubjectivité, la

⁵⁰⁸ Husserl himself points out that in the analogical apperception, it is not a question of inference by analogy, or of any other kind of inference or act of thought (“Denkakt”). Cf. *Cartesianische Meditationen und Pariser Vorträge; Gesammelte Werke Bd. I*, ed. S. Strasser (Haag: Marinus Nijhoff, 1950), p. 141 (=Hua I, p. 141).

présence du représenté qui est la pierre d'achoppement de la théorie du temps, et je comprends enfin ce que veut dire l'énigmatique proposition de Husserl: « La subjectivité transcendente est intersubjectivité. » [*Signes*, p. 157.]

The margins for the possibility of intersubjectivity — which is also, transcendental subjectivity, ideality and objectivity — are *fringy*. Clearly enough, perception does not, and does not have to, seize the object in all its aspects in order to fully perceive it, and when we consider perceiving the other person, the other *ego*, the impossibility of totalization becomes even clearer. And when I engage in conversation with another person, other *ego* and other origin of the world, an “intentional transgression” or, rather, a *transgression of intentionality* must take place. Expression is never total, as Merleau-Ponty calls us to observe, but when we are dealing with the *other's* expression, it is not even clear that we are dealing with one intentional act, a subject-object relation whose “signified exceeds its signifier”,⁵⁰⁹ what we have is indeed something “like a blank form to be filled” (“*comme un formulaire en blanc que l'on n'a pas encore rempli, comme les gestes d'autrui qui visent et circonscrivent un objet du monde que je ne vois pas*”) (*Signes*, p. 143), but perhaps that which remains out of my sight is not only *an object* in the world *but the world itself, absolutely invisible to me* with regard to the point where my visible-invisible interlocutor stands, so to say, the viewpoint of that other origin of the world?⁵¹⁰ It would be not only so that the thematization of the other's viewpoint remains an infinite task (while it remains that even for the speaking subject itself, as Merleau-Ponty invites us to observe), but that it remains radically impossible. It is indeed this radical impossibility with which I must live, and which may be experienced as a demand: “You must change your life.” It is the fragments of radical otherness, with which I deal with every time I perceive the other, when I listen to someone else, when I read, but also when I speak and write. The deformation, transformation, alteration is always also mine.

Si la parole veut incarner une intention significative qui n'est qu'un certain *vide*, ce n'est pas seulement pour recréer en autrui le même manque, la même privation, mais encore pour savoir *de quoi* il y a manque et privation. [*Signes*, pp. 146-147.]

In the poem “Schwimmhäute”, which we were reading a moment ago, the absence incarnated is perhaps named by the word *Bedeutung*: the presence of meaning as the privation or withdrawal of meaning, its luminous appearance and disappearance into the dark abyss of a back-

⁵⁰⁹ “Il y a donc toujours du sous-entendu dans l'expression, — ou plutôt la notion de sous-entendu est à rejeter : elle n'a un sens que si nous prenons pour modèle et pour absolu de l'expression une langue (d'ordinaire la nôtre) qui, en fait, comme toutes les autres, ne peut jamais nous conduire « comme par la main » jusqu'à la signification, jusqu'au choses mêmes. Ne disons donc pas que toute expression est imparfaite parce qu'elle sous-entend, disons que toute expression est parfaite dans la mesure où elle est comprise sans équivoque et admettons comme fait fondamental de l'expression *un dépassement du signifiant par le signifié que c'est la vertu même du signifiant de rendre possible*.” (“Sur la phénoménologie du langage”, p. 146.)

⁵¹⁰ Cf. Derrida's *Béliers — un dialogue ininterrompu : entre deux infinis, le poème* (Paris: Galilée, 2003) on this, and Celan's line “which sounds throughout the [...] essay like a refrain” (as the text on the back cover of *Sovereignities in Question* very well puts it): “Die Welt ist fort, ich muß dich tragen.”

ground. The comet-like, meteoric image, or the creature swimming on the stagnated water of the pool, whose depth is nevertheless unfathomable.

The crossing-through of the tropes resides, perhaps, precisely in this instant of chiasmatic exchange in which the “determined void [*un vide déterminé*]” becomes inscribed in my flesh as the words of the other, learned by heart, without knowledge.⁵¹¹ This incision or inversion in which my sight becomes transformed by the invisible images that appear out of nothingness, this cutting that is also a message without determined content (*dieSeKunde*), is also what invites me to “studying the other”,⁵¹² which means also to take the encyclopaedic detour, but not only that. Even when the words of a poem thus become interiorized into my proper body, both learned by heart (*appris par cœur*) and *auswendig gelernt*, both internal and external at once, they still bear the trace of the singular gesture, the contour of the hand’s tracing; *the person*, which is not just the person Paul Celan, but the person in general, or singularity in general. Any authentic poem is anti-biographic, as Celan writes, but the poet lives on in his poem, his only homeland as a poet, one that changes from poem to poem. This is why the poet must renounce his “complicity [*Mitwisserschaft*]”, while he remains “endowed [*mitgegeben*]” as the “mute consonant [*stumme Mitlaut*]” to these “vocal things”, but this is also why the reader has his chance to be an instantaneous “confidant [*Mitwisser*]” of the poem.

Perhaps the chiasmatic second of inversion could be further described by Celan’s comment on Marion’s words in Büchner’s play: “Danton, your lips have eyes.” For Celan, that is no ‘modern’ metaphor (I do not know whose characterization he quotes in the note) but age-old knowledge concerning the knowledge of a mouth.⁵¹³ When speech meets the eye, when “your mouth / speaks its way to the eye”,⁵¹⁴ a chiasmus of sorts takes place: in seeing you speak, I cannot see you seeing, I cannot get inside your head and inside your time, your “time-fringe” (in a large sense of *Zeithof* which covers not only the retentional-protentional halo of the present perception of an object, but the past and future of a unique and finite destiny, the time-aureole that is always mortal, open at both ends and untransferable as such), and therefore I must renounce the spontaneous images, let the images, visible or mental images, destroy themselves and turn themselves into the words, tokens of the other’s invisibility; this invisibility is not only my impossibility to penetrate the phenomenal surface and see the other’s seeing, and so on, beyond the manifestation, but also the blindfoldedness of the other’s address, bottle-mail from one invisible stranger to another. Transformation, transplan-

⁵¹¹ On learning by heart (*apprendre par cœur*, *auswendig lernen*), cf. Derrida, *Poétique et politique du témoignage* (Paris: L’Herne, 2005); En. trans. by Outi Pasanen in *Sovereignities in Question*, pp. 65-96; and “Che cos’è la poesia”, bilingual (French and English) in *Points... Interviews 1974-1994*, ed. Elizabeth Weber (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995).

⁵¹² Cf. below. We shall return to all the themes that are evoked here for the first time in the present treatise.

⁵¹³ Cf. *TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 593 (*loc. cit.*), and above.

⁵¹⁴ “Zürich, zum Storchen”, trans. Hamburger, in *Poems of Paul Celan*, p. 135; the verb tense has been modified from “spoke” to “speaks” in order to fit the sentence.

tation, metamorphosis without metaphor: this is what is required of me when, from this instant of encounter onwards, I see *with* the other's words.

The poetic image is "by no means visual", as Celan maintains. The non-visual poetic image, turning into a word, wakes up to another reality *as* another dream, another's dream; the transmission of an image must be "blind enough", lose itself in order to ignite the other's eye and sight as a candle and a wick, as in the poem "Zwiegestalt" (written "before 5.4.1954"):

Laß dein Aug in der Kammer sein eine Kerze,
den Blick einen Docht,
laß mich blind genug sein,
ihn zu entzünden.

Nein.
Laß anderes sein.

Tritt vor dein Haus,
schirr deinen scheckigen Traum an,
Laß seine Hufe reden
zum Schnee, den du fortbliest
vom First meiner Seele.⁵¹⁵

The figure (*Gestalt*) is double (*Zwiegestalt*) not only due to the (blind?) fumbling that opts for another image in the middle of the poem (a *mixed* metaphor, as some might say — not I, however), and not only because of the distinction between eye and sight, candle and wick, but also because the figure of *you* or "your house" and *I* or "my soul" are perhaps *one* figure, one double figure; "the roof ridge of my soul" seems to be the one of "your house", your *house of being* perhaps,⁵¹⁶ which is at the same time "my soul", the occupiable, hospitable space offered by the poem — and yet, an abode to be abandoned now, as it seems, inasmuch as it is still a question of "my soul" from whose "roof ridge" you have now blown away the snow. Blown away, that is: breathed. An abode, a confidence (*Mitwisserschaft*), a complicity to be inhabited and abandoned, first by "me" and then, after "your" having liberated the soul of its cover of snow, after having exorcized the haunted house, by "you". Inhabited and abandoned, both at once — perhaps. So it would not be a question of carrying over a content, a message, but rather the form, the figure to be occupied and to be abandoned, both at once; a figure to be liberated by harnessing one's dream and letting its hoofs speak to the snow. Harnessing one's dream means, perhaps, to affirm that it is indeed *my* dream, the other's address having

⁵¹⁵ DGKG, p. 67; cf. Wiedemann, "Kommentar", p. 625.

⁵¹⁶ Celan was familiar with Heidegger's quasi-metaphoric turn of speech "Haus des Seins" at the time of writing this poem (Cf. *La bi. phi.*, p. 691, No. 627); such incidental information and speculation is of course not an argument yet. But on the other hand, the view of the poem presented here is not necessarily an interpretation of the poem, either; rather, the minimalistic reading at hand is to be taken as a description of the *pre-requisites for receiving* the gift of the poem while suspending the position or imposition of any determined content to it.

become blind in the darkness of *my* interiority — it is not the same or the similar, but another figure, and yet one that we share now, one through which we communicate across the irreducible duplicity, in the exchange between I and you: *Zwiegestalt*.

The chiasmatic inversion amounts also to saying that it is not the poematic encounter which bears reference to a real-life encounter, but that every true, authentic encounter (*wirkliche Begegnung*) happens in remembrance of the poem's secret — the irreducible blindfold or veil between us, through which we approach each other.⁵¹⁷ Celan may well be designated as a “transcendentalist” inasmuch as his poems speak “of the conditions of their own possibility”.⁵¹⁸ And, at the same time, they speak of how any true encounter bears witness to the immemorial, archaic imprint of what is called poetry.⁵¹⁹

TOUCHING WITHOUT TOUCHING: THE “CONTINGENT METEORITE”

The third poem where the Husserlian term *Zeithof* appears is an untitled one belonging to the cycle called *Zeitgehöft*; the posthumously titled collection also bears the name of this opening cycle, *Zeitgehöft* (1976):

Erst wenn ich dich
als Schatten berühre,
glaubst du mir meinen
Mund,

der klettert mit Spät-
sinnigem droben
in Zeithöfen
umher,

⁵¹⁷ “Es [das Gedicht] kann, als das Gegenständliche, auch dessen Stummheit und Opazität haben; es erwacht erst in der wirklichen Begegnung, die es als sein Geheimnis hat. Darum ist jede wirkliche Begegnung auch Erinnerung an das Geheimnis des Gedichts.” (*TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 508, loc. cit.)

⁵¹⁸ “Celan’s poems speak — in a transcendental manner [*transzendentalistisch*] like only those of Hölderlin and, to a lesser degree, those of Rilke — of the conditions of their own possibility.” (Hamacher, “The Second of Inversion”, trans. Fenves, p. 352; “Die Sekunde der Inversion” [1988], p. 94.)

⁵¹⁹ “Es gibt Wahrnehmungen, die sich uns unbewußt prägen[.]” (*Mikrolithen*, p. 100, No. 163.11.) The subsequent fragment (No. 163.12) repeats the often quoted words of Valéry: “Poésie: langage à l’état naissant. Sprache in statu nascendi also, freiwerdende Sprache. Das Flüchtige, Verschwebende des Vorgangs.” (Cf. also Wiedemann’s comments on pp. 508–510, as well as *La bi. phi.*, p. 405, Nos. 984–986; these notes were written in September 1954, while reading Heidegger’s *Was Heißt Denken?*, and the note on the “unconscious imprint” seems to indirectly reflect Heidegger’s following words, marked by Celan: “einen Denker aus ihm selbst zu verstehen [...] ist unmöglich, weil kein Denker, so wenig wie ein Dichter, sich selbst versteht.”) To speak of “perception” (*Wahrnehmung*) here is one of the things that make Celan’s notion at least partly incompatible with Husserl’s, since for the latter, an unconscious perception is altogether unthinkable (“Es ist eben ein Unding, von einem ‘unbewußten’ Inhalt zu sprechen, der erst nachträglich bewußt wurde. [...] Retention eines unbewußten Inhalts ist unmöglich.” [*Hua X*, Beilage IX, p. 119]). And yet, cf. also the following correction made in one of the *Meridian* fragments, perhaps in response to Husserl’s objection: “Intuitives Denken: daß ich, in einem Gespräch im Gebirg gen<annt> Stück, aus dem Bewußtlosen, nicht Unbewußten, den Lenz kommen sah; [...] Es gibt Geheimnisse. Gedicht und Geheimnis stehen, auch heute, [...] im Bund.” (*TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 85.) It is a question here, no doubt, of what Celan elsewhere often calls “anamnesis”.

du stößt zur Heerschar
der Zweitverwerter unter
den Engeln,

Schweigewütiges
sternt.⁵²⁰

The expression *glaubst du mir meinem Mund* may be translated, as Michael Hamburger has, as “you believe my mouth”, but there is a second possible significant option: the structure of that expression makes it plausible to claim that the verb *glauben* is here used in the rare, obsolete or dialectal sense ‘to give credit’, to ‘lend’, ‘to entrust something to someone’, ‘to commit something to a person’s keeping’.⁵²¹ So we could translate: “Not until / as a shade I touch you / will you entrust me with my / mouth”.

We find this ‘structure’ of “lending one’s ears” — or rather, entrusting one’s hands, one’s mouth, to the other, *as* the hands and *as* the mouth of the other, of *voicing* the other’s writing, the other’s absence — in several other poems, too (for example in “Es ist alles anders”, the poetic encounter with Mandelstam; we shall return to this poem later). “Selbdrift, selbviert” from *Die Niemandrose* (1963) speaks of, or invites *you* to speak with “my” mouth, in *your* hour; the conversation seems to happen across something that could be named, after a later poem, *Zeitenschrunde* (“time crevasse”):

Diese Stunde, deine Stunde,
ihr Gespräch mit meinem Munde.

Mit dem Mund, mit seinem Schweigen,
mit den Worten, die sich weigern.⁵²²

In another poem from the early sixties we meet the image of meteors or comets, or, in any case, a *meteorological phenomenon* making its way “through the air [*durch die Luft*]”, which is, at the same time, an image of Lucifers, in plural (“light-bringers”), and one which transforms itself into “slender / dog roses”, perhaps reminiscent of the flower, of the no-one’s rose given and received in the earlier poem “Der Tauben weißeste flog auf”, *Heckenrose* also known by several other names, such as *Heidenröslein*, and while this rose known for its thorns is named, and Lucifer and his angels are alluded to (perhaps those who preferred to remain silent and did not take the side of either God or his enemies — a poet’s ambiguous position, perhaps? — but remained between earth and sky: “*Schweigewütiges / sternt*”), these images will not sting, these stones “want to / not sink, not fall, / not collide”; rather than go

⁵²⁰ GW 3:76. “Not until / as a shade I touch you / will you believe / my mouth, // that clambers about / with late-minded things / up there / in time-courts, // you come to the host / of the second-utilizers among / the angels, / and a body that rages for silence / stars.” (Trans. M. Hamburger, *Poems of Paul Celan*, p. 295.)

⁵²¹ Cf. DWB, entry “GLAUBEN, vb.”: “[II.]B. einer person oder sache 'vertrauen', auch 'etwas anvertrauen'. [...] 3) einem etwas glauben 'einem etwas anvertrauen', wohl erst durch den entsprechenden gebrauch von lat. credere veranlaszt“ (Bd. 7, Sp. 7831-7832.)

⁵²² *Die Niemandrose*, in DGKG, p. 127; cf. Wiedemann’s commentary on p. 675.

down and tear the earth, they undergo their transformation and “rise / up, / like slender / dog roses they break open” and are to be plucked “with my / new, my / Everyman’s hands”:

DIE HELLEN
STEINE gehn durch die Luft, die hell-
weißen, die Licht-
bringer.

Sie wollen
nicht niedergehen, nicht stürzen,
nicht treffen. Sie gehen
auf,
wie die geringen
Heckenrosen, so tun sie sich auf,
sie schweben
dir zu, du meine Leise,
du meine Wahre –:

ich seh dich, du pflückst sie mit meinen
neuen, meinen
Jedermannshänden, du tust sie
ins Abermals-Helle, das niemand
zu weinen braucht noch zu nennen.⁵²³

This poem, as perhaps they all are, must be both occasional, a love poem dedicated to someone, as it seems, an erotic poem in the most profound acceptance of this term,⁵²⁴ and at the same time, so to say, “*Poesie der Poesie*”, poetry on the occasion of nothing but poetry itself.⁵²⁵ As they all are, perhaps, both at the same time.

The *you* whose eye is hit by the comets, “you, my gentle one, / you, my true one”, gives the other *I*, the *I* of the poem, her hands, gives her everyman’s-hands to him, to pluck the wild roses, the shooting stars that did not hit the ground but shot, blossomed as roses do, as roses rising up and breaking open before the eye who saw them plucked — then, with his new everyman’s-hands. Their “Once-Again-Brightness”, their fading instant of opening up once more *and yet once again*, is not to be named or to be wept over.

But this instant, the unrepeatable once repeated, always again only for once, the secret of the encounter, would have been, will have been meteoric, and what is meteoric must be

⁵²³ *Die Niemandrose*, in *DGKG*, p. 147; cf. Wiedemann’s commentary on pp. 693-694.

⁵²⁴ Wiedemann’s commentary names Gisèle Celan-Lestrange, and one might perhaps surmise that the name of Saint Frances provides the link between the story of Lucifer and the loved one who appears in Celan’s poems sometimes also enciphered in the figure and name of Francesca, from Dante’s *Divina Commedia* (cf. e.g. Szondi, “Reading ‘Engführung’”, *op. cit.*). Cf. also letter No. 221 in Paul Celan – Gisèle Celan-Lestrange, *Correspondance. Vol. I: Lettres*, ed. Bertrand Badiou (Paris: Seuil, 2001), pp. 233-234, indicated by Wiedemann.

⁵²⁵ I would like to refer here to the paradoxical self-understanding of Goethe, who took his poems to be always occasional poetry, while for Friedrich Schlegel, Goethe represented something that would seem the exact opposite of occasional poetry, “*Poesie der Poesie*”. I would read “Heidenröslein” as a perfect example of Goethe’s poetry being both at once: at least potentially occasional (with biographical reminders and remainders, perhaps) and self-reflective *as* poetry.

brief, rapid, passing. Derrida, on at least two occasions in his essay “La littérature au secret: Une filiation impossible”, the second occasion being right after briefly referring to his own reading of Celan’s “Todtnauberg”, seems to allude, more implicitly, to Celan’s meteors. “Meteor” must be here understood both as “Any atmospheric phenomenon” and as “A luminous body seen temporarily in the sky” (*OED*). If “any atmospheric phenomena” can be called a meteor, we must say that a poem must be a meteor too. It makes its way through the air, readable and recitable, visible and speakable in its verbal body that can touch mine without touching, when I read it, silently or aloud.

Cette phrase [« Pardon de ne pas vouloir dire... »] paraît aussi phénoménale qu’un météorite ou une météorite (ce mot a deux sexes). Phénoménale, cette phrase paraît l’être, car d’abord elle *paraît*. Elle apparaît, cela est clair, c’est même l’hypothèse ou la certitude de principe. Elle se manifeste, elle paraît, mais « en l’air », venue on ne sait d’où, de façon apparemment contingente. Contingente météorite au moment de toucher un sol (car une *contingence* dit aussi, selon l’étymologie, le toucher, le tact ou le contact) mais sans assurer de lecture pertinente (car la pertinence dit aussi, selon l’étymologie, le toucher, le tact ou le contact). Restant en l’air, elle appartient à l’air, à l’être-en-l’air. Elle a sa demeure dans l’atmosphère que nous respirons, elle demeure suspendue en l’air même quand elle touche. Là même où elle touche. C’est pourquoi je la dis *météorique*. Elle se dit encore suspendue, peut-être au-dessus d’une tête, par exemple celle d’Isaac au moment où Abraham lève son couteau au-dessus de lui, quand il ne sait plus que nous ce qui va se passer, pourquoi Dieu lui a demandé en secret ce qu’il lui a demandé, et pourquoi il va peut-être le laisser faire ou l’empêcher de faire ce qu’il lui a demandé de faire sans lui en donner la moindre raison : secret absolu, secret à garder en partage quant à un secret qu’on ne partage pas. Dissymétrie absolue. [*Donner la mort*, pp. 177-178.]

A few pages later, after discussing Kafka’s *Brief an den Vater*, and mentioning Celan’s “Todtnauberg” in passing, Derrida continues:

La littérature aura été météorique. Comme le secret. On appelle météore un *phénomène*, cela même qui apparaît dans la brillance ou le *phainesthai* d’une lumière, ce qui se produit dans l’atmosphère. Comme une sorte d’arc-en-ciel. [...] Le secret du météorite : il devient lumineux à entrer, comme on dit, dans l’atmosphère, venu on ne sait d’où — mais en tout cas d’un autre corps dont il se serait détaché. Puis ce qui est météorique doit être bref, rapide, passager. Furtif, c’est-à-dire, dans son passage éclair, peut-être aussi coupable et clandestin qu’un voleur. [*Donner la mort*, pp. 181, 185-186.]

Foreign bodies detached from a foreign body. The “vocal things” endowed with the “mute consonant” carry not only the secret of their origin — the heart, let us say, not only as the innermost recess of the human body, its “middle-point” (*Herzpunkt*)⁵²⁶ but made manifest by,

⁵²⁶ Cf. these lines of the poem “Von der Orchis her” in *Atemwende* (*GW* 2:64):

Ein kleines Verhängnis, so groß
wie der Herzpunkt, den ich
hinter dein meinen Namen
stammelndes Aug setz,
ist mir behilflich.

or as, *Herzmund* and *Herzfingern*,⁵²⁷ — not only this originary secret, but also the secret of their destination, which may always remain a secret also to the addresser of such a singular, open address, with at least some hope of reaching something or someone, of course.

In an interview with Évelyne Grossman, Derrida characterized his experience of reading Celan as meteoric: “With regard to Celan, the image that comes to my mind is a meteor, an interrupted blaze of light, a sort of caesura, a very brief moment leaving behind a trail of sparks that I try to recover through his texts.”⁵²⁸

We shall return to comet-like figures, aerophones and air-stones, meteoric and meteorological phenomena, and projectiles later. Also a bottle thrown into the sea, bottle-mail, is a projectile of sorts, resembling a carrier pigeon to an extent. In a poem, a carrier pigeon is no metaphor, as Derrida maintains in a quasi-Magrittean fashion: “*mais ce n’est pas une métaphore.*” A poem described as a carrier pigeon is no metaphor either, as odd and unorthodox as this may seem.

Wiedemann refers the word *Herzpunkt* back to one of the things the Grimm dictionary says on “Herz”: “das Innerste, der Mittelpunkt von etwas” (“Einzelkommentar”, in *DGKG*, p. 736).

⁵²⁷ Cf. “In Eins”, *Die Niemandrose*, *GW* 1:270 (“Im Herzmund / erwachtes Schibboleth.”); “Schibboleth”, *Von Schwelle zu Schwelle*, *GW* 1:131 (“Herz: / gib dich auch hier zu erkennen, / hier, in der Mitte des Marktes. / Ruf’s, das Schibboleth, hinaus”); “Hüttenfenster”, *Die Niemandrose*, *GW* 1:278 (“Das Aug, dunkel: / [...] magnetisch / ziehts, mit Herzfingern, an / dir, Erde:”).

⁵²⁸ “Language is Never Owned. An Interview”, trans. Thomas Dutoit and Philippe Romanski, in Derrida, *Sovereignities in Question*, p. 99. French original: “L’image qui me vient à propos de Celan c’est celle d’un météore, un éclat de lumière interrompue, une sorte de césure, un moment très bref et qui laisse un sillage que j’essaie de retrouver à travers ses textes.” (“La langue n’appartient pas. Entretien avec Jacques Derrida”, in *Europe: Revue littéraire mensuelle*. 79ème année, No. 861-862, Paul Celan [janvier-février 2001], pp. 81-91, here p. 83.)

THE FIGURE OF NO ONE

... and the bottle-mail (Martine Broda)

Das Gedicht kann, da es ja eine Erscheinungsform der Sprache und damit seinem Wesen nach dialogisch ist, eine Flaschenpost sein, aufgegeben in dem – gewiß nicht immer hoffnungstarken – Glauben, sie könnte irgendwo und irgendwann an Land gespült werden, an Herzland vielleicht.⁵²⁹

In her superb essay “« A personne adressé » : Paul Celan lecteur de *L'Interlocuteur*” (1985), Martine Broda has paid specific attention to a tension that is not only constituent to metaphor, such as the metaphor of bottle-mail, but *between* the metaphors in this passage: bottle-mail and dialogue, both being “metaphors” of poetry. Poetry is defined as dialogue and, at the same time, as bottle-mail. An absolutely dissymmetrical dialogue, an encounter across an immeasurable distance: “*Mais une rencontre qui suppose cette absolue dissymétrie des places est-elle bien encore une dialogue?*”⁵³⁰ Furthermore, the “dialogue” is described as an address to “no one [*Niemand, personne*]”: another oxymoron. On the one hand, we have this address to *Niemand* (in the poem “Psalm”, most notably), in which the name without name, *Niemand*, takes the place of God’s name, the *missing* or *absent* name of God, which at once also names God’s absence; but this absence of God, denoted by the non-name *Niemand*, stands also for the “irreducible transcendence of the Thou”, the human other, the human person. Into the non-name *Niemand* in Celan’s poetry is translated the whole ambiguity of the French *personne* and the quasi-homophonic proximity of the Russian words *nikto* / *niekto* (no one / someone) in Mandelstam’s essay “On the Addressee”,⁵³¹ Celan also borrows from

⁵²⁹ “Ansprache anlässlich der Entgegennahme des Literaturpreises der freien Hansestadt Bremen” (1958), in *GW* 3:186. Trans. John Felstiner: “A poem, as a manifestation of language and thus essentially dialogue, can be a message in a bottle, sent out in the — not always greatly hopeful — belief that somewhere and sometime it could wash up on land, on heartland perhaps.” (*Selected Poems and Prose*, p. 396.)

⁵³⁰ Martine Broda, “« A personne adressé ». Paul Celan lecteur de « l'Interlocuteur », in *Po&sie*, No. 35, 1985, pp. 13-20, here p. 17.

⁵³¹ “[U]ne opposition travaille *De l'Interlocuteur* [par Mandelstam] dans sa langue d’origine, de part en part. Celan y a sans doute été sensible, qui lisait, lui, le russe à la lettre. C’est celle de *nikto* et de *niekto*. *Nikto*, indéterminé, est l’équivalent exact de « personne » ou de « niemand ». *Niekto*, indéterminé-déterminé, qu’on pourrait traduire par « une personne » ou « une certaine personne » est très proche du « quidam » latin (quelqu’un que je pourrais mais ne veux nommer). Mandelstam lie ces deux mots, presque homophones, à sa réflexion sur l’interlocuteur. Je rappelle les principales articulations de son raisonnement : le poète a l’air de ne s’adresser à personne (*nikto*). C’est que, contrairement au littérateur, il ne s’adresse pas à une certaine personne (*niekto*), son contemporain, son voisin, l’ami-dans-la-génération, ou même le contemporain de l’avenir. Il fait un pari sur l’inconnu, en visant un indéterminé lointain : le lecteur dans la postérité. Cet interlocuteur existe cependant. C’est le poème qui l’élit, le crée, puisque celui qui ramasse la bouteille jetée à la mer sait qu’elle lui était personnellement destinée. En retour, c’est l’existence de l’interlocuteur qui est le garant de la légitimité, du bon droit de la poème. [...] En effet, chez Mandelstam, c’est l’élection par le poème qui détermine cet interlocuteur d’abord hypothétique et indéterminé. Un « lecteur inconnu mais défini », ouvrant la bouteille ou rencontrant le poème, avec joie et épouvante, se sent « interpellé par son nom ». ” (“A personne adressé”, p. 14.)

Mandelstam the metaphor of bottle-mail to denote the poem. On the other hand, we have the description of poetry as “dialogue”, “conversation [*Gespräch*]”. How can these be conjoined — the message in a bottle and dialogue, dialogue and an address to no one, dissymmetry and dialogue? Perhaps these “metaphors” are just incompatible:

Mais une rencontre qui suppose cette absolue dissymétrie des places est-elle bien encore un dialogue? On peut se le demander. / Pour dire ce qui, de la relation intersubjective, peut advenir dans la chance du poème, Mandelstam et Celan ont recours à la métaphore du dialogue. On pourrait dire, ils s’en contentent, car si on lit les textes de près, on s’apercevra qu’il s’agit d’une approximation. Le mot de « dialogue » me semble dangereux, en ce qu’il peut évoquer le schéma question/réponse, et une conception trop simple du discours. Aussi le schéma linguistique banal de la communication, dans laquelle un locuteur transmet des contenus à un allocataire, l’un et l’autre assignés à une place fixe. Dans cette conception, qui reste foncièrement instrumentaliste, le « Je » sait qui il est, où il est, et où est l’autre qu’il vise. Le code est supposé commun, et le message une fois transmis, une information, il n’y a pas de reste. Pour voir ce qu’il en est vraiment, il faut focaliser sur un détail : la lecture que fait Celan du motif de « la bouteille jetée à la mer ». [“A personne adressé”, p. 14.]⁵³²

The incompatibility between the “metaphor of dialogue” and the message in a bottle is so obvious it seems to cry out for *reductio ad absurdum*. But when the positions and the code are already securely fixed beforehand, and the communication is guaranteed, when there is no residue left after the message, and the information contained in it has been safely transmitted, sent and received without loss and without residue (a “cultivation of intimacy” indeed, even when we are surprised or stricken by a good joke or metaphor),⁵³³ are we really having a dialogue, a *true* dialogue? Perhaps a poem, speaking in its ownmost cause but also, at one and the same time, in the cause of the other, *wholly other* perhaps, even when it is a conversation between absent ones, or a desperate conversation,⁵³⁴ could teach us what a true dialogue is.

But perhaps there is no other dialogue, no other than the guaranteed, codified communication. Perhaps there is no other dialogue than the one in which everything is more or less anticipatable. In which the questions are, thus, more or less rhetorical, the other’s response responding to what I already expected him to respond, more or less, as if in a mere tautology. But perhaps, on the other hand, the insecurity and the “motif” of the message in a bottle (*Flaschenpost*: this word does not actually name the ‘message’), the bottle-mail received by Celan from Mandelstam, rather reveal what a true dialogue is, or would be. Celan remarks that the dialogue, the conversation that has taken on the form of a bottle post, or the form of a poem (or perhaps even “writing as a form of prayer”), while remaining yet also a form of

⁵³² Part of this passage has been repeated, word for word, in the beginning of another essay, “Bouteilles, cailloux, schibboleths : Un nom dans la main”, by Broda in her book *Dans la main de personne. Essai sur Paul Celan et autres essais*. Nouvelle édition augmentée (Paris: Cerf, 2002), pp. 95-105; the first version of this essay was published with the title “Un nom dans la main” in *Passé Présent* No. 4, Nov. 1984.

⁵³³ Cf. Ted Cohen, “Metaphor as Cultivation of Intimacy” (1978, *op. cit.*). “Stricken by Metaphor: Some Thematic Consequences” is the title of the final chapter of Murray Krieger’s book *A Reopening of Closure: Organicism Against Itself* (*op. cit.*).

⁵³⁴ Cf. *TCA/Meridian*, Endf. 31, 36; Ms. 458.

conversation, is “not always greatly hopeful”. While remaining conversation (*Gespräch*), the poem can be “despairing conversation”, and often is, as the *Meridian* remarks.⁵³⁵ Without these extremes of conversation, or these borderline cases of dialogue, without such imminent proximity to non-dialogue, interruption and despair, without the poetic “pronouncement of the infinitude of mere mortality and futility” even,⁵³⁶ there would be no dialogue whatsoever. Only the “false dialogue”⁵³⁷ of a perfect — or false — consensus, at the most.

Every dialogue is haunted by an ongoing interior dialogue, each question takes place in anticipation of response and each statement anticipates further questions. Even the most unquestionable, apodeictic assertion must formally anticipate questions, responses, objections, in order to exclude them once and for all, and thus every conversation, indeed all language, even before taking on the explicit form of dialogue, even the Cartesian proposition *je pense, donc je suis*, is haunted by the figure of *prosopopoeia*, giving the other its voice or its hearing, mouth and ears, even before the other speaks or listens.⁵³⁸ This other, this interlocutor, can even take on the form of myself as an other, and of course it does, since it is a question of an *interior* dialogue. But this necessary anticipation and interiority preceding every dialogue in the world (every ‘exterior’ dialogue, that is) does not reduce the conversation into being mere monologue. If language is “in essence dialogue” as Celan claims, even when it is “despairing conversation” and addressed to no one, the whole notion of monologue — and thereby Gottfried Benn’s notion of poetry as monologue addressed to no one, but as a non-address rather than as Mandelstam’s and Celan’s ambiguous address to *nikto/niekto*, *Niemand*, *personne* — becomes dubious.

A poem *can* be a message in a bottle while a message in a bottle *can* be a poem. Of course, a bottle abandoned to the waves could always contain a poem written on a piece of paper. The message in a bottle, the bottle-mail *could* be a poem, and a poem *can* be a message in a bottle. It is not only so that the message in a bottle, the idea of bottle-mail, can teach us what a poem can be, but a poem can teach us what a message in a bottle can be. And these both together can perhaps teach us what dialogue is, and must be: not only expected and expectable lines, but a radical openness of the horizon, an openness to the unexpected and unknown. The alleged “metaphors” of dialogue and bottle-mail, in their very incompatibility

⁵³⁵ “Das Gedicht wird [...] Gespräch – oft ist es verzweifelteres Gespräch.” (*TCA/Meridian*, Endf. 36a.) Trans. Felstiner, in *Selected Poems and Prose of Paul Celan*, p. 410.

⁵³⁶ “Die Dichtung, meine Damen und Herren –: diese Unendlichsprechung von lauter Sterblichkeit und Umsonst!” (*TCA/Meridian*, Endf. 44.) “The Meridian”, trans. Jerry Glenn, “Appendix” in Derrida, *Sovereignities in Question*, p. 183.

⁵³⁷ Cf. the “Exergue” of Derrida’s “La mythologie blanche” (in *Marges*, 1972), where Anatole France’s dialogue “Ariste et Polyphile” is considered a *false* dialogue.

⁵³⁸ It is well known that the phrase *cogito, sum*, let alone *cogito, ergo sum*, is not found as such in Descartes’s *Meditationes de prima philosophia*, but the French equivalent *je pense, donc je suis* appears in the “popularized” account, entitled *Discours de la méthode* and written in French, and in *Principia philosophiae* I,10 Descartes refers to the “proposition” *ego cogito, ergo sum*, but denies that it contains an inference (as the adverb *ergo* would suggest). — On the *prosopopoeia*, cf. Derrida, *Mémoires — pour Paul de Man* (Paris: Galilée, 1988); esp. the chapters “Mnemosyne”, pp. 23–58, here pp. 47ff, and “L’art des mémoires”, pp. 59ff, *passim*.

and the further incompatibility, or rather paradoxicality, of their union with the poem, indicate something not only of the poem, but of dialogue itself, of its conditions of possibility and impossibility.

Rachel Ertel has written:

Mais ce « Rien », ce « Personne » est la figure ultime d'un interlocuteur absent dont il est impossible au poète de se déprendre, car ce serait se priver de la parole.⁵³⁹

The figure of no one, the figure of the withdrawal or definite absence of a determined addressee (which has as its consequence, perhaps, that the address can always only be *overheard* and never appropriated *in person* — except, perhaps, in the rare case of its reaching its ownmost, singular, secret destination *just like a message in a bottle* would), or of the determined addressee, is the contour of absence which makes speech itself, dialogue itself, appear in the apostrophe.

The poem and the bottle-mail share, of course, some common characteristics, more or less essential, that make the metaphor possible. But this “metaphor” suggests perhaps something about the signifier, the signifying form, the vehicle, rather than about the signified (content, message, or tenor). There are many other such “metaphors of the poem in Celan’s texts”,⁵⁴⁰ as Martine Broda puts it. But these are perhaps not simply metaphors, or metaphors of metaphor. Let us read some more of Broda’s excellent essay:

On peut se demander ce qu’il y a dans la bouteille. C’est déjà clair chez Mandelstam: « la description de sa destinée et son nom », ainsi que « la date de l’événement » — la fameuse « mémoire des dates » qui réapparaît dans *Le Méridien*. Le message n’est pas un sens informatif, une collection de signifiés dont le poète serait maître. Ce qu’il y a dans cette bouteille hermétique comme le poème, c’est le poète, son don de lui-même — le poème, son destin chiffré. [“À personne adressé”, p. 17.]

In one of the manuscript fragments written for the *Meridian* speech, Celan cites Whitman: “Who touches this touches a man”.⁵⁴¹ The poem is the poet. The gift of the poem is the gift of the poet, and the gift of the poet is no longer to be distinguished from the poet himself. To give is to give oneself, to expose oneself, as endowed to the poem (*mitgegeben*), as a dowry of sorts (*Mitgift*). Abandoned to the waves and currents, as it were. And we may see how intricate the difference between metaphor and non-metaphor, or quasi-metaphor, between *vague* and *littoral* is here.⁵⁴² If the bottle-mail is washed upon the heartland (“*irgendwo und*

⁵³⁹ Rachel Ertel, “La résonance des cendres”, in *Arcadia: Zeitschrift für Allgemeine und Vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft*, ed. J. Neubauer and J. Wertheimer, Bd. 32 / 1997, Heft 1, Celan und / in Europa, (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1997), p. 266.

⁵⁴⁰ “Métaphores du poème comme corps opaque, organique, du sens, totalité, et aussi du destin du sujet qu’il recèle, d’autres métaphores sont proches de celle de la bouteille jetée à la mer dans les textes de Celan.” (Broda, “À personne adressé”, p. 18.) But here one might evoke Celan’s own question: “was eine Metapher denn sei, wo sie im Text stehe” (*TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 60/582).

⁵⁴¹ *TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 422. Whitman’s line is from the poem “So long!” (1860).

⁵⁴² The pun on *vague* (“wave”, but also “vague”) and *littoral* (“shoreline”; cf. *littéral*), and furthermore, between *vague* and *invagination*, as well as the notion of *quasimétaphoricité*, can be found in Derrida’s “Le

irgendwann an Land gespült werden, an Herzland vielleicht”), it is no longer simply a question of a *message* in a bottle, and no longer metaphor either.

In Broda’s text, the designation “hermetic” seems a metaphor that might be associated with the semantic field of the bottle-mail rather than to be understood as properly characteristic of Celan’s poetry and poetics. Celan himself denied that his poems are “hermetic” in any way: “*Ganz und gar nicht hermetisch.*”⁵⁴³ But as Broda herself emphasizes earlier in her text, the bottle message is not Celan’s own metaphor for the poem, rather he receives it from Mandelstam and thus implicitly cites Mandelstam in his Bremen speech. Mandelstam, with whom he more than shakes hands in an imaginary meeting:

ES IST ALLES ANDERS, als du es dir denkst, als ich es mir denke,
die Fahne weht noch,
die kleinen Geheimnisse sind noch bei sich,
sie werfen noch Schatten, davon
lebst du, leb ich, leben wir.

Die Silbermünze auf deiner Zunge schmilzt,
sie schmeckt nach Morgen, nach Immer, ein Weg
nach Rußland steigt dir ins Herz,
die karelische Birke
hat
gewartet,
der Name Ossip kommt auf dich zu, du erzählst ihm,
was er schon weiß, er nimmt es, er nimmt es dir ab, mit Händen,
du löst ihm den Arm von der Schulter, den rechten, den linken,
du heftest die deinen an ihre Stelle, mit Händen, mit Fingern, mit Linien,
– was abriß, wächst wieder zusammen –
da hast du sie, da nimm sie dir, da hast du alle beide,
den Namen, den Namen, die Hand, die Hand,
da nimm sie dir zum Unterpfand,
er nimmt auch das, und du hast
wieder, was dein ist, was sein war,

Windmühlen

stoßen dir Luft in die Lunge, [...] ⁵⁴⁴

retrait de la métaphor” (in *Psyché — inventions de l’autre*).

⁵⁴³ Reported by Michael Hamburger in the introduction to his volume of English translations (1980).

⁵⁴⁴ In *Die Niemandsrose* (1963), *GW* 1:284. Trans. Felstiner: “It’s all different from what you think, from what I think, / the flag still waves, / the little secrets are still intact, / they still cast shadows — on this / you live, I live, we live. // The silver shekel melts on your tongue, / it tastes of Tomorrow, of Always, a path / to Russia rises into your heart, / the Karelian birch / is still / waiting, / the name Osip comes toward you, you tell him / what he already knows, he takes it, he takes it off you with hands, / you loose the arm from his shoulder, the right one, the left, / you fasten your own in their place, with hands, fingers, lines, // — what ripped apart, grows back together — / you’ve got them now, so take them now, so now you’ve got them both, / the name, the name, the hand, the hand, / so take them and this pledge will stand, / he takes that too and you’ve got back / what’s yours, what was his, // windmills // drive air into your lungs, [...]” (*Selected Poems and Prose*, p. 205.)

What, if we may say so, was actually exchanged in the “imaginary meeting”⁵⁴⁵ between Celan and Mandelstam — a poetic handshake indeed, and more⁵⁴⁶ — ‘was’ not a bottle but a pebble: *Kieselstein*, an enigmatic *symbolon* as Broda says,⁵⁴⁷ which turns into a name at the end of the relatively long poem: “*Alba*”, which, as we have already noticed, enciphers the name Celano:

Weiß ist er, weiß, ein Wasser-
strahl findet hindurch, ein Herzstrahl,
ein Fluß,
du kennst seinen Namen, die Ufer
hängen voll Tag, wie der Name,
du tastet ihn ab, mit der Hand:
Alba.⁵⁴⁸

Here Broda finds a correspondence to a passage in the Book of Revelations: “and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone which no one knows except him who receives it.” (Apoc. 2:17; cf. “À personne adressé”, p. 18.)

Mais il le faut, pour bien marquer l'importance, dans la poésie de Celan, de ce geste de passation d'une main d'homme à l'autre, où ce qui est transmis n'est pas au premier d'abord un communicable : une « pierre-cœur », plus semblable à un signifiant qu'à un signifié, dure, mais orientée et encore vibrant d'un souffle, l'énonciation, un nom propre opaque comme le signifiant, peut-être celui qui signe le dire. [“À personne adressé”, p. 18.]

The gesture is the first thing that counts, perhaps. The gesture of giving a sign counts before the sign itself or its content, the gesture of handing over the gift of oneself (“*le poète, son don de lui-même — le poème*”) — the gift of oneself *mitgegeben*, endowed to the poem's phe-

⁵⁴⁵ “Much consideration has also been given to the fact that personal encounters, letters, and conversations with such persons as Theodor Adorno, Martin Buber, Erich von Kahler, Nelly Sachs, and even his imaginary meeting with the Russian Jewish poet Osip Mandelstam played an essential part in the formation of Celan's Jewish identity.” (Christine Ivanovic, “All poets are Jews” — Paul Celan's Readings of Marina Tsvetayeva”, in *Glossen* 6 [1999]; <http://www.dickinson.edu/departments/germn/glossen/heft6/celan.html>.) On this “imaginary meeting”, see Celan's translations of Mandelstam (*GW* 5:48-161), his own poems in *Die Niemandsrose*, the book dedicated to Mandelstam, and the radio polylogue *Die Dichtung Ossip Mandelstams* (written between Feb. 16th and March 8th and broadcast, in a slightly abbreviated form, March 19th, 1960 by Norddeutsche Rundfunk; *TCA/Meridian*, pp. 215-221; also in *Mikrolithen*, pp. 196-206, No. 300; cf. Wiedemann, “Kommentar”, pp. 825ff).

⁵⁴⁶ See “Brief an Hans Bender”: “Ich sehe keinen prinzipiellen Unterschied zwischen Händedruck und Gedicht.” (*GW* 3:177.)

⁵⁴⁷ *GW* 1:285:

es wandert überallhin, wie die Sprache,
wirf sie weg, wirf sie weg,
dann hast du sie wieder, wie ihn,
den Kieselstein aus
der Mährischen Senke,

Cf. Broda, “À personne adressé”, p. 18.

⁵⁴⁸ *GW* 1:286, ad finem. Cf. L. M. Olschner's commentary to this poem in Lehmann et al., *Kommentar zu Paul Celans »Die Niemandsrose«*, pp. 340-352, and above.

nomenal and thus opaque, vocal things — counts more than the countable, decipherable value of the item given (its signification or significance, its information value, etc.). What is enciphered in this gesture is indeed often the proper name of the “one who signs the saying [*celui qui signe le dire*]”; the various poetic encipherings of the name Antschel — Ancel — Celan, and of toponyms such as Bukovina, whose old German name is *das Buchenland* (the land of the beech trees; the homonymy meaning “book” must be taken into account) have been remarkably traced by Thomas Schestag in his essay “buk”.⁵⁴⁹ The poet is metonymized by his *corpus*, his poetry, the gift of himself. But this gift is opaque, opaque like the proper name, as Broda suggests (“*un nom propre opaque comme le signifiant*”) (“À personne adressé”, p. 18).

The name, the opaque signifier, the hand or the *sumbolon* that transmits the warmth of the hand and thus of the heart, the destiny and destination of the name and the one bearing it are not absolutely something else than this person or this reality, even when this reality remains beyond our reach as such. The detachment belonging to metaphor is radically different from the detachment belonging to metonymy, understood as a figure of contiguity — or severed contiguity, detached belonging to a singular reality waiting to be re-attached to another singular reality, radically dissimilar but joined through the *sumbolon*.

Broda still sees these as metaphors — which they of course are, too, even when they would denote the anti-metaphorical resistance of the poem:

Métaphores du poème comme corps opaque, organique, du sens, totalité, et aussi du destin du sujet qu’il recèle, d’autres métaphores sont proches de celle de la bouteille jetée à la mer dans les textes de Celan. On lira le poème *Tout est autrement* [“Es ist alles anders”], qui parle de la rencontre avec Mandelstam (ils échangent leurs mains, marquées des lignes de destin). Vers la fin, un mystérieux symbolon, un « caillou blanc » se change en nom, mis dans la main. « Et je lui donnerai un caillou blanc, et sur ce caillou un « nom nouveau » est écrit, que nul ne connaît, hormis celui qui le reçoit. » C’est dans *L’Apocalypse* (II, 17). Je reviens ici, de façon très allusive, sur quelque chose que j’ai développé ailleurs. [“À personne adressé”, p. 18.]

This “elsewhere” is in another excellent essay, whose first version dates from 1984 and appeared in a revised form in the book *Dans la main de personne* (1986, new augmented edition 2002).⁵⁵⁰ There Broda comments again on the passage of the Bremen speech and the figure of the bottle-mail:

Il n’est jamais question, chez Celan en tout cas, plus clair sur ce point que Mandelstam, de fracturer la bouteille et de déchiffrer son message, ce qui compte est de le ramasser : « Le poème en tant qu’il est, oui, une forme d’apparition du langage, et par là d’essence dialogique, le poème peut être une bouteille jetée à la mer, abandonnée à l’espoir — certes, souvent fragile — qu’elle pourra un jour quelque part être recueillie sur une plage, sur la plage du cœur peut-être. Les poèmes en ce sens sont en chemin :

⁵⁴⁹ Thomas Schestag, “buk”, *MLN* 109 [April 1994], pp. 399-444. Cf. e.g. *Mikrolithen*, p. 116, No. 200.1: “Mein Name – Celan, Célañ, Zelan.” On corresponding encipherings in Kafka, cf. Hamacher, “The Gesture in the Name: On Benjamin and Kafka”, trans. Fenves, in *Premises*, pp. 294-336.

⁵⁵⁰ “Bouteilles, cailloux, schibbolets : Un nom dans la main”, in *Dans la main de personne. Essai sur Paul Celan et autres essais. Nouvelle édition augmentée* (Paris: Cerf, 2002), pp. 95-105.

ils font route vers quelque chose. Vers quoi ? Vers quelque lieu ouvert à invoquer, à occuper, vers un toi invocable, vers une réalité à invoquer. » / Rien qu'un contact avec la main. Et la main chez Celan résume tout l'homme, contigu, continu — voir la lettre à Hans Bender. Le poème est un « serrement de mains » : geste unissant qui fait que d'un homme à l'autre quelque chose passe, est transmis. C'est pour ce geste qu'un « Je » et un « Tu » sans places fixes, assignées, se cherchent et finissent peut-être par se trouver, à travers toute l'épaisseur de la langue, au bout d'une longue distance d'espace-temps. [“Bouteilles, cailloux, schibboleths”, p. 99.]

The poem does not deny this distance or annul it in favour of something supratemporal, supra-spatial and supra-personal, it seeks not to transcend but to traverse: “*Denn das Gedicht ist nicht zeitlos. Gewiß, es erhebt einen Unendlichkeitsanspruch, es sucht, durch die Zeit hindurchzugreifen – durch sie hindurch, nicht über sie hinweg.*”⁵⁵¹ This is said in the Bremen speech just before the paragraph on the bottle-mail. And Broda connects the metaphor of the bottle-mail with the handshake of which Celan speaks, most notably and most famously, in his letter to Hans Bender (“Paris, den 18. Mai 1960”) on the occasion of the latter’s invitation to participate in the collective volume of essays and poetry entitled *Mein Gedicht ist mein Messer*. Instead of an essay or poems, this letter was published in the volume — perhaps its figure of poetry as a handshake was a comment on the title (“My poem is my dagger”), a counter-word to it? This is the exact formulation: “*Ich sehe keinen prinzipiellen Unterschied zwischen Händedruck und Gedicht.*” (GW 3:177.) There is no *difference of principle* between a poem and shaking hands. This is hardly a metaphor. But, in the other essay, Martine Broda writes:

Cette métaphore du « serrement de mains » me semble plus adéquate que celle du dialogue pour dire le geste fondamental de la poésie de Celan: « je gagnai, je perdis (...) je jetai / tout dans la main de personne ». [“À personne adressé”, p. 17.]

Broda uses in the passage cited a few moments ago, and also in the other essay (these two texts are almost versions of each other), the terms “contiguous, continuous”, to denote the way the hand “resumes the whole man” in the hand-shake: “*Et la main chez Celan résume tout l'homme, contigu, continu*” — “*Et la main est ce qui résume tout l'homme, contigu, continu.*”⁵⁵² Contiguity and continuity are terms accepted to characterize metonymy as a figure juxtaposed with — and sometimes also opposed to — metaphor, which is a figure of similarity; metaphor, this figure based on resemblance, is of course also a figure of substitution, or if not substitution, then of impertinent predication, and so on and so forth.

Referring to Mandelstam’s “Interlocutor”, the source of Celan’s image of the bottle-mail, Broda writes:

⁵⁵¹ GW 3:186. Trans. Felstiner: “For a poem is not timeless. Certainly it lays claims to infinity, it seeks to reach through time — through it, not above and beyond it.” Cf. e.g. the documents 140-143 in *Paul Celan – Die Goll-Affäre* (2000), pp. 476-477 = *TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 301, 305, 325, 328. *Et passim*.

⁵⁵² “Bouteilles, cailloux, schibboleths”, p. 99; “À personne adressé”, p. 17.

Ce que le poète-navigateur, à l'heure ultime, confie aux flots roulants vers le futur n'est pas un ensemble de signifiés dont il serait maître. C'est son être même, inscrit dans son poème, souvent meilleur que lui. Le message, c'est lui tout entier, avec le chiffre, secret, de son propre destin, que le poème conserve, que lui ne connaît pas. ["Bouteilles, cailloux, schibboleths", p. 100.]

The white pebble exchanged by the hands — which themselves are exchanged in the poem "Es ist alles anders" — remains, for Broda, a metaphor: "*métaphore de la langue perdue-trouvée et du poème [...] le caillou transmis, métaphore du poème comme corps opaque [...] métaphore du destin du sujet qu'il recèle*" (p. 101). But the pebble (*Kieselstein*) in this poem is not just any metaphorical pebble, it is "*Kieselstein aus / der Mährischen Senke, / den dein Gedanke nach Prag trug*" (GW 1:285),⁵⁵³ etc.; not just any old pebble, but a very specific pebble bearing reference to the unique and singular destiny that can be addressed by a proper name. A *symbolon*, *tessera* or metonymy, not metaphor.

The pledge (*Unterpfand*) of "the name, the name, the hand, the hand",⁵⁵⁴ is an incarnation and, yet, is also thrown "in the air", this "in the air" meaning first of all a *dis*-incarnation: "uncertain", "unsubstantial". But perhaps an inversion takes place here?

ES IST ALLES ANDERS, als du es dir denkst, als ich es mir denke,
die Fahne weht noch,
die kleinen Geheimnisse sind noch bei sich,
sie werfen noch Schatten, davon
lebst du, leb ich, leben wir.⁵⁵⁵

In spite of *what you think and I think*, the flag still waves, the little secrets are still intact (*bei sich*), they still cast shadows, *and on this, you live, I live, we live*. This is to say that you are, I am, we are still living on, *living on all this*, in spite of what you, what I, what we may think of these things and their reality, their presence or absence.

How does this happen? How did this happen, this 'mistake' in thinking otherwise, and how does the correction take place, how can this living-on take place, in spite of what "we" thought, as the strange logic of this first strophe of a poem claims? Perhaps it takes place through another sense of the expression "in the air" (*in der Luft*). This expression, used by Celan on many occasions,⁵⁵⁶ alludes to the opposite expression '*aus der Luft*', '*es ist aus der*

⁵⁵³ Trans. Felstiner: "that pebble from / the Moravian Basin / your thought carried to Prague," (p. 207).

⁵⁵⁴ Cf. DWB: "UNTERPFAND, n. [...] [1] b) von gliedern des leibes; vgl. freispfand (MEIBOM 25): damit du aber der bezahlung versichert seiest, so wil ich mir ein gliedt, es seye ein arm oder schenckel, abschneyden und dir zum underpfandt lassen volksb. v. dr. Faust 81 ndr. Br.; wie d. Faustus geld von einem juden entlehnet und ihme seinen fusz zum u. eingesetzt WIDMANN Fausts leben 262 K." (Bd. 24, Sp. 1711ff.)

⁵⁵⁵ GW 1:284. Trans. Felstiner: "IT'S ALL DIFFERENT from what you think, from what I think, / the flag still waves, / the little secrets are still intact, / they still cast shadows — on this / you live, I live, we live."

⁵⁵⁶ Cf. *Der Meridian*: "in der Luft, die wir zu atmen haben" (GW 3:192); in *Die Niemandsrose*: "IN DER LUFT, da bleibt deine Wurzel, da, / in der Luft." (GW 1:290); in *Atemwende*: "STEHEN, im Schatten / des Wundenmals in der Luft." (GW 2:23); "Blume" in *Sprachgitter*: "Der Stein in der Luft, dem ich folgte." (GW 1:164); and "Todesfuge" in *Mohn und Gedächtnis*: "ein Mann wohnt im Haus dein goldenes Haar Margarete / er hetzt seine Rüden auf uns er schenkt uns ein Grab in der Luft" (GW 1:42). Cf. also "Der Stein aus dem Meer", in *Mohn und Gedächtnis* (GW 1:27).

Luft gegriffen’, meaning ‘it is fully invented’, ‘with no foundation whatsoever’, ‘pure invention’, ‘mere rumour’. ‘In the air’ is, in Celan’s use, no metaphor. It is quite literally “the air we have to breath”.⁵⁵⁷ It is no metaphor, according to Celan himself, not even when he speaks of a “grave in the air”:

Zur »Todesfuge«:
Das »Grab in der Luft« – lieber Walter Jens, das ist, in *diesem* Gedicht, weiß Gott
weder Entlehnung noch Metapher.⁵⁵⁸

This is said in a letter, in a direct address and appeal to someone, and as if in calling God to witness: believe me, as God is my witness, this “grave in the air” is no borrowing and no metaphor either, in spite of the appearances to the contrary. In *this* specific poem, in “Todesfuge”, it is not metaphorical. One must read it *in* the poem, and not detach it in order to find similar expressions elsewhere, concordances, or explain it away as a loan or as an “ambulant metaphor”:

ein Mann wohnt im Haus dein goldenes Haar Margarete
er hetzt seine Rüden auf uns er schenkt uns ein Grab in der Luft⁵⁵⁹

But how on earth can a grave be ‘in the air’? How can it be granted, how can it be given? There is a ‘metonymical’ chain between the ‘speech act’ of the man in the house who not only “looses” the hounds (as Felstiner translates “*hetzt*”) but rushes them,⁵⁶⁰ verbally entices them to their hunt and thus enforces the killing, a chain between this man in the house and his gift of the grave in the air, not only setting the hounds free but enticing them to kill, a chain between this enticing and the smoke rising above the well-known bakeries of death. The grave in the air is not situated (only) in that smoke, nor (only) in the song sung by the prisoners while shovelling the graves in the earth, but (also) in the way the grave is granted: in the death-bringing speech (*todbringende Rede*) enticing the hounds or “hounds”.⁵⁶¹

⁵⁵⁷ TCA/Meridian, Endf. 18b (*loc. cit.*); trans. Felstiner, *Selected Poems and Prose*, p. 405.

⁵⁵⁸ “[Paul Celan an Walter Jens] Paris, am 19. Mai 1961”, in *Paul Celan – Die Goll-Affäre* (2000), p. 532 (doc. 186).

⁵⁵⁹ *Mohn und Gedächtnis*, GW 1:42. Trans. Felstiner: “a man lives in the house your goldenes Haar Margarete / he looses his hounds on us grants us a grave in the air” (p. 33).

⁵⁶⁰ “[het]zen 1 <V. t.> *hitzig verfolgen; mit Hetzhunden jagen, treiben*; Füchse, Hirsche, Rehe, Sauen ~; den Hund auf od. gegen jmdn. ~zur Verfolgung antreiben [...] 2 <V. i.> *sich sehr beeilen; aufreizend reden, Schmähreden führen*; [...] gegen jmdn. ~ andere zum Haß gegen ihn aufstacheln; [...] zum Kriege ~. [...] [< ahd. *hetzen* ‘antreiben’ < germ. **hatjan* ‘zum Verfolgen bringen’; zu germ. **hatan* ‘verfolgen’; verwandt mit *Haß*]” (Wahrig). Cf. also DWB, Bd. 10, Sp. 1272ff.

⁵⁶¹ In the first strophe of “Todesfuge” (GW 1:63ff) are the following lines:

wir schaufeln ein Grab in den Lüften da liegt man nicht eng
Ein Mann wohnt im Haus der spielt mit den Schlangen der
schreibt der schreibt wenn es dunkelt nach Deutschland dein goldenes Haar Margarete
er schreibt es und tritt vor das Haus und es blitzen die Sterne er pfeift seine Rüden herbei
er pfeift seine Juden hervor läßt schaufeln ein Grab in der Erde
er befiehlt uns spielt nun zum Tanz

A song is in the air. Even when it is written down (a “singable residue”) it is “in the air” in more than one way, not only up-in-the-air as something unreal; one of these ways is that it remains at least contiguous with being-in-the-air, namely being audible. The difference between knowing a poem by heart (while this ‘knowing’ does not actually have to ‘know’ the content, the meaning of what is ‘known’ by heart) and reciting it, airing it, is in any case “phenomenologically impure”.⁵⁶² And sometimes things have their only reality in the air: the only grave for those who “went through the chimney” as the saying goes, their only monument is in the air, in the song.

In the two essays we have been discussing by Martine Broda almost everything is illuminating, except the connection between name and metaphor, which Celan himself would very probably have considered malapropos:

Le nom opaque, mis dans la main, est métaphore du poème et du sujet qui s’y efface, lui-même devenu signe, ou plutôt signifiant. Il est métaphore du mot crypté de son destin, au destinataire inconnu destiné. Celan s’est choisi lui-même un nom, je veux dire son nom d’écrivain, pour se dédier, non pas à Dieu [n.: « En leur donnant un nom, les parents dédient à Dieu leurs enfants. » (Benjamin)], mais à personne, ce qui inclut Dieu, et l’autre homme. Ce nom, Celan, envers d’Ansel, contient la figure du retournement, de l’inversion [...]. Signature : nom jeté dans la main de personne. [“Bouteilles, cailloux, schibbolets”, pp. 104-105.]

Perhaps a movement from the metaphor *of* what is no metaphor (the man, the poem) to the quasi-metonymical token of an irreducibly singular reality (hand, handwriting, signature, proper name, a pebble as a *sumbolon*, etc.) is one way to “carry metaphor *ad absurdum*”: to carry the token, or let oneself be carried by the poetic token, where it ceases to be metaphor and *regains reality*. Perhaps heartland: heartland is always somebody’s heart-land. A meton-

Nearer the end of the poem:

er ruft streicht dunkler die Geigen dann steigt ihr als Rauch in die Luft
dann habt ihr ein Grab in den Wolken da liegt man nicht eng

The reader must pay heed to the contrapuntal development of this ‘motif’ in this “Death fugue” as a whole, of course (the lines cited here are not the only lines that should be considered). — The expression “todbringende Rede” is from Celan’s Bremen Prize Speech: “Sie, die Sprache, blieb unverloren, ja, trotz allem. Aber sie mußte nun hindurchgehen durch ihre eigenen Antwortlosigkeiten, hindurchgehen durch furchtbares Verstummen, hindurchgehen durch die tausend Finsternisse todbringender Rede. Sie ging hindurch und gab keine Worte her für das, was geschah; aber sie ging durch dieses Geschehen. Ging hindurch und durfte wieder zutage treten, »angereichert« von all dem.” (GW 3:185-186.) Perhaps might we say that this *hindurch* is one possible translation of the prefix *dia-* of the Celanian “dia-logue” and “dia-chrony” too? Only a few lines later in the Bremen speech: “Denn das Gedicht ist nicht zeitlos. Gewiß, es erhebt einen Unendlichkeitsanspruch, es sucht, durch die Zeit hindurchzugreifen – durch sie hindurch, nicht über sie hinweg.” (GW 3:186. Cf. Zanetti, »zeitoffen«, p. 69 et *passim*.)

⁵⁶² Jean-Luc Chrétien points out that “the distinction between vocal and mental prayer” is “phenomenologically impure” (“The Wounded Word: The Phenomenology of Prayer”, trans. Jeffrey L. Kosky, in Dominique Janicaud et al., *Phenomenology and the “Theological Turn”*. *The French Debate*, trans. Bernard G. Pruzak et al. [Authors: Dominique Janicaud, Jean-François Courtine, Jean-Louis Chrétien, Michel Henry, Jean-Luc Marion, Paul Ricœur.] [Perspectives in Continental Philosophy, No. 15, John D. Caputo, series editor.] [New York: Fordham University Press, 2000], pp. 147-175, here p.148.) I discuss this in more detail in the forthcoming article “‘Schreiben als Form des Gebets’: An Impossible Form of Apostrophe?”.

ymy of one's heart, one's abode, whether it be in the Rhine valley or only in the piece of earth, the pebble that one carries buried in one's palm, or a piece of language learned by heart. Carried with, wherever you go.

This reduction of metaphor, as a reduction of its metaphoricity, can be established because the poem, bearing an implicit signature and counter-signature, as well as a counter-sign or counter-word, creates reality, seeks and attains reality (counter-sign and counter-word are synonyms for password, and even Lucile's *Gegenwort*, "*Es lebe der König*" is a sort of password, even when it is also a *counter-password*, a *shibboleth in reverse*):⁵⁶³

Le mot, ou le nom, mis dans la main, est bien un schibboleth, un mot de passe. C'est-à-dire le mot sans référent, au signifié accessoire, qui permet de quelque chose se transmettre, passe. Le poème hermétique est lui-même le schibboleth, il est un mot de passe. Pur corps de lettres sans référent, mais référent de lui-même, car créateur de réalité, ses signifiés ne sont pas l'essentiel. ["Bouteilles, cailloux, schibboleths", pp. 102-103.]

But why on earth does Broda, again in the other essay ("À personne adressé"), claim that *shibboleth* is "the last metaphor"?

La dernière métaphore est celle du mot de passe, du *schibboleth*, métaphore du poème hermétique lui-même. Qui produit ses effets quand il est reçu plutôt que compris. ["À personne adressé", p. 18.]

Perhaps this "last metaphor" is no more metaphor — or at least it denotes, if it is a metaphor of the poem and if we draw the consequences of Broda's own suggestions, the effect that takes place *before* comprehension and certainly before any metaphorical undertaking. It is the compelling force of the poem which drives us to "cite and recite beyond knowledge" and to "learn by heart", as Jacques Derrida has said about Celan's poetry, a "compulsion to cite and re-cite, to repeat what we understand without completely understanding it".⁵⁶⁴

Shibboleth — or rather *Schibboleth* — can be the last metaphor for the poem ("*La dernière métaphore [...] du poème hermétique lui-même*"), because it marks the limit of *Über-*

⁵⁶³ "Wirklichkeit ist nicht, Wirklichkeit will gesucht und gewonnen werden." (GW 3:167). Trans. Walter Biller and Jerry Glenn: "Reality doesn't exist, it must be sought and attained." ("Reply to an Inquiry held by the Librairie Flinker, Paris", in *Prose Writings and Selected Poems* [Carlton, Victoria: Paper Castle, 1977], p. 24; cit. Ian Fairley, "When and Where? Paul Celan's *Fadensonnen*", in Celan, *Fathomsuns and Benighted*, trans. Ian Fairley [Manchester: Carcanet, 2001], p. 7.) — According to James K. Lyon, Celan "took note" of the following sentence in *Sein und Zeit*: "Die Wahrheit (Entdecktheit) muß dem Seienden immer erst abgerungen werden." (SuZ, p. 222 = GA 2:294; cit. James K. Lyon, *Paul Celan and Martin Heidegger: An Unresolved Conversation 1951-1970*, p. 17.) However, a marking of this particular sentence is not reported in the catalogue *La bibliothèque philosophique*, although a sentence in the end of the same brief paragraph has been marked by Celan with a double stroke in the margin: "daß In-der-Unwahrheit-sein eine wesenhafte Bestimmung des In-der-Welt-seins ausmacht?" (p. 379, No. 613). This reading trace of course confirms that Celan did focus his attention on the paragraph, even though for some reason he did not mark either the sentence that begins it (cited above) or its sequel, for instance this phrase: "Das Seiende wird der Verborgenheit entrissen."

⁵⁶⁴ "Poetics and Politics of Witnessing", trans. Outi Pasanen, in *Sovereignties in Question* (2005), p. 87; *Poétique et politique du témoignage*, pp. 57ff.

tragbarkeit, transferability, translatability. And this is perhaps one reason for the fact that in the two poems in which the word *Schibboleth* occurs, several languages, several shibboleths are cited and mentioned and perhaps referred to: *no pasarán*, *Peuple de Paris*, *Wien und Madrid*, *Estremadura*, *Februar*, *Dreizehnter Feber*, *Hirten-Spanisch*, and so on, all these counter-words and citations and dates and toponyms and idioms, and even the German catchword, in italics, from Büchner's pamphlet, *Friede den Hütten!*

Shibboleth marks this borderline between idioms, the limit between languages, and finally, between the speakers of different idioms, referring to the very corporeal conditions of possibility for the correct pronunciation of an idiom. An infant is given a name but also a mother tongue, a native language which once and for all forms his or her speech organs and delimits, at least to a certain extent, his or her ability to pronounce certain phonemes. The body is literally marked, formed by language. We shall return to this.

But the shibboleth is also a password that brings these idioms together. What is absolutely idiomatic, the corporeal singularity of each individual person, can also be named by this word. A word whose significance does not reside in its signification. It names the entrance into a community, a community of speakers, which each of us has once had to undergo; and this is what brings it close to another main theme of Jacques Derrida's first essay on Celan, *Schibboleth — pour Paul Celan* (1986), namely circumcision.

Martine Broda comes thematically quite close to Derrida's *Schibboleth*, and she refers to this "*bel essai*" in her essay whose first version she had published in 1984 and whose revised book version appeared two years later.⁵⁶⁵ But speaking of another carrier of messages, not bottle-mail this time but a carrier pigeon, which would perhaps be another metaphor for poetry in Broda's view, Derrida says the very opposite. A carrier pigeon very much resembles in certain respects bottle-mail and could thus be considered yet another metaphor for the poem. But for Derrida, such a vehicle, such a carrier is not a metaphor. This vehicle is alive — or supposed to be alive. It is a bird, a carrier pigeon:

[U]ne date n'allant jamais sans lettre à déchiffrer, je pense à l'anneau du pigeon-voyageur, au centre de *La Contrescarpe*. Le pigeon-voyageur transporte, transfère, traduit un message chiffré, mais ce n'est pas une métaphore. Il part à sa date, celle de l'envoi, il doit revenir de l'autre lieu au même, celui de sa provenance, aller-retour accompli. Or la question du chiffre, Celan ne la pose pas seulement au sujet du message mais de l'anneau même, du signe d'appartenance, alliance et condition du retour. Le chiffre du sceau, l'empreinte de l'anneau *compte* peut-être plus que le contenu du message. Comme dans *schibboleth*, le sens du mot importe moins que, disons, sa forme signifiante quand elle devient mot de passe, marque d'appartenance, manifestation de l'alliance.

⁵⁶⁵ I do not know whether the footnote mentioning Derrida's *Schibboleth* dates from the 1986 revision or whether it is added only to the augmented edition of 2002.

Scherte die Brieftaube aus, war ihr Ring
zu entziffern? (All das
Gewölk um sie her – es war lesbar.) Litt es
der Schwarm? Und verstand,
und flog wie sie fortblieb?

Une date s'emporte, elle se transporte, s'enlève – et donc s'efface dans sa lisibilité même. L'effacement ne lui survient pas comme un accident, il n'affecte pas son sens ou sa lisibilité, il se confond au contraire avec l'accès même de la lecture à ce qu'une date peut encore signifier.⁵⁶⁶

The carrier pigeon in this poem, or as it is also called, homing pigeon, is no metaphor. This figure of the homing pigeon is no metaphor for metaphor, either. Derrida relates it to *shibboleth*, the word whose “signifying form” counts more than the content of the message, as soon as it has become a password: the Hebrew word *shibboleth* which originally meant, depending on the context, “ear of corn” or “stream in flood”, was “used by Jephthah as a test word by which to distinguish the fleeing Ephraimites (who could not pronounce the *sh*) from his own men, the Gileadites (Judges xii. 4-6)”, as the *Oxford English Dictionary* tells us; by “transfer-ence” it has come to mean, among several other things, “[a] word or sound which a person is unable to pronounce correctly; a word used as a test for detecting foreigners, or persons from another district, by their pronunciation” and “[a] peculiarity of pronunciation or accent indicative of a person’s origin” (*OED*). It resembles the carrier pigeon, and perhaps also bottle-mail and all these alleged “metaphors” for the poem — which are actually anti-metaphors, counter-figures to metaphor — by virtue of its emphasis on the signifying form instead of the content or message.

⁵⁶⁶ Derrida, *Schibboleth — pour Paul Celan* (Paris: Galilée, 1986), p. 39. Trans. Joshua Wilner, revised by Thomas Dutoit: “[S]ince a date is never without a letter to be deciphered, I think of the ring of the carrier pigeon at the center of ‘La Contrescarpe.’ The carrier pigeon transports, transfers, or transmits a ciphered message, but this is not a metaphor. It departs at its date, that of its sending, and it must return from the other place to the same one, that from which it came, completing a round trip. Now the question of the cipher is posed by Celan not only with regard to the message but also with regard to the ring itself, sign of belonging, alliance, and condition of return. The cipher of the seal, the imprint of the ring, *counts*, perhaps more than the content of the message. As with *shibboleth*, the meaning of the word matters less than, let us say, its signifying form once it becomes a password, a mark of belonging, the manifestation of an alliance:

Did the carrier pigeon sheer off, was its ring
decipherable? (All that
cloud around it — it was readable.) Did the
flock endure it? And understand,
and fly as the other stayed on?

“A date gets carried away, transported; it takes off, takes itself off — and thus effaces itself in its very readability. Effacement is not something that befalls it like an accident; it affects neither its meaning nor its readability; it merges, on the contrary, with reading’s very access to that which a date may still signify.” (Derrida, “Shibboleth — For Paul Celan”, in *Sovereignities in Question: The Poetics of Paul Celan*, ed. Thomas Dutoit and Outi Pasanen [New York: Fordham University Press, 2005], pp. 19-20. A translation revised by T. Dutoit, based on Joshua Wilner’s translation. The poem’s [GW 1:278] translation is by Wilner, too.)

And yet, the cooing carrier of coordinates — since the information trusted to the homing pigeon can concern the location of the troops sending it off at a given time — carries also the date of its sending, and a date, says Derrida, is always a metonymy: “*La métonymie de la date (une date est toujours aussi une métonymie) désigne la partie d’un événement ou d’une séquence d’événements pour en rappeler le tout.*” (*Schibboleth*, p. 41.) And as Derrida says elsewhere, in the phrase we have already cited: “*Une métonymie porte au moins le deuil d’un sens propre ou d’un nom propre*” (*Le toucher...*, p. 29, *loc. cit.*). A date is, insofar as it is a date, immediately exposed to its other, another date which it already is, insofar as it is a date: it is its own self-effacement. “*Elle doit s’effacer pour devenir lisible.*” (*Schibboleth*, p. 32.)

La première inscription d’une date signifie cette possibilité : ce qui ne peut pas revenir reviendra comme tel, non pas seulement dans la mémoire, comme tout souvenir, mais aussi à la même date, à une date en tout cas analogue, par exemple chaque 13 février... Et chaque fois, à la même date sera commémorée la date *de* ce qui ne saurait revenir. Celle-ci aura signé ou scellé l’unique, le non-répétable ; mais pour le faire, elle aura dû se donner à lire dans une forme suffisamment codée, lisible, déchiffrable pour que dans l’analogie de l’anneau anniversaire (le 13 février 1962 est *analogue* au 13 février 1963) l’indéchiffrable *apparaisse*, fût-ce *comme* indéchiffrable. [*Schibboleth*, pp. 37-38.]

The figure of the date carries along with it the same features of double-sidedness as perhaps any truly poetical figure or trope: its wish to be reduced *ad absurdum qua similitudo*, as a false identity, a wish to be deciphered as an undecipherable singularity, perhaps.

AMBIGUITY WITHOUT A MASK

Hugo Huppert, who had become acquainted with Celan already in Vienna in 1947, scrupulously begins the account of his interview with the poet by reporting its time and place: December 26, 1966, 78 Rue de Longchamp. The account is titled “»Spirituell«: Ein Gespräch mit Paul Celan”.⁵⁶⁷ Huppert describes how his interlocutor silently moved his lips as this rare German-speaking visitor recited some poems from *Atemkristall*.⁵⁶⁸ Huppert comments on the poems to the poet by characterizing them as “unspeakably abstract, imponderably spiritual”, to which Celan responds that these characterizations delight him and indicate, perhaps, that the guest resembles him in being no supporter of “the socialization of the interior life”,⁵⁶⁹ and that he hopes the information that proceeds from his verse (“*die Informationen, die von meinem Vers ausgehen*”) is precisely that, spiritual.

⁵⁶⁷ In Hamacher and Menninghaus, eds., *Paul Celan*, pp. 319-324, already cited above.

⁵⁶⁸ The first cycle of 21 poems from *Atemwende* (1967) was published already in 1965 as a limited edition, illustrated by Gisèle Celan-Lestrange, by the title *Atemkristall* (cf. e.g. *GW* 3:36). Huppert uses incorrectly the title *Atemwende* for this special edition.

⁵⁶⁹ “»Unsagbar abstrakt«, meinte ich, »unwägbbar spirituell« [...] »Es freut mich, daß Sie »abstrakt« sagen, auch »spirituell« ist zutreffend. Vielleicht sind Sie, wie ich, kein Freund der Vergesellschaftung des Innenlebens.” (Cit. Huppert, “Spirituell”, p. 319.)

Celan tells Huppert that at an earlier time, in Vienna, he still used to “experiment with the mental media of communication”: somewhat paradoxically, “a play of hide-and-seek behind metaphors” was for him such a medium, a medium he had since those days denied himself.⁵⁷⁰

Heute, nach zwanzig Jahren Erfahrungen mit den Widerständen zwischen dem Innen und dem Außen, habe ich das Wörtchen »wie« aus meiner Werkstatt verbannt. [“Spirituell”, p. 319]⁵⁷¹

The particle — *Wörtchen* — *wie* indicates a comparison in general or a simile in particular and, by a metonymy of sorts, also metaphor as a condensed simile, a concise figure of resemblance.

Es gibt ein Gedicht »Sprachgitter« von mir, nach welchem ich einen ganz Lyrikband benannt habe [1959]. Wissen Sie, was Gitter sein können? Dort hab’ ich, fast zum letztenmal, das »wie« angewandt und diesen Vierzeiler hernach zwischen Klammern isoliert: »*Wär ich wie du. Wärest du wie Ich. / Standen wir nicht unter einem Passat? / Wir sind Fremde.*« Das war mein Abschied von dem trügerischen »Wie«. Ich stehe auf einer andern Raum- und Zeitebene als mein Leser; er kann mich nur »entfernt« verstehen, er kann nicht in den Griff bekommen, immer greift er nur die Gitterstäbe zwischen uns: »*Augenrund zwischen den Stäben. / Flimmertier Lid / rudert nach oben, / gibt einen Blick frei.*« So lautet mein Text. [“Spirituell”, p. 319.]⁵⁷²

We are always on separate levels of time and place, and not only as writers and readers. We never coincide. According to one traditional way of speaking, ‘spiritual’ would be something that transcends time and place. But (the) poem is not timeless: it does not transcend time, it aspires to traverse time (cf. *GW* 3:186).

But the poem is written, it is language, it aspires to conversation, and this conversation may take place through the bars — and these bars *are* conversation, they are *Sprachgitter*.

Und dieser durchs Gitter »freigegebene Blick«, dieses »entfernte Verstehen« ist schon versöhnlich, ist schon Gewinn, Trost, vielleicht Hoffnung. Keiner ist »wie« der andere; und darum soll er vielleicht den andern studieren, sei’s auch durchs Gitter hindurch. Dieses Studium ist mein »spirituelles‘ Dichten«, wenn Sie so wollen. [“Spirituell”, p. 320.]⁵⁷³

⁵⁷⁰ “Damals, in Wien, experimentierte ich noch mit den seelischen Medien der Mitteilung. Ich übte noch das Versteckenspiel hinter Metaphern.” (‘Spirituell’, p. 319.)

⁵⁷¹ “Today, after twenty years of experiencing the resistance between the inside and the outside, I have expelled the tiny word ‘like’ from my workshop.” (My translation.)

⁵⁷² “There is a poem of mine, ‘Sprachgitter’ [‘Language Mesh’], [...] There I have, for the last time almost, used the ‘like’, and afterwards isolated this four-lined stanza between brackets: ‘If I were like you. If you were like me. / Did we not stand / under *one* trade wind? / We are strangers.’ That was when I parted with the treacherous ‘like’. I am situated on a different level of place and time than my reader; he can only comprehend me in a ‘distanced’ fashion, he cannot come to grips with me, he always only grasps the bars of the grating between us: ‘Eye’s roundness between the bars. // Vibratile monad eyelid / propels itself upward, / releases a glance.’ That is how my text reads.” (My translation, except for the verse trans. by Michael Hamburger.) The emphasis on the word “*einem*”, belonging to the published version of the poem (*GW* 1:167), is missing in Huppert’s text and is hereby restored.

⁵⁷³ “And this ‘liberated glance’ through the lattice, this ‘distanced comprehension’ is already comforting, al-

“If you wish”: not completely without reservations, perhaps, or without differentiations. We already saw that what is ‘spiritual’ in the poem is both “embodied and disembodied” at one and the same time. ‘Spiritual’ seems to be situated between the interior life and its manifestation, between inhaling and exhaling, in the becoming manifest of the non-manifest. In any case, the study of the other is launched at this borderline, through the “language mesh (*Sprachgitter*)”. The spirituality is linked with corporeality in the sense that the body is the locus of invisibility and singularity: the spiritual is the secret of the invisible, but nothing otherworldly, nothing removed from the terrestrial and corporeal ‘reality’; we also remember that, for Celan, the opposite of the ‘merely apparent’ (*scheinbar*) is not the ‘real’ but the ‘non-apparent’ (*unscheinbar*), the invisible, the otherness that never comes to daylight in itself, in all its depth.

What about Huppert’s other characterization? It soon appears that Celan is less satisfied with “abstract” than he first seemed to be. He refers to *poésie concrète* and remarks: “It is neither concrete nor poetry [*weder konkret noch Poesie*]. A philistine abuse of language. A sin against the word. [*Ein banausischer Sprachmißbrauch. Die Sünde am Wort.*]” As long as the “slanderers” call themselves concrete poets, Celan will call himself “abstract”, although he knows that in the perspective of any “epistemology [*Erkenntnistheorie*]” he does not have the least to do with “abstract art, that is to say: art without objects [*gegenstandsloser Kunst*]”. Thus the departure from the “treacherous ‘like’” or from the “hide-and-seek behind metaphors” — “metaphor” understood here, at once, as a “medium of communication”, and as something that you can hide behind, which is by no means a contradiction — does not mean turning towards a non-figurative art form, something like ‘abstract art’. Actually Celan sees his own ‘abstract’ poetry as rather ‘concrete’, but the latter characterization has been made even less usable than the former, by the “concrete poets”, the anti-poets. “A language that no one speaks is anti-poetic. [*Eine Sprache, die niemand spricht, ist anti-poetisch.*]” As Celan presents his wife’s studio to the guest, the conversation turns more closely to the visual arts and also touches upon music. He tells his visitor that he doesn’t “work with a graving tool [*Stichel*], not even in a figurative sense [*auch im übertragenen Sinn nicht*]”, and that he nowadays, years since “Todesfuge” has become “thrashed ripe for a reading-book [*schon lesebuchsreif gedroschen*]”, separates rigorously poetry from music, while graphic art is nearer to what he does, although he “only uses more shade than Gisèle [*nur schattiere ich mehr*]” (“Spirituell”, pp. 320-321).

ready an advantage, consolation, perhaps hope. No one is ‘like’ the other; and therefore he should perhaps study the other, be it through lattice then, through the bars. This study is my ‘spiritual’ poetry, if you wish.” (My translation.)

Ich bin für Verständlichkeit, sogar Gemeinverständlichkeit; nur wollen auch diese präparierten Druckplatten, französisch ›cliché‹ genannt, kein Klischee sein... [“Spirituell”, p. 320.]⁵⁷⁴

Every phrase always already bears the mark of reproduction, but we should pay attention to the *will* of the *cliché*, to the will of the figure itself, to be anti-cliché.

Und was meine angeblichen Verschlüßelungen angeht, ich würde eher sagen: Mehrdeutigkeit ohne Maske, so entspricht sie exakt meinem Gefühl für Begriffsüberschneidung, Überlappung der Bezüge. Sie kennen doch auch die Erscheinung der Interferenz, Einwirkung zusammentreffender kohärenter Welle aufeinander. Sie wissen Bescheid über das dialektische Übergehen und Umschlagen – die Wandlung ins Benachbarte, ins Nächstfolgende, ja oft ins Gegenteilige. Dem entspricht meine (nur an gewissen Wendepunkten, Dreh-Achsen, auftretende) Mehrdeutigkeit. Sie trägt auch dem Umstand Rechnung, daß wir an jedem Ding Schliffflächen beobachten, die das Ding aus mehreren Sichtwinkeln zeigen, in mehreren ›Brechungen‹ und ›Zerlegungen‹, die keineswegs nur ›Schein‹ sind. Ich trachte sprachlich wenigstens Ausschnitte aus der Spektral-Analyse der Dinge wiederzugeben, sie gleichzeitig in *mehreren* Aspekten und Durchdringungen mit anderen Dingen zu zeigen: mit nachbarlichen, nächstfolgenden, gegenteiligen. Weil ich leider außerstande bin, die Dinge *allseitig* zu zeigen. Ich bleibe in meinen Sachen sinnfällig; sie prästendieren niemals aufs ›Übersinnliche‹, das liegt mir nicht, das wäre Pose. Ich lehne es ab, den Poeten als Propheten hinzustellen, als ›vates‹, als Seher und Weissager. Ich versuche, Ihnen zu erklären, weshalb ich meine angebliche Abstraktheit und wirkliche Mehrdeutigkeit für Momente des Realismus halte... [“Spirituell”, p. 321.]⁵⁷⁵

Celan considers his ambiguity as fidelity to his *Seelenrealismus*, and his shades as responding to the truth of *Nuance*: they respond to how we observe in each thing its ground surfaces, the way it is cut, ground (*Schliffflächen*), or, as we could say, the way each thing is constituted through this multiangular observation of ‘refractions’ and ‘cuttings’ that are nevertheless no mere appearances (“*Schein*”). Still, it is not painting, drawing, graving, sculpting, and not absolutely versatile (“*allseitig*”) either: “Yet,” admits Celan, “I am unfortunately not in a position to show the things in *all* of their aspects.” He does not mean only the aspects of particular things, but also how the things ‘penetrate’ and ‘overlap’ each other. These terms themselves, the “phenomenon of interference” and the “spectral analysis” that describe the ambiguity or equivocality (“*Mehrdeutigkeit*”) without a mask and multi-facetedness, may be called metaphors, to be sure. They are borrowed from other domains, as it seems. By interference, Celan refers to the theory in physics of the “mutual action of two waves or systems of waves, in reinforcing or neutralizing each other, when their paths meet or cross” (*OED*), and

⁵⁷⁴ “I am all for comprehensibility, even for common comprehensibility; but even these prepared printing plates, called ‘cliché’ in French, want to be no cliché...” (My translation.)

⁵⁷⁵ “And as it comes to my alleged encipherings [*Verschlüßelungen* is an expression Huppert used a moment before], I would rather say: ambiguity without a mask, thus it corresponds exactly to my sense of conceptual intersection, overlapping of relations. [...] I remain sensibly plain in my things; they never pretend to the ‘suprasensual’, it wouldn’t suit me, it would be a pose. [...] I see my alleged abstractness and my actual ambiguity as moments of realism ...” (My translation; for the rest of this passage, cf. the interpretative paraphrasing in the following paragraph.)

by spectral analysis he refers to the “analysis of light or another oscillating system into a spectrum” (*OED*). But the verbalization, namely the concept formation in these source domains themselves, is not exempt of borrowing resources from — as it were — another domain, the existing vocabulary and syntactic possibilities in the language system, either. The spectres of polysemy and the originary violence of catachresis, namely abuse of metaphor, haunt the spectral analysis, and the technical term of interference cannot avoid being interfered with by these ghosts, either. And this need not be a hindrance to the exactness and precision of the concept formation. To the contrary: it is rather the inevitable procedure in coining new terms. But these terms and models and theories themselves, in the sciences, can always be shown as inadequate, only analogical or sometimes even metaphorical, and superseded by new models, theories and analogies. This is not the case with the phenomenon of language itself, the appearance or manifestation of language in the poem (“*Erscheinungsform der Sprache*”), to which Celan applies these terms — catachrestically, no doubt, *and in return*, so to say, in a return to the ‘source domain’ of these terms which is actually language itself — the “poetizing”⁵⁷⁶ of the things in their several overlapping and sometimes contradicting or paradoxical aspects, is not something refutable or supersedable by new, more accurate visions and theories. The phenomena (*Erscheinungen*) constituted in this poetizing, and the poetizing itself, are not mere “appearances”, mere “sham [*Schein*]”, and the apparent “metaphors” of interference and spectral analysis must be read in their anti-metaphorical context, as indications toward the original ‘source domain’ of these terms, toward the linguistic prerequisites of naming that some call, confusingly and metaphorically, the “metaphoric” resources of language.

Almost fifteen years before his conversation with Huppert Celan wrote this note:

Das Miteinander der Worte im Gedicht: nicht nur ein Miteinander, auch ein Gegeneinander. Auch ein Zueinander und Voneinander. Begegnung, Widerstreit und Abschied in einem.⁵⁷⁷

⁵⁷⁶ This “poetizing” must be read as a translation of Heidegger’s *Dichtung* in the sense that even the objects of science, such as the sun and the wind of meteorology, are no less “poetized [*gedichtet*]”, even though poetized “more clumsily and unpoetically”, than the sun and the wind in Hölderlin’s hymns; this is said as part of one of Heidegger’s anti-metaphorical arguments (*GA* 52:40).

⁵⁷⁷ *Mikrolithen*, p. 98, No. 162.5. Wiedemann considers it probable that the series of notes to which this one belongs was written between September and November 1954 (“Kommentar”, pp. 503ff).

SQUALLS

A reading of the poem “Ein Dröhnen”

EIN DRÖHNEN: es ist
die Wahrheit selbst
unter die Menschen
getreten,
mitten ins
Metapherngestöber.⁵⁷⁸

Me-ta-phern-ge-stö-ber: First, two light pats of the first two crystals from above, the first two syllables, one lighter than the other (*Me-ta-*), then a whirlwind, a violent twist of air pressing itself forth through a spiral, hurling about the light particles that it carries afar in a quick rush (*-phern-*), then a sudden stop, a suspension in mid-air, as the wind halts and leaves the light little things hovering about on their own (*-ge-*), before they are grabbed and pressed forth again in a horizontal thrust (*-stö-*), then a heavier fall that ends thick and mute in the white mass below (*-ber*). *Me-ta-phern-ge-stö-ber*.

But who said anything of snow? *Gestöber* does not have to be *Schneegestöber*, and when it consists of something other than snowflakes or hail or dust, it still does not have to be a metaphor. In another poem, *Partikelgestöber* is not only the Democritean movement of atoms, but also the dispersion of linguistic particles on the page, *Par- / tikelgestöber* (cf. “Einführung”, *GW* 1:195ff). The white below the line, the silence after *Metapherngestöber*, does not have to be the silence of snow, or metaphor.

This poem, “Ein Dröhnen”, appears to be one of the most accessible in Paul Celan’s book *Atemwende* (1967). In this respect, taken that this poem could be classified as relatively accessible, it is understandable that the volume caused an allergic reaction in a contemporary critic who exclaimed: “Such a gifted, experienced poet, so much praised by the critique as

⁵⁷⁸ *GW* 2:89. Trans. Michael Hamburger:

A RUMBLING: truth
itself has appeared
among humankind
in the very thick of their
flurrying metaphors.

Cf. John Felstiner’s translation:

A RUMBLING: it is
Truth itself
walked among
men,
amidst the
metaphor squall.

Paul Celan is, seems to be not the least interested in commonly comprehensible poems any longer.”⁵⁷⁹ The poem “Ein Dröhnen” serves as the critic’s proof of how the poet’s deliberate incomprehensibility fits together with his “theoretical stand”: with the conviction that “the truth of the things” is irreconcilable with the “idle talk [*Gerede*]” of the people. In the critic’s view, the truth is for Celan beyond idle talk, beyond “fallenness [*Verfallenheit*]”, and indeed, this critic appeals to Heidegger and the fact which, as it seems to him, has been overlooked by the poet, the equiprimordiality of truth and untruth — authenticity and inauthenticity — that determines *Dasein*: “*Das Dasein ist gleichursprünglich in der Wahrheit und Unwahrheit.*” The human being-there lives as originally in truth as in untruth, and even the poet must live his life in both “authenticity [*Eigentlichkeit*]” and “inauthenticity [*Uneigentlichkeit*]”. It even seems that the critic would recommend silence as a solution to the poet’s problem, as “the simplest consequence” of the poet’s tendency towards “the uninhabited” or “unrelatedness” (“*Paul Celan ist ein Dichter der Unbezogenheit*”), the tendency of the poet who already moves “in the no-man’s-land between speaking and remaining silent”.⁵⁸⁰

The poem is comprehensible enough for the critic to infer a “theoretical stand”, a poetic programme of incomprehensibility out of it: the juxtaposition of truth and metaphor in the poem is enough evidence for him. By referring to “Ein Dröhnen” the critic seems to acknowledge metaphor as a normal, standard procedure towards common comprehensibility and, on the other hand, that this detour belongs for the most part to the “idle talk”, to the side of “fallenness” and “inauthenticity”. He also recognizes Celan’s critical stance toward poetic metaphor, or toward the poetic concept of metaphor.⁵⁸¹ So this critic, Arthur Häny, sees the

⁵⁷⁹ Arthur Häny, “Paul Celans »Atemwende«” [1968], in: Dietlind Meinecke, ed., *Über Paul Celan* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1970), pp. 207-209, here p. 207. The translation is mine.

⁵⁸⁰ Cf. Häny, p. 207.

⁵⁸¹ Some readers of “Ein Dröhnen” have seen this in a different light. Ulrike Poch, in her brief analysis of the poem, remarks upon the “tellingly ambiguous [*vielsagend mehrdeutig*]” character of Celan’s stance toward metaphor: “Der Ort, das »Metapherngestöber«, an dem die Wahrheit erscheint, wirkt ungünstig. Das Wort »Metapherngestöber« signalisiert einen ungeordneten Schwall von verwirrenden, womöglich täuschenden Worten. Und doch werden die Metaphern als der menschliche Ort gewürdigt, an dem die Wahrheit sich dröhnend, unüberhörbar bemerkbar macht. Die Anspielung auf das Neue Testament, Johannes 1,14 (»Und das Wort ward Fleisch und wohnte unter uns«) wirkt mit am feierlichen Charakter der Allegorie. Sprachskepsis, die Metaphernskepsis einschließt, und Hochschätzung dichterischer Metaphorik prallen in Celans Gedicht aufeinander.” (Ulrike Poch, *Metaphernvertrauen und Metaphernskepsis: Untersuchungen metaphorischer Strukturen in neuerer Lyrik* [Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang, 1989], pp. 287-288.) Celan’s objection to metaphor (as a hobbyhorse of criticism), it seems to me, is rather based on the failure of the word to become flesh and to abide amongst us — or rather, the detachment from what is “earthly, terrestrial”, and human. The (possibility of a) Biblical allusion in the poem “Ein Dröhnen” is evident; its ‘function’ is not evident at all. One of the ironies of irony remains the fact that one can never be quite sure whether it *is* irony. — For another interpretation of the poem, cf. the chapter “Paul Celan: ‘EIN DRÖHNEN’” in Franz Schneider, *Plötzlichkeit und Kombinatorik. Botho Strauß, Paul Celan, Thomas Bernhard, Brigitte Kronauer* (Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 1993), pp. 121-129. Schneider writes, with regard to the poem in question and the title of the book *Atemwende* (p. 127): “Grundsituation ist hierbei das Verstummen der Sprache vor der Wirklichkeit.” This would require much differentiation: Celan’s own statements on poetry, reality, language, and their interrelation, seem to anticipate objections to such a simplification. — Yet another interpretation of this poem is to be found in Ulrich Fülleborn’s article “Rilke und Celan”: “Das ‘Dröhnen’ [...] bildet hier den stärksten Kontrast zur Belanglosigkeit menschlicher Dichtersprache; und wenn es auch als eine auditive Epiphanie der ‘Wahrheit’ inmitten der Menschen ertönt,

poet offending both common comprehensibility and the poetic tradition by his unwillingness to use metaphor, an instrument of both ordinary spontaneous communication and poetry.

Indeed, as Blanchot writes, “there comes a moment when art realizes the dishonesty of everyday speech and departs from it”.⁵⁸² This dishonesty may be a moment of ‘art’ in everyday speech, an eloquence by which so-called common sense betrays itself; this may also be a naïve lack of honesty, a failure to see this betrayal, which is not due to an intended, conscious dishonesty of a speaking subject. The moment of its realization, in art or by art, may of course be seen as a moment in history, or as thematized at a certain historical moment, and perhaps this should have bothered the Germanist critic Arthur Häny more than it seems to have done, in all his nostalgia for the comprehensible metaphor as an elevation of “idle talk”. The rapport between the vernacular, so-called natural language and artful eloquence is indeed recognized by him. But of course, Häny’s charges against the heinous poetic rebellion seem absolutely anachronistic with regard to the historical situation, the genocide and the verbicide that could not leave the language of art and poetry untouched.⁵⁸³

Regarding other matters, such as Celan’s motivation for the anti-metaphoric stance — or the anti-metaphoric movement of his poems in the *Atemwende* book — the critic is even more at a loss. He fails to recognize that the truth still arrives, in Celan’s poem, “amongst men [*unter die Menschen*]” and that the poet still writes — or that the poem still “speaks” as Celan reminds his audience in the *Meridian* speech — and has not chosen silence after all, and that the title of the book, *Atemwende*, recalls the word that was first used in the *Meridian* speech (1960) where this speaking of the poem was first addressed, and precisely against the fantasy of an “absolute poem”; in spite of this, Häny attributes to Celan a “non-commitment of the absolute [*die Unverbindlichkeit des Absoluten*]” and “absolute non-commitment [*absolute Unverbindlichkeit*]”. The sheer rage of Häny’s reaction, measured against the general enthusiasm mentioned but not shared by this critic, is an indication that something extraordinary may have happened in the history of poetry. The critical resistance may be a reaction to the poem’s unwillingness to respond to some traditional methods and horizons of interpretation, such as the tropological models; and for some reason, these poems that defy comprehension are not laughed at in such an easy and simple manner as they perhaps would have been in earlier days: “*In früheren Zeiten hätte man über ein solches Gedicht [“Keine Sandkunst mehr”] schlicht und einfach gelacht.*” Poor Arthur Häny. His golden days would never return.

bleibt es doch seinem Wesen nach jenseits ihrer Maße und Fassungskraft [...]” (In Ingeborg H. Solbrig & Joachim W. Storck, eds., *Rilke heute. Beziehungen und Wirkungen* [Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1975], pp. 49-70, here p. 58.)

⁵⁸² “La Littérature et le droit à la mort”, in *Part du feu* (Paris: Gallimard, 1949), p. 334. English translation: “Literature and the Right to Death”, trans. Lydia Davis, in *The Work of Fire* (Stanford, Cal.: Stanford U. P., 1995), p. 332. Translation modified.

⁵⁸³ Cf. e.g. *Mikrolithen*, p. 122, No. 214: “Kein Gedicht nach Auschwitz (Adorno): / Was wird hier als Vorstellung vom »Gedicht« unterstellt? Der Dünkel dessen, der sich untersteht hypothetisch-spekulativerweise Auschwitz aus der Nactigallen- oder Singdrossel-Perspektive zu betrachten oder zu be-dichten.”

If we decide, instead of the complacent but perhaps also embarrassed, feigned easiness and simplicity of such laughter, to face the difficulty of the poems of *Atemwende* as such, as a new kind of difficulty that does not meet the expectations of the olden days anymore, such as the continuity between rhetoric and poetry, established by the tropological approach to art, how should we proceed?

We might consult the dictionary first. “*Metapherngestöber*”: we are told that *Gestöber* is also a synonym for *Niederschlag*, which means, not only the corresponding meteorological phenomenon or phenomena of raining and snowing and condensation of humidity, but also written expression, a condensation of thought in writing. It seems obvious that *Gestöber* is neither *Niederschlag* in that sense in this poem, nor the contrary of condensation, a rapid flurry of metaphors. Here there is no abundance of metaphors in a restless motion condensed into a concise figure that only waits, in turn, to explode into a flurry of metaphors again. If we take the lead of the semantic possibilities of the poem’s vocabulary, it soon turns out that these are almost limitless, even with such a concise poem in question: we might begin an endless drift with *ein Dröhnen* through the series of *die Drohne* / *Drohnendasein* / *Drohnenschlacht* and perhaps finally, the ephemeral pleasure of all the good guesses notwithstanding, suffocate below a pile of dictionaries, as if buried in snow. Or in metaphor.

The noun *Gestöber* is not primarily attached to some particular type of material particles (snow, dust, etc.) but rather names the force of their flurrying movement, the whirlwind and the particles hurled about by it; the first quasi-synonyms of *Gestöber* in the Grimm dictionary are “*aufwirbeln, aufscheuchen, durcheinanderstieben*”.⁵⁸⁴ The accustomed interpretation would be that this noun and the verb *stöbern* apply themselves to sensible phenomena and are then extended to more abstract, figurative or transferred acceptations, and this would also be the case with *Metapherngestöber*.

But there is also a more ‘literal’ sense that we might choose and ascribe to the composite noun *Metapherngestöber*: the verb *stöbern* means, besides the flurrying movement of air and the particles tossed about in it, approximately the same as “to rummage, ransack, overhaul”.⁵⁸⁵ We could imagine that something like a whirlwind has messed up a writer’s

⁵⁸⁴ DWB: “GESTÖBER, n., verbalsubst. zu stöbern (s. d.), aufwirbeln, aufscheuchen, durcheinanderstieben, älter md. gestubere, gestüber, gestobere, gestober, noch bei FRISCH 2, 213^a schneegestüber. vgl. gestäube, gestiebe, gestübe. // 1) aufscheuchung, aufruhr, auflauf, getümmel: [...] ein gestobere sich erhüb / under den gotes cristen. / pass. [=Passional : eine Legenden-Sammlung des dreizehnten Jahrhunderts] 169, 10 Köpke; [...] 2) aufwirbelnde staubmasse: [...] do aufferhub sich der sudwind .. / und trieb daher ein grosz gestöber. / als mir nun das gestöber neheth, / es sich umb mich ringweisz umbdrehet / H. SACHS 1, 285^c; // gestöber, gestäub, polverio, polverina KRÄMER 553^a; gestöber, pulveratio, pulvis STEINBACH 2, 709; mühlen-gestöber, mill-dust LUDWIG 764; aschengestöber PYRKER werke 35; davonwirbelnde spreu: // doch wie der wind hinträget die spreu durch heilige tennen, / unter der worfeler schwung, .. / fern dann häuft das weisse gestöber sich: also umzog nun / weisz von oben der staub die Danaer. / VOSS Ilias 5, 502; // wasserstaub: durch diesen fall und oftmalige brüche des wassers wird ein groszer theil derselben in staub und nebel verwandelt. man siehet von diesem gestöber um die (teufels-)brücke herum ganze wolken. FÄSI [...] 3) durch einander wirbelnder regen, hagel, besonders aber schnee: ein regen-gestöber [...]” (Bd. 5, Sp. 4241ff.)

⁵⁸⁵ The Wahrig dictionary gives the following quasi-synonyms: “<fig.> nach etwas suchen, Sachen

desk: perhaps someone has been searching for metaphors, or searching the way through metaphors?

It is clear that the verb *stöbern* cannot be translated into a single English word even if we agree on the means of translation here, the semantic fields overlapping in this usage: the movement of the whirlwind is transferred to the movement of a plunderer searching after some item — or of an enthusiastic “dilettante philologist” or “cultural attaché” searching for metaphors in a corpus of poetry in order to write their “tractatii and tractatuli [*Traktaten und Traktätchen*]” (cf. *TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 60/582). Or then it could be the other way around, the search could be first and the flurrying movement could be its result. The Grimm dictionary ascribes the first, transitive sense of *stöbern* to hunters’ jargon, referring to the way the hounds search for game and chase it out into the open, but also, in an extended sense, to the way the wind whirls the snowflakes as if they were feathered prey, and this association between snowflakes and feathers and feathered fowl serves as a bridge toward the intransitive sense, which is “perhaps” derived from the “technical term” in the waterfowl hunters’ jargon, referring to the sudden flight of startled birds, upset by the hounds as one may imagine. And so on and so forth: the possibilities of metonymico-metaphorical displacement between the fowl and its feathers and the hounds chasing the game like the wind driving the snowflakes, and the startled flight of the birds themselves, like a bed of feathers risen and dispersed by the wind, seem almost limitless. But this means also that it becomes very hard to reduce the polysemy or dissemination of these multilateral displacements to some presumed primary, authentic, literal or even ordinary meaning of the noun *Gestöber* or the verb *stöbern*, transitive or intransitive.⁵⁸⁶ Let alone to translate the whole ambiguity into one noun or verb.

durcheinanderbringen, um etwas zu finden; (in Fremden Sachen) herumsuchen, schnüffeln; es stöbert es herrscht Schneegestöber; in jmds. Schreibtisch [stöbern]” (*Wahrig*); i.e. “to search after something, [...] to meddle (in other people’s affairs), to nose about; [...] to [tamper] on someone’s desk [etc.]” or, in one word, to *ransack*, i.e. to “shake down, beat the bushes, leave no stone unturned, look high and low”; cf. entry “ransack” in *Roget’s II: The New Thesaurus, Third Edition*. Copyright 1995 by Houghton Mifflin Company (<http://www.bartleby.com/62/74/R1227400.html>).

⁵⁸⁶ Cf. entries “STÖBER” and “STÖBERN” (tr. and itr.), in the Grimm dictionary (*DWB*): “STÖBER, m., wie oben stäuber 3 (*th.* 10, 2 *sp.* 1104) eine art kleiner jagdhunde [...]”. “STÖBERN [I.], verb. zu oben stöber, m.: // 1) im eigentlichen sinne von den das wild aufsuchenden hunden gebraucht: sie (*die isländischen wasserhunde*) stöbern aus dem rohr, gleich einem jagdhunde die fuchse, ottern und wilden katzen mit besonderem fleisz, dasz man ihnen desto besser im schieszen beykommen kann *FLEMING teutscher jäger* 182^b [...] 2) in erweiterter bedeutung von jedem ‘aufsuchen, aufscheuchen, auftreiben’, zunächst (und noch der ursprünglichen sphäre nahe) von den jägern, welche mit den stöbern (*s. oben*) jagen: [...] // doch liegt den folgenden gebrauchweisen vielmehr der vergleich zu grunde (wie ein stöber eines aufsuchen und scheuchen). // a) als nächstes reiht sich hier an aus einem gewandstück die flöhe stöbern u. s. w.: [...] b) feinde auseinandersprengen und aus dem lande jagen: [...] c) einen aus dem bette stöbern, ihn zwingen aufzustehen [...] d) besonders nach büchern stöbern, unter alten beständen und in heimlichen ecken nach büchern, documenten oder sonst erinnerungen der vergangenheit suchen. [...] 3) in einer begrifflichen vermischung mit dem folgenden intrans. stöbern, doch noch völlig angeschlossen an unser jägerisches bild: der wind stöbert die schneeflocken wie wenn es federwild wäre, [...] 4) bildlich: stöbernder argwohn, verdacht, welcher der wahrheit auf die spur zu kommen sucht: [...]”. “STÖBERN [II.], verb., iterativbildung zu ndd. stöwen, stöben, stieben, ausschlieszlich intransitiven gebrauches, vielleicht als technisches wort der niederdeutschen wasservogeljagd, vom hastigen unruhigen auffliegen des federwildes gebraucht, [...] doch gewöhnlich von federn oder schneeflocken, welche vor dem winde wirbelnd umhertreiben: die federn stöbern in der luft herum *ADELUNG*; auch kurz: die federn des bettes stöbern, fliegen

The word *Metapherngestöber* need not be metaphorical, but its meaning cannot be, at first or in principle, delimited as a ‘proper’ meaning either. Not even if its worldly referent could be recognized as a certain biographical series of incidents. Barbara Wiedemann, the editor of the vast documentation of the “infamy” known as the “Goll affair”, the stupid accusations waged against Celan that turned into an aggressive press campaign, comments on the poem, dated “6.5.1965”, in the light of the fact that metaphor is opposed to truth and equated with lies already in the drafts for the *Meridian* speech (1960), while Claire Goll and her advocates used to “ransack” Celan’s “metaphors” in order to find proof of plagiarism, and on the other hand, with regard to the fact that, for anyone familiar with Celan’s use of the word *Mensch*, it is “no coincidence that ‘truth’ is here seen in connection with ‘human beings’”.⁵⁸⁷ The false accusations were anything but humane and it is well known that they affected Celan gravely. But the import of the tension between ‘metaphor’ and ‘truth’ or ‘humanity’ is certainly not solely personal or biographical, while it is also that: it is situated precisely on the border between “the inside and the outside”, internal and external, between speaking and muteness.

Whatever the objections may be, a reader sensitive to metaphor — even if he is sensitive to other things too and not only metaphor⁵⁸⁸ — may always detect one metaphor after the other, and we do not absolutely refuse to address the question of the so-called “basic” or “conceptual” or “absolute metaphor” at this point, either:

[...] es ist
die Wahrheit selbst
unter die Menschen
getreten,
[...]

*umher CAMPE; entsprechend: wenn die flocken still vom himmel fielen oder tanzten und stöberten FONTANE I 1, 89; [...] ein gedräng der worte wie stöbernde winterflocken REHFUES briefe aus Italien (1805) 1, 91. -- als allgemeine wetterangabe: es stöbert es schneit fein, der schnee wird vom winde umgetrieben ADELUNG [...]” (Bd. 19, Sp. 3ff.) Et cetera: this citation quasi in extenso should indicate that the choice between the ‘literal’ or ‘original’, and the ‘extended’ and the ‘transferred’ or ‘figurative’, between the ‘sensible’ and the ‘intelligible’ or ‘concrete’ and ‘abstract’ sense is not always that simple, but involves speculation and arbitrariness. On the other hand, these ambiguities — while ambiguity is irreducible in poetry, insofar as it is not just a stylistic component but altogether essential (Szondi) — should also indicate that the *extensibility*, a form of general iterability or, on the other hand, of *dissemination*, of concepts or terms is in a certain sense congenital to these terms themselves, and therefore the *etymon* or the literal, original meaning may be very hard to determine. — As has already been argued in our discussion on Heidegger and Aristotle, there is a certain “phenomenology” of the co-intended meanings, which also amounts to a deconstruction of the traditional concept of metaphor.*

⁵⁸⁷ “Schon in den Entwürfen zur Büchnerrede [i.e. *Der Meridian*] ist die Gegenüberstellung von Metapher, die der Lüge gleichgesetzt wird [...] und Wahrheit zentral; die Metapher steht dabei als aus dem Kontext gelöstes und als solches sinnentleertes Element im Zusammenhang mit den Argumentationsmethoden von C[laire] G[oll] und ihren Helfern, die, wenn man so will, in Metaphern ‘stöbern’, um Vergleichsmaterial zu finden. Nicht zufällig wird ‘die Wahrheit’ hier mit den ‘Menschen’ zusammen gesehen.” (Barbara Wiedemann, “Kommentar”, in *Paul Celan Die Goll-Affäre* [2000], p. 784).

⁵⁸⁸ Cf. *TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 584, 470, 585.

How can the truth itself arrive? Or, better: how can it arrive *by foot*, taken that the basic or original meaning, the oldest and the most concrete we can retrace, of the verb *treten* is to “tread” or to “trample”, “tramp”? Truth, something abstract as we may presume, arriving by foot, perhaps even by heavy foot?⁵⁸⁹ Or do we just take the trope the wrong end up? Should we see Truth personified as something or someone who can walk amongst men? Or rather, should we first see a person entering and then recognize him or her as “truth”? Should we see “*die Wahrheit selbst*” as a person “*unter die Menschen*” and not as an abstraction at all? Is truth here a metonymy for someone who speaks the truth in contrast to the *Metapherngestöber*? If there is metonymy, it might suggest that truth resides — appears — amongst humans, in their midst, between humans. In the air between them: “*in der Luft, die wir zu atmen haben.*”⁵⁹⁰

Rumbling, droning (“*ein Dröhnen*”) is hardly *speaking* — this roar could of course be an effect of speaking, caused by speaking the truth, but a truth which has arrived “*mitten ins / Metapherngestöber*”, within or between two unarticulated noises, one being “*ein Dröhnen*” and the other being — perhaps something like the white noise of — “*Metapherngestöber*”.

EIN DRÖHNEN: [...]
[...]
mitten ins
Metapherngestöber.

Is it not so that truth, considered as something abstract, can only arrive *amongst* people, even in the very thick of their flurrying metaphors? Between the rumbling and the flurrying the truth has arrived, despite the odds against anybody recognizing what happened? The ambiguity is not alleviated by the fact that in the structure

EIN DRÖHNEN: es ist
die Wahrheit selbst
unter die Menschen
getreten,
[...]

the *es* could in principle function in two ways. According to the usage and perhaps a first intuition, the colon marks the way of speaking so that we should read “*ein Dröhnen*” as an ef-

⁵⁸⁹ Not “on dove’s feet”, here, as it seems; cf. *TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 265: “Einiges kommt vielleicht, auch jetzt, auch heute noch, auf Taubenfüßen.” Celan obviously alludes to Nietzsche’s phrase of “thoughts that come on dove’s feet [and] direct the world [*Gedanken, die mit Taubenfüßen kommen, lenken die Welt*]”; from Heidegger’s *Was heißt Denken*, Celan has extracted (on his first reading of the book in 1954) this quote from Nietzsche’s *Also sprach Zarathustra* (GA 8:77; cf. James K. Lyon, *Paul Celan and Martin Heidegger. An Unresolved Conversation, 1951-1970* [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U.P., 2006], p. 114; *La bi. phi.*, p. 404, No. 168; Celan reread the book, given to him by Heidegger in thanks for the reading in Freiburg July 24th, 1967, with very intensive attention as it seems, in December 1969; cf. *La bi. phi.*, pp. 392ff). But of course, what comes on dove’s feet, arrives through the air, and it is indeed the movement of the air, and through the air, that we are talking about here.

⁵⁹⁰ Celan, *Der Meridian* (GW 3:192; *TCA/Meridian*, Endf. 18c); trans. Felstiner (p. 405): “the air we have to breath”.

fect of the arrival of truth amongst men; first we hear “*ein Dröhnen*” and then we are told that this reverberation is caused by that arrival, more or less directly. In this case (1) the *es* would be an impersonal pronoun functioning as an indefinite subject and thus with an indirect reference to *Wahrheit*, or rather to the state of affairs in some rather indefinite connection to the subject *die Wahrheit selbst*, and as such it could function even if we would have only a fragment of the poem beginning with *es ist die Wahrheit selbst...*, without *Ein Dröhnen*; or so that first

[...] *es ist*
die Wahrheit selbst
unter die Menschen
getreten,
 [...]

and only then there is a “rumbling; (2) but the *es* could also be a relative pronoun, with reference to the neuter-gendered noun *ein Dröhnen*:

EIN DRÖHNEN: es ist
die Wahrheit selbst
 [...]

So we have two possible and incompatible readings of this structure, corresponding to: “*Ein Dröhnen ... ist die Wahrheit selbst*, or *Ein Dröhnen: ... die Wahrheit selbst [ist] unter die Menschen getreten*.”⁵⁹¹ We cannot be quite sure which is the cause and which is the effect here: is the truth identified with the noise, or even caused by the noise, or has the apparition of truth caused the noise? It seems intuitively clear that the relatively simple, almost prosaic sentence of which this poem consists, a complex sentence divided by the colon into two more or less elliptical clauses, attributes the role of effect or consequence to the “drone” or “rumbling”, an effect caused by the “arrival” of “the truth itself”; the hypothesis of identification between “*ein Dröhnen*” and “*die Wahrheit selbst*” seems immediately false. But on the other hand, nothing in this complex sentence confirms the priority of truth with regard to the droning noise, at least not temporal priority: they may arrive together, at once, they may *coincide*, and we may perhaps recognize the arrival of truth by the noise that signals it; but it is always also possible that the signal remains indistinct from the signalled “itself”.⁵⁹²

⁵⁹¹ This indeterminacy is one of the reasons why I prefer Felstiner’s translation to Hamburger’s: “A RUMBLING: it is / Truth itself / walked among / men / amidst / the metaphor squall.”

⁵⁹² These quasi-metonymic possibilities relating ‘the truth’ to ‘a rumbling’, as if they were a ‘cause’ and an ‘effect’, in a flurry where we no longer are able to tell the one from the other or the order of their arrival, resemble Martin Heidegger’s talk of “unconcealment”, *Unverborgenheit* or *aletheia* in terms of “truth”, *die Wahrheit*, a way of speaking he later abandoned and declared misleading; he had, by a quasi-metonymical turn of phrase, as I would call it, used the word “‘truth’ to name the conditions of the possibility of truth”, as Mark A. Wrathall has pointed out (“Heidegger and Truth as Correspondence”, *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* Vol. 7 [1], pp. 69-88, here p. 71).

It seems that both the metaphoric and the metonymic poles are flurried about by the tropic movement of this poem. The truth itself takes place between a roaring noise (“*ein Dröhnen*”) and a metaphor-drift (either a flurry of metaphors or a search for metaphors, which sometimes may be the same thing: the metaphors searched for and found may not be *there* in the poem, but rather the outcome of the activity of the “dilettante philologist”). The poem that names *Metapherngestöber* reduces the attempt to operate by overhauling metaphors to an awkward state of sterility — drone-likeness (*Drohnendasein*). Such a strictly intrinsic approach leads almost immediately too far. The flurrying and buzzing of the ‘dead metaphors’ about the poem makes it impossible to focus on its few words as if they were metaphorical. We cannot rely on a lexical system of commonplaces or calculate on collusions and collisions of conventional meanings or ‘dead metaphors’ to solve the riddle — as if we were solving a riddle, as if there was a riddle to be solved — of what would seem to be more lively metaphorical. We will only be stupefied, transferred and then re-excited to drone in — or invited to blow apart, *stöbern* — a whirlwind of metaphors instead of revealing the truth of this enigma, as if there was a truth to be revealed, or an enigma, within this poem. The truth itself, *die Wahrheit selbst*, is only mentioned and not revealed, nor relieved by some dialectical accord uniting the discordant twain of metaphor and truth.

What is this truth? That is not easy to say. But perhaps the truth is precisely that it is not easy to say, or that it is impossible to make a statement of the truth of this poem parting from the ‘metaphors’ that one might detect in it: the truth is not *in* the metaphors, it arrives *in their midst* but unnoticed insofar as there is a *Metapherngestöber*, out of which the droning noise, perhaps caused by it, may be impossible to distinguish, and insofar as we take its metaphors for granted and not ‘for real’, insofar as we do not even ask “what a m[etaphor] is, anyway, when it has its place in a text [*was eine M. denn sei, wo sie im Text stehe*]” (*TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 60/582). In the manuscript drafts for the *Meridian*, Celan objects vehemently to the metaphor-oriented interpreters’ severing individual expressions from their context and treating them as “ambulant” metaphors. It is in the text, the poem as a text, that tropes and metaphors manifest their will to be reduced *ad absurdum*.

The almost prosaic sentence of this poem is nevertheless articulated into verse, and as such it seems to manifest a certain vertical movement or structure, a descending movement as if between two meteorological phenomena (*Ein Dröhnen*: this could be something like thunder in the clouds, followed by *-gestöber*, a squall in the lower atmosphere; like thunder and hail these would be, without a lightning bolt in between, without the mediation between the gods and mortals, the heavens and the earth):

EIN DRÖHNEN: es ist
 die Wahrheit selbst
 unter die Menschen
 getreten,
 mitten ins
 Metapherngestöber.

The Biblical or Judeo-Christian associations seem evident. But perhaps it is not *quite* a question of the Word here, of the Logos come to abide amongst men (in spite of the obvious *possibility* of sarcastic or blasphemous tone), let alone of Zeus' thunder — or perhaps it is a question of these *also*, but not *only* these, since we never know the exact origin or motivation and, on the other hand, the final destination of these words, let alone the associations evoked by them.

The manuscript of the poem “Ein Dröhnen” bears the date 6.5.1965. In her commentary, Barbara Wiedemann tells us that on the same day, the newspaper *Die Welt* announced the closure of the hearing of evidence in the Auschwitz Trial in Frankfurt; the next day the *Frankfurter allgemeine Zeitung* published a corresponding article and Celan sent another copy of the poem to his wife. According to Wiedemann, Celan was possibly reminded of an earlier article concerning the trial in *FAZ*, dated 14.11.1964, which contained the statement by the witness Princz, a prisoner of Auschwitz who drove a horse wagon sometimes loaded with containers of Cyclone B: “[Wilhelm] Boger called an SS-man and was given a gas mask. Cartons were unloaded and Boger took out the containers that looked like tinned provisions. He opened them and passed them on. Other SS men threw them in through the open window, out of which a droning noise could be heard, as if there were several people underground [*warfen sie in die geöffneten Fenster, aus denen man ein Dröhnen hörte, als ob sich viele Menschen unter der Erde befänden*]. The openings — the little windows — were then closed again [*Die Öffnungen — die Fensterchen — wurden wieder geschlossen*], and I had to return immediately.”⁵⁹³ A droning noise, as if many people were underground — “...ein Dröhnen ... als ob ...” — while of course, there *were* many human beings in the room, *as if* underground. Cyclone B, hydrogen cyanide (HCN), was a fumigant originally meant for killing vermin — rats, mice, lice. But the droning noise heard through the “little windows” consisted of human voices, in spite of the “as if [*als ob*]” pronounced *as if* in doubt of its origin.

In the *FAZ* article in question, there is no obvious referent for the expression *Metapherngestöber*. However, there are examples, for instance one specimen out of the ordinary “raid of the bestiary”⁵⁹⁴ in the vocabulary of the murderers: “*Erschießt die Hunde.*” This is what the camp adjutant Mulka is reported to have yelled, ordering his subordinates to shoot

⁵⁹³ “Ein Beinbruch des Kommandanten Höß? Die Verteidigung bezweifelt die Glaubwürdigkeit eines Zeugen / Der Auschwitz-Prozeß”, *Frankfurter allgemeine Zeitung*, Nov. 14th, 1964, pp. 17-18, here p. 17. Partly cited by Barbara Wiedemann in her commentary in Celan, *DGKG*, pp. 743-744.

⁵⁹⁴ This expression “raid of the bestiary” is borrowed from Jonathan Culler’s “Commentary”, in *New Literary History*, Vol. VI, No 1 (Autumn 1974), p. 222. Culler’s expression corresponds roughly to the “system of commonplaces” evoked by such trivial metaphors as “man is a wolf” (cf. Max Black, “Metaphor”).

two prisoners, who they had already beaten for having “organized” something; this “something” that was shown to Mulka as he came across the two SS men, who were making a body search of the prisoners after beating them into a blood-soaked state, was not seen by the witness. And as the subtitle of this newspaper article already announces (“The defence casts doubt on the credibility of a witness”), the witnesses are subjected to doubts about their seeing things with their own eyes: “*Der Zeugen Princz wird hart angefaßt, manchmal scheint er sich in einen Angeklagten zu verwandeln. Etwa, wenn der Vorsitzende vorwurfsvoll vorhält: ›Sie sagten doch, die Häftlinge seine roh hineingetrieben worden (in die Gaskammer). Also müssen Sie es doch gesehen haben.‹*” The anonymous writer of the article ridicules this in an eloquent fashion: “*Nein, der Zeuge muß es nicht gesehen haben, denn er gibt in dieser Sache nur wieder, was über viele Kanäle von den Krematorien ins Lager gesickert war: daß nämlich die Selektierten nicht mit höflichen Verbeugungen und sanften Gebärden gebeten wurden, die Gaskammern zu betreten.*” But it is neither in the ironical figures of the journalist, nor in the witness’s statements that metaphors flurry, not even in the couple of metaphorical expressions quoted by them, even though we may find another example of a metaphor of sorts taken from the mouth of the Gestapo officer Wilhelm Boger: “*So haben wir in Warschau alle Juden fertiggemacht, gefällt dir das?*” This is what he is reported to have said, after he and a fellow officer had just murdered a child in an especially show-off manner.⁵⁹⁵

In one of the two later newspaper articles mentioned by Wiedemann, namely the *FAZ* article from the day the poem “Ein Dröhnen” was originally written (May 6th, 1965), we actually encounter the verb *dröhnen* again — the verb this time and not the noun, an adjectival present participle to be precise — a fact which seems to have escaped Wiedemann’s attention. The “mammoth process of a trial [*der Mammutprozess*]” is being described, with the audience asked to leave the courtroom and then called back, with the ongoing commuting between Frankfurt and Auschwitz and Krakow during the process, with the attorneys having to remove their cloaks in order to appear as witnesses from time to time, and with the disputes between the Nuremberg defence attorney Laternser and the counsel for the plaintiff, the East Berliner Professor Kaul; and then the writer of the article (Walter Pfuhl) imagines for us “an internal dispute in the breast of the Gentleman from East Berlin” (i.e. F. K. Kaul): “*Aber auch in der Brust des Herrn aus Ost-Berlin herrscht Widerstreit. Eben noch hat er durch Scharfsinn, Redekunst und Gedächtnis imponiert, als er mit einem Male in dröhnende Fensterreden ausbricht, als kenne das Regime, dem er dient, weder Mauer noch Stacheldraht.*”⁵⁹⁶ The wall and barbed wire are no metaphor, of course, but a part and metonymy of the East Berlin reality as we know it. The journalist’s choice is nevertheless not any more exempt from rhetorico-political strategies than the speech droning out of Professor Kaul’s internally agitated breast. However, the *drone* of the human voice is the same (i.e. it

⁵⁹⁵ Cf. *FAZ*, Nov. 14th, 1964. Here we recognize the common “basic” and objectifying metaphor of *fertigmachen* whose variants we have already encountered in dealing with Heidegger and Aristotle.

⁵⁹⁶ Walter Pfuhl, “Wenn Bogers Silhouette erschien...”, in *Die Welt*, May 6th, 1965, p. 18.

can be named with the same noun or verb: *ein Dröhnen, dröhnende*), whether it comes through the *Fensterchen* of the gas chamber or in the *Fensterrede* (soap-box oratory, propaganda) from beyond the Iron Curtain. The tone of accusation, “as if there were several people underground”. A droning, like one from an underground wasps’ nest, perhaps — but this time, this drone is composed of human voices.

Friedrich Karl Kaul is known for his outstanding career as a lawyer who had the exceptional opportunity to work in West Germany in spite of being a GDR citizen, as a defence counsel for persecuted communists and, of course, as a counsel in the Frankfurt trials for the survivors of Auschwitz who had thereafter become East German citizens; he was also present at the Eichmann trial, of which he authored one of his several books, *Der Fall Eichmann* (1964). He was the son of a Jewish mother and spent two years in Dachau after being arrested in 1935. He was released, however, and exiled to the Americas, first to Columbia and finally to the USA, where he was actually interned as an enemy alien in a prison camp in 1941; after the war he returned to the city that became East Berlin. He has of course been controversial, especially after the collapse of the “wall and the barbed wire” mentioned by the journalist, with his connections to the East German regime and to the Stasi.⁵⁹⁷ It is probable — and of course, nothing more than probable to us — that in May 1965 Celan felt a specific sympathy towards this man, and perhaps he might have even identified his own situation, with regard to the recent accusations by the ransackers of the ambulant metaphor led by Claire Goll, with the politically characterized accusations against the “*dröhnende Fensterreden*” of F. K. Kaul. Perhaps. We do not know, and such conjectures about what happened in the poet’s mind and heart — or about the nature of the *Widerstreit* that perhaps reigned in the attorney’s breast — must not count as evidence.⁵⁹⁸

But in light of the ‘extrinsic’ but always still textual ‘evidence’ we *do* possess, we may of course make a few connections between the newspaper articles and the poem, as well as connections ‘within’ the poem, within its phenomenal, textual structure. It is perhaps not quite unimportant that the noun *Dröhnen* and the present participle *dröhnend* appear in both articles we have cited; and in the earlier article there are, in the quotations of Alexander Princz’s testimony, the words *Fenster* and *Fensterchen* in close proximity to this noun *Dröhnen*, while in the later article by Pfuhl the pejorative term *Fensterreden* is used with the present participle *dröhnende* as its attribute: “*dröhnende Fensterreden*”.

⁵⁹⁷ I have gathered this information over the internet, especially from a review of Annette Rosskopf’s dissertation on Kaul (2002): Johannes Beleites, “Review of Annette Rosskopf, *Friedrich Karl Kaul. Anwalt im geteilten Deutschland (1906-1981)*,” H-Soz-u-Kult, H-Net Reviews, August, 2002; <http://www.h-net.msu.edu/reviews/showrev.cgi?path=298571032202498>), and the former’s earlier brief article on the subject of her dissertation, “Strafverteidigung als ideologische Offensive. Das Leben des Rechtsanwalts Friedrich Karl Kaul (1906-1981)”, in *forum historiae iuris*, Aug. 8th, 1998; http://www.rewi.hu-berlin.de/FHI/98_08/roskpf.htm.

⁵⁹⁸ Cf. Derrida, *Schibboleth*, p. 38: “le 13 février 1962 est *analogue* au 13 février 1936”. There is no identification, no assimilation between the singularities metonymized by the date (cf. p. 41: “une date est toujours aussi une métonymie”), but only an analogy. Analogy is not always metaphor.

Within the poem's verbal 'surface' structure we can recognize parallel connections, internal connections — whether or not we can speak of strictly internal connections of a text (in the traditional, empirical sense of 'text'). There is the noun "*ein Dröhnen*" that can be symmetrically juxtaposed with another noun, another word in this poem which can be largely associated with noise — let us say — 'white noise', namely the last word in this poem, *Metapherngestöber*, the "metaphor squall" as Felstiner translates it. The rumbling or drone, *ein Dröhnen*, is a noise associated with *die Wahrheit selbst*, which takes place — arrives, walks in or "is [...] walked [in] among men" (which is Felstiner's translation) — *unter die Menschen*, and this latter expression is, on the other hand, juxtaposed with *mitten ins / Metapherngestöber*. It is easy to arrange these terms as a pair of structural oppositions: [I] *EIN DRÖHNEN: es ist / die Wahrheit selbst* [versus] *Metapherngestöber*; [II] *die Wahrheit selbst / unter die Menschen* [versus] *mitten ins / Metapherngestöber*.

What is the truth of this poem, then? What is the 'truth' mentioned in the poem, *die Wahrheit selbst*? It is not a proposition, it is not a statement, it is not a message or content. It is not a 'meaning' or 'opinion'. Rather, it seems to be something like the voice of an individual life, or one voice composed of many voices, many lives: the human voice as such. A naked voice, stripped of signification but all truth: *die Wahrheit selbst*.⁵⁹⁹

⁵⁹⁹ But the human voice as such may be more than human... "alles ist weniger, als / es ist, / alles ist mehr." ("Cello-Einsatz", in *Atemwende, TCA*, p. 125; trans. Michael Hamburger: "all things are less than / they are, / all are more." In *Poems of Paul Celan. Revised and Expanded* [ed. of 2002], p. 237.) — A conversation with Esa Kirkkopelto inspired further suggestions and questions and especially this reference to the more-than-human — the more-than-human in the human voice. (I take full responsibility for what I have drawn from that conversation, of course.) One of Esa's suggestions was that perhaps *ein Dröhnen*, the noise heard is *no longer human*, it has turned into a non-human voice: the voice of the Furies, the *Erinyes*. A noise composed of many shrieks, *squalls* that defy the "metaphor-squall". — Esa's remark on the *Erinyes* brought to my mind an essay by another Finnish scholar and friend, Susanna Lindberg, concerning the figure of the Furies, these "Daughters of the Night" in Blanchot, most notably in *L'espace littéraire* (1955). This image is primarily no metaphor, but bears a precise literary-historical reference, even though the feminine figures that could be named with the general name "daughters of the night" are "omnipresent" in Blanchot's work, including for instance Eurydice and the Sirens. "Mais quand Blanchot nomme les « Filles de la Nuit » expressément et avec majuscule, il ne fait pas une métaphore mais une référence historique précise." (Susanna Lindberg, "Les filles de la nuit", in Éric Hoppenot, ed, *L'Œuvre du féminin dans l'écriture de Maurice Blanchot* [coll. Compagnie de Maurice Blanchot] [Grignan: Éditions Complicités, 2004], pp. 81-94, here p. 82.) Primarily, the Daughters of the Night name the Furies of Aeschylus' *Eumenides*, part of the *Oresteia* trilogy, the Furies who are also the Daughters of the Earth. The Furies are those who are buried, with their terrifying voices, beneath the city, hopefully appeased by the "epuhemistic" name *Eumenides* and by building them a shrine by the side of the abodes of the more diurnal divinities: "[L]a cité offrira comme réparation aux Filles de la Nuit un temple souterrain en plein milieu de la cité, à côté des temples brillants des divinités du Jour. Celles qu'on nommera désormais les Euménides continueront leur vie obscure dans ce temple, cet abri, cette tombe souterraine. De manière analogue Antigone sera enterrée vivante, et ainsi on montrera que sa mort n'est pas visible. Les Filles de la Nuit habitent cette cachette visible, dans laquelle elles cesseront de vivre sans pour autant être déjà mortes [...]. Dans un premier temps nous pourrions donc penser que le chant des Sirènes, qu'il soit un bruit naturel ou l'imitation de la voix humaine dépourvue de signification, est pure voix : phone sans logos, et ceci serait son manque essentiel. De même, le chant des Erinnyes n'est qu'à moitié articulé, toujours en proie à une cassure apte à le transformer en de simples cris et jappements, ou prêt à s'élever comme un merveilleux chant sans paroles. Elles viennent en bandes qui crient, et même dans la pièce de théâtre, leur chant maudit et envoûte grâce à la répétition, à la rime et à l'écho plus que par la force de l'argument. / Mais la séparation en *phone* et *logos* ne suffit nullement pour décrire le chant des Sirènes et le cri des Erinnyes. D'abord, nous savons qu'une pure voix n'existe pas, et

AEROPHONES, AIR-STONES

One of the sources for the poem “Ein Dröhnen” can be found in the middle of an ode by Mandelstam, one of Celan’s own translations (*GW* 5:133):

Wo beginnen?
 Alles kracht in den Fugen und schwankt.
 Die Luft erzittert vor Vergleichen.
 Kein Wort ist besser als das andre,
 die Erde dröhnt von Metaphern,

The fact that the line “*die Erde dröhnt von Metaphern*” finds its way, transformed, from Mandelstam or rather from Celan’s translation of Mandelstam into the poem “Ein Dröhnen” does by no means efface any other possible connections to other texts — such as the newspaper articles. But each such connection of the unique verbal body that the poem is to other poems and other texts presents only one aspect of the breath-crystal — yet another name for the poem, perhaps. The newspaper articles to which the poem seems to refer, the recognizable Biblical associations, a possible response to a line by Stefan George (“*Ich bin ein dröhnen nur der heiligen stimme*”, in a poem which also has the line “*Ich fühle luft von anderen planeten*”),⁶⁰⁰ all this information that can be gathered with some effort and with some luck, with the help from other readers and scholars, can only work as guidance and introduction.

Mandelstam’s poem, translated by Celan, is indeed an ode of earth and air (yes, ‘of’ and not only ‘to’).

We shall try to retain this ‘reference’ to earth and air: the poem retains it, even when it hovers suspended in the air. It hovers suspended, its truth remains equivocal — no decision can be guaranteed, the poem remains underway and open, occupiable, even when the droning of the voice retains its singularity, and this infinite iterability is just the reverse side of the infinite singularity of the poem’s voice, the verbal body, which makes the “always again only for once” possible. The aspects that cannot be grasped all at once and their shades are irreducible, for instance the possibility that the *Wahrheit* of this poem is (also) an ironical remark, even in its very sincerity.

que même le non-sens recèle toujours un renvoi à un sens retiré ou perdu : même si le chant des esprits naturels n’appartient pas au logos, il est déjà articulé d’une manière ou d’une autre. Deuxièmement, nous savons que le cri des esprits naturels n’est pas du simple son comme l’est le bruit du vent ou de la mer, ni même comme peut l’être la parole des humains fondue en un simple bruit de fond. Le cri des esprits naturels n’est pas un pur phone au sens d’un tranquille bruit de fond, mais toujours déjà une voix qui s’adresse à quelqu’un, le touche, le transforme parfois.” (Pp. 83, 87.)

⁶⁰⁰ Stefan George’s poem “Entrückung” is made famous through the fourth movement of Schönberg’s *Second String Quartet* (Stefan George, *Werke. Ausgabe in zwei Bänden* [Düsseldorf: Küpper, 1968], vol. 1, p. 293.)

The first two lines of the poem we have just been reading, “*EIN DRÖHNEN: es ist / die Wahrheit selbst*”, reverberate in a remarkable manner in the first two lines of another poem from *Atemwende* (GW 2:67):

SCHWIRRHÖLZER fahren ins Licht, die Wahrheit
gibt Nachricht.

There are striking resemblances between these beginnings. The two words before the colon in the poem “Ein Dröhnen”, seem to correspond to the sentence before the comma in this other poem: “*SCHWIRRHÖLZER fahren ins Licht*”. And what follows the comma here in this poem, “*die Wahrheit / gibt Nachricht*”, echoes and is echoed by the words following the colon in the first poem, “*es ist / die Wahrheit selbst*”. In both cases, it is as if the second co-ordinate sentence, following the colon in one poem and the comma in the other, explained the first co-ordinate sentence. And in both cases truth is at issue: it is as if truth’s arrival amongst men and truth’s bringing tidings were to explain the noise, the noise called “*ein Dröhnen*” in one case and in the other, the noise made by the bullroarers’ movement in the light.

Schwirrholtz is a bullroarer, an aerophone known from all over the world, but best known as an instrument of the Australian aboriginals, as well as the Maori, and the natives of New Guinea and North America; among the variants of this instrument is also the traditional toy used in Europe. What should especially interest us here, is maybe its status as an aerophone and as the representative of a divine voice or voice of the ancestors, its role in a “drama of death and resurrection” and in initiation rites, especially its relation to circumcision — and finally, the connection between air as “*Luftstrom*”⁶⁰¹ and the rite of circumcision as initiation.

Frazer’s *The Golden Bough* tells us of tribes in New Guinea whose “tribal initiation, of which circumcision is the central feature, is conceived by them, as by some Australian tribes, as a process of being swallowed and disgorged by a mythical monster, whose voice is heard in the humming sound of the bull-roarer.”⁶⁰² The initiation happens in these tribes in a mighty spectacle, in which, “after a tearful parting from their mothers and women[-]folk, who believe or pretend to believe in the monster that swallows their dear ones, the awe-struck novices are brought face to face [with a monstrous structure, a hut built for this special occasion, a betel palm as its backbone and] adorned by a native artist with a pair of goggle eyes and a gaping mouth”; then “this imposing structure, the huge creature emits a sullen growl, which is in fact no other than the humming note of bull-roarers swung by men concealed in the monster’s belly”; later, after being released from the monster’s belly, each young man must “undergo the more painful and dangerous operation of circumcision. It follows immediately, and the cut made by the knife of the operator is explained to be a bite or scratch which

⁶⁰¹ Cf. Celan’s poem “OFFENE GLOTTIS, Luftstrom, / der / Vokal, wirksam, / [etc.]” (GW 2:388).

⁶⁰² James Frazer, *The Golden Bough: a study in magic and religion*. Abridged ed. (Ware: Wordsworth, 1993), pp. 692ff.

the monster inflicted on the novice in spewing him out of his capacious maw. While the operation is proceeding, a prodigious noise is made by the swinging of bull-roarers to represent the roar of the dreadful being who is in the act of swallowing the young man.” The bullroarer, the “harmless wooden instrument” that makes the air speak and that is not supposed to be seen by women or children or anyone uninitiated on pain of death, is a metonymy for the rite of circumcision itself and also for the “grandfather”, or the dead ancestors, who have of course had to undergo the same horror of being swallowed up by the “bull-roarer” — the bullroarer who at last bites off and swallows up the foreskin, as the women will be told.⁶⁰³ This “drama of death and resurrection”, in its several variations characterized by secrecy, intimidation and even threat of death, involving wild mythical stories told to the uninitiated and to those about to undergo initiation, the myths that culminate in a theatrical spectacle, in which the yet uninitiated believe that they will be eaten by a monster, with all the physical pain and seclusion that the young man has to suffer, this terrifying event turns out to be a drama after all, a rite whose secrets (including the knowledge of its being only a myth, a fictitious spectacle after all, a “counterfeit”) are not to be revealed to the women and children and other uninitiated. Of course we will never know whether Frazer and his colleagues were themselves fooled by the “solemnity” of the “drama”, uninitiated as they were, and as we are.

In certain districts of Viti Levu, the largest of the Fijian Islands, the drama of death and resurrection used to be acted with much solemnity before the eyes of young men at initiation. In a sacred enclosure they were shown a row of dead or seemingly dead men lying on the ground, their bodies cut open and covered with blood, their entrails protruding. But at a yell from the high priest the counterfeit dead men started to their feet and ran down to the river to cleanse themselves from the blood and guts of pigs with which they were beslobbered. Soon they marched back to the sacred enclosure as if come to life, clean, fresh, and garlanded, swaying their bodies in time to the music of a solemn hymn, and took their places in front of the novices. Such was the drama of death and resurrection. [*The Golden Bough*, p. 695.]

Let us return to the poem beginning with the humming, the droning of the bullroarer making its way in the light, mid-air, the space in which truth itself dwells and “brings tidings”, the space of the priest’s yell and of singing and shouting and reverberating:

SCHWIRRHÖLZER fahren ins Licht, die Wahrheit
gibt Nachricht.

⁶⁰³ “It is highly significant that all these tribes of New Guinea apply the same word to the bull-roarer and to the monster, who is supposed to swallow the novices at circumcision, and whose fearful roar is represented by the hum of the harmless wooden instruments. Further, it deserves to be noted that in three languages out of the four the same word which is applied to the bull-roarer and to the monster means also a ghost or spirit of the dead, while in the fourth language (the Kai) it signifies ‘grandfather.’ From this it seems to follow that the being who swallows and disgorges the novices at initiation is believed to be a powerful ghost or ancestral spirit, and that the bull-roarer, which bears his name, is his material representative.” (Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, pp. 692-695. Also available as an electronic copy at *Bartleby.com* [cop. 2000]: www.bartleby.com/196/. Accessed Oct. 18th, 2003.)

Drüben die Ufer-
böschung schwillt uns entgegen,
ein dunkler
Tausendglanz — die
auferstandenen Häuser! —
singt.

Ein Eisdorn — auch wir
hatten gerufen —
versammelt die Klänge.⁶⁰⁴

When the resurrection of houses is spoken of, the houses can be a metonymy for families, just as names can be. Another poem, entitled “Chymisch”, speaks elliptically of “*alle die mit- / verbrannten / Namen*”, “all the names burnt / together / with” (*GW* 1:227-228). Burnt together with what? With the houses? But the houses can be a metonymy for families, just as the names can be. Burnt together with those who were burned, perhaps. Both “houses” and “names” can be metonymies for whole families, generations, lines of tradition not only severed but annihilated. And, in the vision of the poem, resurrected in a singing “dark / thousand-glare [*dunkler / Tausendglanz*]”.⁶⁰⁵

The source of the word *Schwirrhholz*, *Schwirrhölzer*, has been identified, in Celan’s personal library, in an ethnological study published in 1933, *Kulturgeschichte Afrikas* by Leo Frobenius (1873-1938), with words underlined by the poet: “*Im Busch erklingen die Schwirren als Stimmen der Ahnherren*”, “*die Schwirrhölzer und andere Lärminstrumente*”, etc.⁶⁰⁶ The discovery of such “reading traces [*Lesespuren*]”, as the editors call them, are often indispensable; but here these materials do not facilitate our understanding of the “thousand-brightness” and the “ice-thorn”, let alone that they would reveal the identity of the “we too”. The questions concerning these are left open.

⁶⁰⁴ *GW* 2:67. Trans. Pierre Joris:

BULLROARERS whiz into the light, truth
sends word.

Yonder, the shore’s
slope swells toward us,
a dark
thousand-brightness — the
resurrected houses! —
sings.

An icethorn — we too
had called —
gathers the tones.

Breathturn (Los Angeles: Sun & Moon Press, cop. 1995), p. 167; reproduced at the website of Christopher Brakel, <http://christopherbrakel.com/audio/IceThorns-English.pdf>.

⁶⁰⁵ Cf. “Es ist alles anders” (*GW* 1:286): “*die Ufer / hängen voll Tag, wie der Name*”.

⁶⁰⁶ Leo Frobenius, *Kulturgeschichte Afrikas. Prolegomena zu einer historischen Gestaltlehre* (Zürich: Faidon, 1933), pp. 181, 188. Cf. Barbara Wiedemann’s notes in Celan, *DGKG*, pp. 736-737.

Eisdorn is nevertheless no new coinage. The word can be found in the Grimm dictionary: “*EISDORN, m. asterias glacialis.*” *Eisdorn* is a starfish, *asterias glacialis*, also known as *marthasterias glacialis* (Linnaeus 1758).⁶⁰⁷ If we look at the taxonomic tree, the significant choice for classifying this poetic *Eisdorn* might be the class of *asteroidea*. This is because we may recognize a significant constellation of poems, a concordance in a very specific sense, in which this asteroid gathers several tones together, and indeed a “thousand-brightness”, *Tausendglanz*. Before proceeding towards these parallels, it must be emphasized that these concordances and constellations, the access to some of the possible literary and literal referents of the poem’s vocabulary, do not have to furnish the key to the poem’s secret any better than the typical metaphorical inventions, based on the associations of ideas would, while such discoveries of reference material are indispensable in their own right, and especially with regard to Celan’s objections to metaphor-oriented interpretations. We can see that the use of rare but lexical vocabulary is, at the least, a means of prevention against metaphor, but this avoidance of coinage is also motivated by other poetical concerns: the botanical, zoological, geological, meteorological, ethnological and phenomenological (such as Husserl’s *Zeithof*); all these special terminologies and many more belong to the sedimentation of what Celan calls, in his 1948 Jené essay, “ashes of extinguished sense-giving [*Asche ausgebrannter Sinngebung*]” (*GW* 3:157). No pretensions shall be made at deciphering the poem here; it can only be mentioned that the African cultural history or any other single source is not enough: for instance, *Eisdorn* is not *asterias africana* but its northern cousin.

In any case, when we have a “grave in the air”, in the song, even the “thousand-brightness” turns “dark”, milk turns black, and death turns “day-break” — the dawn of “the others”, as Celan comments on “Todesfuge” in a later note.⁶⁰⁸ Here the drama of death and resurrection is perhaps the drama of their coincidence in the song that survives.

When we first read the incipit of the poem we have just been trying to decipher, we might have been surprised by the fact that it says “*SCWIRRHÖLZER fahren ins Licht*” and not “*in der Luft*”, as we might have expected when *aerophones* are at issue. Aerophones and boomerangs are at issue also in one of the poems in the book whose title poem marked the poet’s “farewell to the deceiving ‘like’”, *Sprachgitter* (1959), in a poem named by another adverb and conjunction, “Aber” (*GW* 1:182):

ABER

(Du
fragst ja, ich
sags dir:)

⁶⁰⁷ *DWB*, Bd. 3, Sp. 364. The taxonomic tree of this species can be found in Costello, M.J.; Bouchet, P.; Boxshall, G.; Embrow, C.; Vanden Berghe, E. (2004). European Register of Marine Species. Available online at <http://www.marbef.org/data/erms.php>. Accessed Feb. 14th, 2006.

⁶⁰⁸ “Frühe (der Anbruch des Anderen)”, etc.; *Mikrolithen*, p. 109, No. 185.

Strahlengang, immer, die
 Spiegel, nachtweit, stehn
 gegeneinander, ich bin,
 hingestoßen zu dir, eines
 Sinnes mit diesem
 Vorbei.

Aber: mein Herz
 ging durch die Pause, es wünscht dir
 das Aug, bildnah und zeitstark,
 das mich verformt – :
 die Schwäne,
 in Genf, ich sah's nicht, flogen, es war,
 als schwirrte, vom Nichts her, ein Wurfholz
 ins Ziel einer Seele: soviel
 Zeit
 denk mir, als Auge, jetzt zu:
 daß ichs
 schwirren hör, näher – nicht
 neben mir, nicht,
 wo du nicht sein kannst.⁶⁰⁹

The swans would be, of course, a famous poetic *topos* or “emblem”.⁶¹⁰ But these swans are, besides the allusion to all the poetic swans and their *topoi*, the swans of Geneva. The address or dedication, the occasionality of the poem, becomes manifest through mentioning Geneva, even while no other proper name is explicitly given. Until the mention of Geneva, suggesting biographical details and a ‘real-life encounter’ underlying the poem’s address, the poem could have concerned the reader directly, any reader and her reading, even when we do not know what is meant by, for instance, *Strahlengang* and the mirrors standing against each other. *Strahlengang* is, once again, a special term referring to the stream of rays through a lense or an optical instrument,⁶¹¹ such as an instrument called a *cælostæt* (*Zölostæt*): “An instrument consisting of a mirror turned by clockwork on an axis parallel to itself and to the axis of the earth, by means of which the celestial bodies may be observed and photographed as in a stationary position.” (*OED*).⁶¹² This “as in a stationary position”, the fixed image of the sun and the stars permitted by the instrument invented by Gabriel Lippmann who won the Nobel Prize in physics in 1908, this image of an image must be seen constellated with the

⁶⁰⁹ My *ad hoc* approximation: “BUT [or YET, or AGAIN] // (You / ask and I / tell you:) // Stream of rays, ever, the / mirrors, night-wide, stand / across each other, I am, / projected towards you, of one / mind with this / going-by. // But: my heart / went through the pause, wishing you / the eye, image-near and time-strong, / that disfigures me – : / the swans, / in Geneva, I didn’t see it, flew, it was / as if, from nothingness, a boomerang / into the target of a soul: think for me [*zudenken*: grant me, in your thoughts, as if in echange for ‘the eye’ that my heart ‘wished (for) you’] / so much / time, as an eye: / that I / hear it buzz, nearer – not / by my side, not / where you cannot be.” These untranslatable ‘displacements’ (“mein Herz [...] wünscht dir / das Aug, [...] denk mir, als Auge, jetzt zu”) would deserve specific attention.

⁶¹⁰ Cf. Hamacher, “The Second of Inversion”, trans. Jewett, p. 303: “a topic”, “a classical poetic emblem” (or Fenves’s translation [1996], p. 376).

⁶¹¹ This is part of *Wikipedia*’s definition: “Der Lauf von Lichtstrahlen durch optische Geräte (Mikroskope, Fernrohre usw.) hindurch wird Strahlengang genannt” (<http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strahlengang>).

⁶¹² Cf. Barbara Wiedemann’s commentary in Celan, *DGKG*, p. 659, and *TCA/Sprachgitter*, p. 111.

nominalized adverb *Vorbei*, “past” in the sense of gone by and bygone,⁶¹³ and the movement of being thrust toward you, *hingestoßen zu dir*. So inasmuch as there is an image or metaphor here, it is immediately reflected by its counter-figure, this *Vorbei* and what follows it in the third strophe, beginning with the adverb *Aber*:

Aber: mein Herz
ging durch die Pause, es wünscht dir
das Aug, bildnah und zeitstark,
das mich verformt – :

The heart that went through the pause — perhaps the instant of taking the stationary snapshot permitted by Lippmann’s instrument which is, after all, an appliance of photography — desires ‘your’ eye, or *wishes you an eye* that deforms ‘me’, an eye that is image-close and time-strong: an eye that sees the stereoscopy involved in every poetic image, metonymized by the date of which Derrida speaks in *Schibboleth*, the date that is both singular and plural, both unique and, yet, always already a *commemoration* of what is unique. Such an eye observes time, the time-crevasse (*Zeitenschrunde*) that belongs to every breath-crystal (*Atemkristall*) and *prohibits* metaphorical undertaking, as Celan understands it, the shortcut or short-circuit between the irreducibly different times and places, belonging to the irreducibly different singularities that are situated in time and space, and are thus nothing supratemporal or omnipresent.

So this poem seems indeed to speak of the poetic image, of itself as a poetic image, which is rather the metonymical heart than the metaphor whose *reductio ad absurdum* the heart desires. It carries this wish just like the tropes and metaphors are said to carry in the *Meridian*. The *cœlostat* is indeed associated with the meridian, the meridian which is an image that would traverse the tropes, cross them through as tropes and metaphors, perhaps in order to display, through this palimpsest of crossing through, the phenomenal character of the poetic image. Phenomenal, meteoric — “*eines / Sinnes mit diesem / Vorbei*”.

Already the title and first verse (between brackets, just like the strophe between brackets in “Sprachgitter”) of this poem seem to associate the Thou of this poem with other Thous, since this *Du* is both singular and, as it were, doubled into being *Aber-Du*, “Yet-Thou”. This “Yet-Thou” is John Felstiner’s very fortunate translation for “*Aber-Du*” in another poem, “Zürich, zum Storchen”, because “Yet-Thou” combines the two ambiguously interrelated significations of the adverb *aber* (‘but’ and ‘again’). “Zürich, zum Storchen” is a poem bearing an explicit dedication below the title: “Für Nelly Sachs” (GW 1:214). The title itself names another city in Switzerland and a hotel by the name of Stork, and *shibboleths*

⁶¹³ For this “gone by” that is not just the same as “bygone”, cf. *OED*, entry “by, prep., adv.”: “16. a. On along-side of, into the vicinity of and on beyond, past. Originally the *nearness in passing* was emphasized; in later use ‘by’ is more frequently distinguished from ‘through’ or other word [*sic?*], and expresses *passing without stopping or contact*, and thus *avoidance, aloofness*; but often the notion is merely that of getting beyond, or to the other side of, and *pass by, go by* merely = *pass*.” (*OED*, 50030364.)

like this “Stork” (as well as the dedication itself) seem to be there to mark the rapport to reality, to real-life encounters between real people and thus to something that cannot be repeated in itself, not even as an ideal meaning bestowed after the event, rather than to function as conveyors of a given content. This “Yet-Thou” appears in yet another poem as well, “Radix Matrix”: “*du in der Aber-Nacht Be-/gegnete, du / Aber-Du –*” (GW 1:239).⁶¹⁴

AN EXCURSION: “YOU / YET-YOU”

The sense of this *Aber-Du* could perhaps be clarified by an anecdote that we can read out of the published correspondence between Celan and Nelly Sachs. She gave a manuscript copy of this poem to her “dear brother [*Lieber, lieber Paul – Bruder*]” on the last day of their meeting in Zurich, on May 25th, 1960, and this is another poem beginning with a line consisting of the sole word “*Du*”:

Du
in der Nacht
mit dem Verlernen der Welt Beschäftigte
von weit weit her
dein Finger die Eisgrotte bemalte
mit der singenden Landkarte
eines verborgenen Meeres
das sammelte in der Muschel deines Ohres die Noten
Brücken-Bausteine
von Hier nach Dort
diese haargenaue Aufgabe
deren Lösung
den Sterbenden mitgegeben wird.⁶¹⁵

The anecdote concerns Celan’s reception of this poem. There is a note attached to the manuscript leaf of the poem, in Celan’s handwriting, that is to commemorate something of the instance of its giving and Nelly Sachs’s words from the following day: “*Von Nelly Sachs, / <nach dem Du?>, am 25. Mai 1960, in Zürich / am 26.5. : »Dieses Gedicht ist Dein Gedicht; Du bist gemeint.«*”⁶¹⁶ Among the manuscript notes he made during their meeting in Zurich can be found the following, dated on May 25th: “*Das Gedicht: »Du ... mit dem Verlernen der Welt Beschäftigter«*” (*Paul Celan / Nelly Sachs: Briefwechsel*, p. 41). But later, in a note from June 17th, the last day of Sachs’s five-day visit in Paris which was the second time they met after the years of correspondence, we find a few more words concerning the referent of the poem:

⁶¹⁴ Trans. Felstiner: “you in Yet-Night en- / countered, you / Yet-You — “ (p. 167).

⁶¹⁵ *Fahrt ins Staublose. Die Gedichte der Nelly Sachs* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1961), p. 333.

⁶¹⁶ Facsimile of the poem manuscript and of the note are on p. 44 of *Paul Celan / Nelly Sachs — Briefwechsel*, ed. Barbara Wiedemann (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1996).

17 juin: 2 h 50 Nelly Sachs Abreise

Vormittag Nelly S. bei uns. Das Gedicht »Du mit dem Verlernen Beschäftigte (?)«
u.a. ihre Mutter. Die Mutter: zehn Jahre hindurch jede Nacht Gespräch mit den Toten,
dann am Morgen, Beruhigung. [Paul Celan / Nelly Sachs: *Briefwechsel*, p. 47.]

This is to say that the “Thou” addressed by this poem is Margarete Sachs, the mother who used to speak to the dead for ten years each night before she herself passed away (“*dann am Morgen, Beruhigung*” — then one morning, the morning of all these nights, brought peace). That is, she spoke in her sleep just like the old man in Jean Paul’s *Titan* who spoke to the dead through the speech-grille of sleep (“*der alte Mann sprach hinter dem Sprachgitter des Schlafs mit Todten*”).⁶¹⁷ Celan’s notes reveal that he first mistook the gender of “Du” in the poem to be masculine (already before Sachs told him that “*Dieses Gedicht ist Dein Gedicht; Du bist gemeint*”), as he slightly misquoted it: “*Du ... mit dem Verlernen der Welt Beschäftigter*”; later he wrote the gender correctly, though with a question mark attached to this abbreviated citation — abbreviated and by heart — this time: “*Du mit dem Verlernen Beschäftigte (?)*”. But Celan’s mistake was of course not actually a mistake, nor Sachs’s dedication by any means inappropriate, quite to the contrary. What is especially remarkable in Celan’s later elliptical note is the siglum “u.a.”: the addressee is identified as “u.a. ihre Mutter”, namely, a Thou among others. The Thou of the poem, in the irreducible singularity of its address, is among others the late mother of the poet. The question mark points to the openness of the address, the openness of “*diese haargenaue Aufgabe*” given to “*der Muschel deines Ohres*”. The poem speaks in the absence or rather to the absence of its final addressee who is not only the dead mother but also the mortal Thou in his or her irreplaceability — the only one who can receive “this task of a hair’s width / whose solution will be / endowed to the dying”:

diese haargenaue Aufgabe
deren Lösung
den Sterbenden mitgegeben wird.

“*Du bist gemeint*”: the *Meinung* (*intentio*, *denotatio*) of the poem is *Du* — and *Aber-Du*. No one is the final and only addressee of the poem, but the address is always more or less a piece of an overheard conversation: the one who finds him- or herself addressed, as by a personal letter, may still recognize the poem’s remaining open (and “underway”) toward others.

And yet, this *Aber-Du* can also be a “Not-You” (as it has also been translated), albeit only in the sense that the address finds its addressee alone (and thus, addressed by no one, *no one there with her*), alone in the world, or after the world has withdrawn (“*Die Welt ist fort*”), in the “*Aber-Nacht*” of solitude in which the word “wished to shine”, as in “*Engführung*”, but only as the tiniest particle of *Asche* — its shining, its glory or halo is an ashen one, *Asche* that

⁶¹⁷ Cf. *DWB*, entry “Sprachgitter”, and below.

wishes to shine, even in “*Nacht. / Nacht-und-Nacht*” — even as an invisible, tiny particle that will “[g]o / to the eye, the moist one”.⁶¹⁸

BOOMERANGS, ASTEROIDS

The sender’s absence in the poetic address brings to light, even if this light is a cinereous afterglow, glow after glow, what is involved in every real encounter, every daylight encounter: the incommensurability, the comparable incomparability — analogy, between metonymies, the figures of the other, always only parts or aspects or indications, gestures⁶¹⁹ — between the times of the one and the other, meeting each other across the language-mesh, which separates one from the other, not only in space but also in time. In the now, in your now which is always the time of the *ego*, “my” now that is, you can see the light of an already extinguished star — an afterglow, already present in the present of your perception. Yet, the time of the other is allowed to participate in the now, *mitsprechen*; in the poem “Aber”, this structure of participation or conversation of times seems to be applicable to the conversation between the “I” and the “you” of the poem, between your eye or you *as* an eye, indeed *you as an I*, and my ear, as yours, now:

[...] ich sah’s nicht, flogen, es war,
als schwirrte, vom Nichts her, ein Wurfholz
ins Ziel einer Seele: soviel
Zeit
denk mir, als Auge, jetzt zu:
daß ichs
schwirren hör, näher – nicht
neben mir, nicht,
wo du nicht sein kannst.

This eye, your eye, you as an eye and you as I, is beseeched to think, for a time, for a passing moment, as much time as it takes to hear the aerophone boom, *schwirren* in the air: the image of the boomerang, *Schwirrholz*, present in many of Celan’s poems, is not just the weapon that you have sent and that comes back to hunt you down, in the worst case scenario, as it has often been interpreted with reference to the so-called Goll Affair and the role of detached tropes in it (“ambulant metaphors”), but something more ambivalent. It is not simply an object present-at-hand or a weapon ready-to-hand, nor just a metaphorical image for the detached metaphors for instance, not just a wooden projectile and not an immaterial figure of this instrument either, one that would have no real link, no *true* connexion with the breath-paths (*Atemwegen*) named by another poem speaking of a boomerang (“EIN WURFHOLZ, auf Atemwegen”) — these “paths of breath” are also “respiratory ducts” as Werner Hamacher

⁶¹⁸ “Engführung”, “The Straitening”, trans. M. Hamburger, *Poems of Paul Celan*, p. 119.

⁶¹⁹ I refer here to Husserl’s fifth *Cartesian Meditation* (*Hua I*), and the theme of the “analogical appresentation of the alter ego”, often referred to by Derrida.

invites us to observe in his great essay “The Second of Inversion”, and there are no aerophones and boomerangs without the movement of air and in the air — we see this boomerang travelling “breathways”, breathwise from soul to soul; this is indeed a twin poem of “Aber”, as it seems:

EIN WURFHOLZ, auf Atemwegen,
 so wanderts, das Flügelmächtige,
 das
 Wahre. Auf
 Sternenbahnen,
 von Weltensplittern
 geküßt, von Zeitkörnern
 genarbt, von Zeitstaub, mitverwaisend
 mit euch,
 Lapilli, verzwergt,
 verwinzigt, vernichtet,
 verbracht und verworfen,
 sich selber der Reim, —
 so kommt es
 geflogen, so kommts
 wieder und heim,
 einen Herzschlag, ein Tausendjahr lang
 innezuhalten als
 einziger Zeiger im Rund,
 das eine Seele,
 das seine
 Seele
 beschrieb,
 das eine
 Seele
 beziffert.⁶²⁰

The figure of the returning trope locates the noise of the boomerang, as the voice of the poem, perhaps something to be learned by heart as Derrida says, *nearer* but not quite *close by*, not by ‘my’ side where ‘you’ cannot be, separated as ‘we’ are by the time taken by the poem, so to say. Taken by the poem to reach the eye that thinks, thinks the time of the other as a given time, without imagining too much.⁶²¹ This hitting the eye — and the heart, con-

⁶²⁰ *Die Niemandrose* (GW 1:258); En. trans. William D. Jewett, in Hamacher, “The Second of Inversion”: “A BOOMERANG, on paths of breath, / so it wanders, the wing- / powered, the / true. On / astral / orbits, by world- / shards kissed, by time- / kernels pitted, by dust of time, co- / abandoning with you, / Lapilli, / dwarfed, diminished, an- / nihilated, / deported and abject, / of itself the rhyme,—/ thus it comes / back and comes home, / for a heartbeat, for a millennium / to stall as / the solitary hand on the dial, / a soul / described, its soul / which one / soul / figured.” Cf. Fenves’s translation (1996), pp. 377-378: “[...] on breath-ways [...] by world- / splinters kissed, by time- / kernels grained, by time-dust, co- / orphaned with you [...] deported and thrown away, / itself the rhyme,—/ thus it comes / flown, thus it comes / back and home, [...] to pause as / a lone hand on the dial, / by one soul, / by its soul / inscribed, / by one / soul / ciphered.”

⁶²¹ “Das Gedicht [...] muß unentwegt auf jenes Fremdeste zuhalten, das es — immer noch — als ansprechbar, besetzbar, zumindest nennbar denkt (nicht: imaginiert).” (*TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 30.) In writing that the ‘eye ... thinks the time’ without ‘of’ (i.e. not just ‘thinks of the time of the other’) I would like to approximate Celan’s way of using the verb *denken* here. Such a transitive use is akin to the one instantiated in the *OED* by, for instance, the following example: “1895 *Cornh. Mag.* Mar. 303 Don’t begin to think hard things

tigious with the true eye — may be a millennium, the flight may have taken a thousand years. How can it come home, then, in this twin of the poem “Aber”? How can it be *one* soul, coming home after wandering for perhaps a thousand years?

“Language is not posited”, writes Werner Hamacher, “but projected [*nicht gesetzt, sondern entworfen*]”.⁶²² Projections of existence, as Celan designates them in the *Meridian* and the manuscript notes: “*Gedichte sind Engpässe / ‘Du mußt hier hindurch, Leben’: Daseinsentwürfe.*”⁶²³ Hamacher continues on the poem “Ein Wurfholz”, on the word “boomerang”:

Thrown, a boomerang — this word — is already on its way with the first word of the poem, thus not at home but grasped in the flight of its displacements and transformations [*Enstellungen und Verwandlungen*], “on breath-paths.” [...] The return and the homecoming of the word to itself, traditionally regarded as the awakening of the potencies exhausted by conventional usage or as the “metapoetic” reflection of its content and thus, once again, as the inversion that sets things in order, takes a strange turn in Celan’s poem, for it does not return in restituted form to its authentic and proper site but returns, instead, in a scarred, dismembered, and finally an-nihilated form at a site that is not its own, at site where it is not itself. [“The Second of Inversion”, trans. Fenves, pp. 378-380.]

But this alteration is not something altogether negative. Actually it might be the poem’s only hope, its risk and its chance, the very will of the words and images in the poem. In this homecoming —

It is always the other that comes. This two-turned coming — the implicit inversion of writing and the unwritten [while the unwritten is, as Hamacher notes, also the *yet* unwritten, namely that which is to come], of reading and the unreadable [and here too, we must think of the *yet* unreadable, the unknown destiny of the poem in its being underway], in every poem, every speaking and reading — is itself the movement of alteration in which even the most hardened and petrified self opens itself toward an other. The “ores” (*Erze*) of the beginning are then “transformed into a heart” (*Herzgewordenes*). [“The Second of Inversion”, trans. Fenves, p. 386.]

Hamacher refers here to the poem “À la pointe acérée” (written in 1961) whose title refers to both Baudelaire and Hugo von Hoffmansthal:

À LA POINTE ACÉRÉE

Es liegen die Erze bloß, die Kristalle,
die Drusen.
Ungeschriebenes, zu
Sprache verhärtet, legt
einen Himmel frei.

now.” (Entry “think, *v*²”, *OED*, 50251158, last accessed March 16th, 2007.)

⁶²² “The Second of Inversion”, trans. Jewett, p. 303; cf. Fenves’s translation, p. 376.

⁶²³ *TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 352; cf. *TCA/Meridian*, Endf. 46; *GW* 3:201.

(Nach oben verworfen, zutage,
überquer, so
liegen auch wir.

Tür du davor einst, Tafel
mit dem getöteten
Kreidestern drauf:
ihn
hat nun ein – lesendes? – Aug.)

Wege dorthin.
Waldstunde an
der blubberndern Radspur entlang.
Auf-
gelesene
kleine, klaffende
Buchecker: schwärzliches
Offen, von
Fingergedanken befragt
nach – –
wonach?

Nach
dem Unwiederholbaren, nach
ihm, nach
allem.

Blubbernde Wege dorthin.

Etwas, das gehn kann, großlos
wie Herzgewordenes,
kommt.⁶²⁴

Only a couple of remarks on this poem now. The apparently ‘metaphorical’ link between the first and second strophe (“so / liegen auch wir”) is actually bridged rather by the fact that the term *Verwerfung* not only means being “thrown out”, or being rejected, dismissed, and so on, but is also a geological term, corresponding to “fault” (*OED*: “A dislocation or break in continuity of the strata or vein”). Celan often makes such expeditions into the no-man’s-land between the general, ‘natural’ language and specific terminologies, as we have already seen, and the transfer, from the first strophe with its geological terms and into the bracketed second strophe, serves the catachrestic precision rather than metaphorical approximation. Irony, too: this lying “upward, revealed, / crossways” is the way *not only* the ores and crystals and geodes

⁶²⁴ *Die Niemandsrose* (1963); *GW* 1:251- 252; *DGKG*, p. 146. For a commentary, see Georg-Michael Schulz, “À la pointe acérée”, in Lehmann, ed., *Kommentar zu Paul Celans »Die Niemandsrose«*, pp. 208-213. Trans. Michael Hamburger: “The ores are laid bare, the crystals, / the geodes. / Unwritten things, hardened / into language, lay bare / a sky. // (Thrown out, upward, revealed, / crossways, so / we too are lying. // Door in front of it once, tablet / with the killed / chalk star on it: that / a – reading? – eye has now.) // Ways to that place. / Forest hour alongside / the spluttering wheeltrack. / Col- / lected / small, gaping / beechnuts: black- / ish / openness, questioned / by finger thoughts / about – / about what? // About the unrepeatable, about / it, about / everything. // Spluttering tracks to that place. // Something mobile, ungreeting / as all that’s turned into heart, / is coming.” (*Poems of Paul Celan* [2002], p. 173.)

are things that have been “unwritten” but also, then, “hardened / into language”, exposed. Exposed not only to the surveyor trying to pay attention to the time of the other (even geology is that, isn’t it?), but also to the shortcuts of metaphorical interpretation. Not to mention the preciseness of the third strophe, in which, as Georg-Michael Schulz well observes, the door and the David’s shield, two things of protection, have become things of exposure and give-away: the board (“tablet”) and the yellow star crayoned on it, killed by this act of signaling that would lead to the other killings: “*todbringender Rede*”, this too.⁶²⁵ *Fingergedanken* should be clear enough in its relation to hand-clasping and handwork: as it is said in Heidegger’s *Was heißt Denken?* — a very important text for Celan — thinking is a handicraft, *Hand-Werk*. And also questioning and remembrance. *Herzwerk*, too: poetry and thinking could not be true hand-works without a continuity, contiguity with a heart; and an eye too, inasmuch as it really reads, can establish this connexion in one way or another.⁶²⁶

Enquiring after the unrepeatable (“*Nach / dem Unwiederholbaren, nach / ihm*”) means, here, enquiring after everything (“*nach / allem*”). Everything that is less than it is, every thing that is more:

alles ist weniger, als
es ist,
alles ist mehr.⁶²⁷

The reading eye, the thinking finger enquires after all this, unrepeatable, unwritten too. Hamacher writes: “The metaphor of petrifying the unwritten into language, being itself written, brings to light the fact that that it misses the unwritten.”⁶²⁸ But isn’t the second of inversion the un-writing of metaphor? The gift of the heartbeat that may literally take a thousand years, going through the pause (syncope?), and yet, *not* missing the mark but *hitting* the eye, *perhaps* (which is an event not totally without violence, since it requires a transformation, transplantation of sorts), this movement of a figure, not only through Celan’s poetry, but through the “pause” (“*mein Herz / ging durch die Pause*”) and the troposphere like a meteor (an atmospheric phenomenon it is, literally), through “paths of breath” and through being “dwarfed, diminished, an- / nihilated, / deported and abject”, through being deformed by the eye of the other but also through becoming a heart, isn’t all this also a profound inversion of

⁶²⁵ Cf. Schulz’s commentary, p. 210.

⁶²⁶ Cf. Celan’s “reading traces” and notes in *La bibliothèque philosophique*, p. 351, Nos. 155, p. 387, Nos. 726, 731-733, pp. 392-410, esp. Nos. 823-824, 829, 831, concerning both the short version of “Was heißt Denken?” and the book containing the lectures (2nd ed.: Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1961); as has already been noted, this volume was given to Celan by Heidegger after their first face-to-face encounter in Freiburg, July 24th, 1967, and Celan was reading it at least in December 1969; he had read the first edition already fifteen years earlier and written many notes as well as a few lines of dedication (pp. 409-410, No. 1041) meant to be attached to a book of his own that he would send to Heidegger; echoes of this inspiring reading experience can of course be found in the Bremen speech, as has often been observed.

⁶²⁷ “Cello-Einsatz”, in *TCA/Atemwende*, p. 125 (*loc. cit.*).

⁶²⁸ “The Second of Inversion”, trans. Jewett, p. 309.

metaphor? An inversion of “conventional usage”, an expropriation underway towards reappropriation?

The poetic boomerang carries no message, no content, it imposes nothing but exposes itself (“*La poésie ne s'impose plus, elle s'expose*”)⁶²⁹ — “sets out for an other”, precisely as Hamacher says. It exposes itself as a projection of existence and preparation for an encounter that is always a self-encounter and homecoming, even at another time, at another’s time; a meridian.

The poet must pass through the narrow passage of the poem with his life, says Celan (“*Gedichte sind Engpässe / ‘Du mußt hier hindurch, Leben’*”). No doubt, this narrow passage is (also) the path of breath, *Atemweg*, respiratory duct. Poems are porous formations, as he also writes, and the form of the poem is a poet’s heart waiting for an encounter.⁶³⁰ The transformation required can be that of the reader’s too, of course, besides being required of the writer of the poem and besides being requested of the reader’s eye, transforming the other “I”, the one whose voice we may give back to the “silent consonant” through our own voice. But perhaps the first lesson in this school of humanity is to learn to respect the secret inherent to the poem, its not-quite-comprehensible character, the irreducible not-knowing and unbridgeable distance, the meteoric character of the poetic trace. And in spite of all appearances to the contrary, it is this asteroidal or meteoric character that resists the metaphorical undertakings to the utmost. The meteor, the asteroid is *the* trope that would be carried *ad absurdum* — or rather, one of them all. It is a photoacoustic phenomenon, a voice without voice asking for us to give an eye that, while figuring or disfiguring or transforming him, still remains “picture-near and timestrong [*bildnah und zeitstark*]”, asking for us to trust him with his mouth and give him his new everyman’s hands:

Erst wenn ich dich
als Schatten berühre,
glaubst du mir meinen
Mund,

der klettert mit Spätsinnigem
droben
in Zeithöfen
umher,

du stößt zur Heerschar
der Zweitverwerter unter
den Engeln,

⁶²⁹ *Mikrolithen*, p. 58, No. 105 (*GW* 3:181); this “French maxim” is also cited by Hamacher, “The Second of Inversion”, trans. Jewett, p. 305.

⁶³⁰ Cf. *TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 305: “Mit dem Gedicht, dem zeitoffenen, dem zeitdurchlässigen, dem porösen Gedicht steht sie [die Person] in die Zeit hinein. Zeit kann hier hinzutreten...” Cf. *Mikrolithen*, p. 108, No. 180: “Gedichte sind poröse Gebilde: Das Leben strömt und sickert hier aus und ein, unberechenbar eigenwillig, erkennbar und in fremdester Gestalt.”

Schweigewütiges
sternt.⁶³¹

The meteoric, comet-like, asteroidal poems, even satellite- or spaceship-like poems that are still *lehmgelb*, clay-yellow by the colour of the light they emit, scarred eyes (*Seh-/narben*), beg for earth-mouths, earthen mouths — human mouths, that is, composed of *Atem-und-Lehm*.⁶³²

DAS UMHERGESTOßENE
Immer-Licht, lehmgelb,
hinter
Planetenhäuptern.

Erfundene
Blicke, Seh-
narben,
ins Raumschiff gekerbt,
betteln um Erden-
münder.⁶³³

Even in the apparent metaphors that have been launched into the air or beyond it, above the earth's atmosphere, even there, notched into being carried by the spaceship with its calculated portion of oxygen, the poems need the earth's air; they beg to be voiced by earth's mouths, mortal voices. Even when the poetic images have been thrust about as unearthed metaphors, they carry the detached remnants of contiguity. Contiguity with earth and with mortality. Even a poem written by computer, Celan reportedly said, is a poem, and that is, an anti-computer.

Without being able to answer the questions concerning "*dunkler Tausendglanz*" and "*ein Eisdorn*" and "*auch wir*", in the poem "Schwirrhölzer", in spite of these attempts at deciphering the poem through materials and concordances, the 'motif' of resurrection, associated with the bullroarer and the truth that "brings tidings" through the roaring of the aerophone, can be bookmarked and followed elsewhere. And these connexions suggest certain connexions between certain corporealities, namely between the acoustic phenomena on the one hand, of which the human voice is one very specific type, and circumcision on the other.

⁶³¹ *Zeitgehöft* (posthumous, 1976), *GW* 3:76. Cf. e.g. "Psalm": "Niemand knetet uns wieder aus Erde und Lehm, / niemand bespricht unseren Staub." (*GW* 1:225.) Cf. also above.

⁶³² The first strophe of the last poem of *Die Niemandrose* (*GW* 1:290):

IN DER LUFT, da bleibt deine Wurzel, da,
in der Luft.
Wo sich das Irdische ballt, erdig,
Atem-und-Lehm.

⁶³³ *Atemwende*, *GW* 2:71. Note the difference between "*umhergestoßene*" here and "*hingestoßen zu dir*" in "Aber" (*GW* 1:182).

“THE TROPIC OF CIRCUMCISION”

Following on from Derrida’s *Shibboleth: For Paul Celan*⁶³⁴

Tzipora took a flint and cut off her son’s foreskin, she touched it to his legs and said:
Indeed, a bridegroom of blood are you to me!⁶³⁵

By giving the present chapter the title “The Tropic of Circumcision”, I do not want to be too abusive. It is not so much “the distasteful and embarrassing subjects of circumcision, blood, and foreskins”⁶³⁶ that I wish to touch upon. But perhaps it would actually be even more abusive and more distasteful to treat the topic of circumcision and the term itself only as a trope, as wordplay, regardless of its reference to the literal mutilation of the human body. I do not want to be abusive in either way: so I should find a third way besides the literal and the figurative, a tropic beyond this dichotomy. For a ‘tropic’ it is after all, a deviation from the ordinary usage of the word ‘circumcision’, inasmuch as we shall be speaking of a circumcision *of the word*. But the question we shall have to ask, following Derrida, is: “What is literality in this case?”⁶³⁷

The words between quotation marks in my title, “The Tropic of Circumcision”, are actually borrowed from Jacques Derrida’s first essay on Paul Celan’s poetry, *Schibboleth — pour Paul Celan* (1986). More specifically, the expression appears in the seventh and con-

⁶³⁴ I presented an earlier version of the present chapter at the annual conference of *The International Association for Philosophy and Literature*, in Nicosia, Cyprus, June 6th, 2007. The overall topic of the *IAPL 2007* conference was *Layering: Textual, Visual, Spatial, Temporal*, and the “Invited Symposium” where I presented was titled “Palimpsests of Poetry: Philosophy and / as / in Poetry”. The discussions during and after the panel proved very fruitful. I am especially grateful to Chris Bremmers, Carrol Clarkson, Volker Kaiser, Artemy Magun, Martin Jörg Schäfer, Jarkko Toikkanen, and last but not least, Merle Williams.

⁶³⁵ Exodus 4:25, trans. Everett Fox, *The Five Books of Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy* (*The Schocken Bible, Vol. 1*), a new translation with introductions, commentary, and notes by Everett Fox (New York: Schocken Books, 2000). For a brief theological (and in the last analysis, typological) interpretation of the passage, cf. Ronald B. Allen, “The ‘Bloody Bridegroom’ in Exodus 4:24-26”, *Bibliotheca Sacra* 153 (July-September 1996): 259-69. Tzipora (Zipporah) appears to “dislike” the rite of circumcision but, caught in a double bind, decides to perform it on her son in order to save her husband’s life when God is about to kill Moses, apparently because “Moses was guilty of not carrying out circumcision in his own family, yet he was the one who was to lead the circumcised nation of Israel from Egypt to the promised land” (Allen, p. 266). Some interpreters have taken “his legs” or “his feet” to refer to Moses’, some to the baby boy’s legs or feet, some to Yahweh’s “legs” or “feet”, which could be “a euphemism for the male genitalia” (Allen, p. 268n32); on these ‘extremities’, cf. my discussion below concerning the word *Gottes-gemächt* (“god-like loins”, Felstiner translates; I would prefer, in need of a better term, “god’s-loins”) in a poem by Celan.

⁶³⁶ Cf. Allen, “The ‘Bloody Bridegroom’”, p. 260. By the term ‘abusive’, I would like to refer to the polysemy of this adjective, ranging from “1. Wrongly used, perverted, misapplied, improper: in *Rhetoric*, catachrestic” to “5. Employing or containing bad language or insult; scurrilous, reproachful” (*OED*, 50000977, last accessed Sept. 14th, 2007).

⁶³⁷ Derrida, “Shibboleth: For Paul Celan”, trans. Joshua Wilner revised by Thomas Dutoit, in Derrida, *Sovereignities in Question: The Poetics of Paul Celan*, ed. Thomas Dutoit and Outi Pasanen (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), pp. 1-64, here p. 54.

cluding chapter of the essay, where the topic announced already at the outset returns more emphatically and occupies the thematic foreground: “Only one time: circumcision takes place only once” (*Sovereignities in Question*, p. 1).⁶³⁸

Shibboleth, the essay for Paul Celan, is not only an essay about shibboleth (or shibboleths) and “what one sometimes [*parfois*] calls a *date*” (p. 2), but also about the “only once” and the circumcision which obviously “takes place only once”, as Derrida affirms. But right away he continues, faithfully to his idiom, introducing an element of doubt concerning this evidence: “Such at least is the appearance given to us” (p. 1; cf. p. 53). And yet, several pages later, he seems to concede that “a birth or a circumcision takes place only once, nothing could be more self-evident”. But he also affirms that it is indeed a “*revenance* of impossible return” (p. 18) that his essay is concerned with.⁶³⁹ It is precisely a question of the “resistance that *once* [*une fois*] may offer to thought” (p. 1).

How could there be a “one time” that would escape the mentioned *revenance* or repetition (or perhaps *Nachträglichkeit*), how could “one time” escape being offered to the other time, the other’s time? “Only once”, “one time”: this uniqueness is perhaps unthinkable, the unthinkable itself. But on the other hand, every repetition, everything “repeatable” — and that is, everything, everything thinkable and the thinkable everything, and also the tropes and images that demand to be “verified” or “perceived” (*Wahrgenommen*) and, at once, “carried *ad absurdum*” as tropes and metaphors, “always again only for once [*immer wieder einmal*]” — take place “After / the unrepeatable, after / it, after / everything [*Nach / dem Unwiederholbaren, nach / ihm, nach / allem*]”. Another poem, also quoted by Derrida, states: “*alles ist weniger, als / es ist, / alles ist mehr*”; “everything is less than / it is, / everything is more”.⁶⁴⁰

Let us try to uncover or analyse some of the connections in this configuration or complex that joins (or perhaps ‘layers’) together, as into a palimpsest, the date, circumcision, shibboleth, and the unrepeatable “only once”.

“TO STAND, IN THE SHADOW...”

The unique, the unrepeatable may be unthinkable, just as it is impossible to speak of singularity or solitude without at once betraying it.⁶⁴¹ It is perhaps the unthinkable itself, I just said; it

⁶³⁸ “Une seule fois : la circoncision n’a lieu qu’une fois.” (*Schibboleth*, p. 11; cf. pp. 97 ff.) The expression “tropic of circumcision” appears as such at least twice in Derrida’s text, on pages 98 and 100 of the French original (i.e. on pp. 54, 55 in *Sovereignities in Question*).

⁶³⁹ *Sovereignities in Question*, p. 18. Emphasis added to the word *revenance*; this is a French word introduced, without italics, into the English terminology by the translators of “Shibboleth”, as it seems; however, cf. *OED*, entry “*revenant*, *n.*” (and *a.*)” (50205293; last accessed Sept. 14th, 2007).

⁶⁴⁰ Celan, *GW* 1:251-2, *GW* 2:225; trans. Michal Hamburger, modified by Wilner and Dutoit; cf. *Sovereignities in Question*, pp. 3, 190; 38, 198.

⁶⁴¹ The word “alone” is, as Blanchot once wrote, “as common as the word *bread*”: “Un écrivain qui écrit : « Je suis seul » ou comme Rimbaud : « Je suis réellement d’outre-tombe » peut se juger assez comique. Il est comique de prendre conscience de sa solitude en s’adressant à un lecteur et par des moyens qui empêchent l’homme d’être seul. Le mot seul est aussi général que le mot pain.” (*Faux pas* [Paris: Gallimard, 1943], p.

is unthinkable *as such*. But on the other hand, the unrepeatable may, at the same time, be that which calls for thinking in the form of *commemoration*, for *thinking* in the form of *thanking* (these are Heideggerian themes famously adopted by Celan in his Bremen speech of 1958, but also continued in the 1960 *Meridian* speech), inasmuch as we are dealing with something analogous to the aporetics of the gift. In order that there be a gift, it must not be recognized as a gift, as Derrida has argued; a gift must not present itself as such, and Celan's words of thanks are loaded, "enriched" with an ambivalence that is not simple irony. A commemoration of the immemorial, bearing witness to that which no one bears witness to.⁶⁴² Thinking does not always happen in the realm of knowledge and memory is not always representation. "The date," Derrida writes, "must conceal within itself some stigma of singularity if it is to last longer than that which it commemorates — and this lasting is the poem." (*Sovereignities*, p. 20.)

In the seventh and final chapter of *Shibboleth*, Derrida returns more closely to the theme of circumcision, announced at the very outset of the essay. He points out that "in the literality of its word (*Beschneidung*), circumcision appears rarely in Celan's text" (p. 54). To my knowledge, the verb is used only once in Celan's corpus, in a poem we shall soon return to. But the "tropic" of this topic "disposes cuts, caesuras, ciphered alliances, and wounded rings throughout the text" (*ibid.*). One of Derrida's examples is the occurrence of the word *Wundgelesenes* ("wound-read") in one of the *Atemwende* poems; instead of that, I will try to say a few words about the poem that precedes it in the book (*GW* 2:23).⁶⁴³

STEHEN, im Schatten
des Wundenmals in der Luft.

Für-niemand-und-nichts-Stehn.
Unerkant,
für dich
allein.

9.) No doubt, the Hegelian "dialectic of sense-certainty" imposes itself even here: as soon as I utter "I am alone", my solitude is put into question. (As he often does, Derrida alludes to Hegel's discussion of *sinnliche Gewissheit* also in "Shibboleth"; *Sovereignities in Question*, p. 40.) On the solitude of the poem, with reference to Celan's *Meridian* speech, cf. *Shibboleth*, pp. 23, 25 (*Sovereignities*, pp. 9, 10).

⁶⁴² For the patently Heideggerian themes of commemoration and thinking as thanking, cf. Celan's Bremen speech (*GW* 3:185-186: »eingedenk sein«, »Andenken«, etc.; this gratitude must be related to the word also in quotation marks, »angereichert«, towards the end of the speech, meaning "enriched"; not all these quotation marks are necessarily ironical, however), "Der Meridian" (*GW* 3:196: "eingedenk bleiben"); Derrida, *Sovereignities...*, p. 40: "a commemoration without whose enunciation [*sic?*] no event would ever take place [*sans l'annonce de laquelle aucun événement jamais n'aurait lieu*]" (*Shibboleth*, p. 73). Commemoration or its "announcement" (*l'annonce* should here be translated as "announcement" rather than "enunciation", I think) indeed arrives *before* the event, as its condition of possibility — and, at once, impossibility. For the verses on bearing witness, see Celan's poem "Aschenglorie" (*GW* 2:72) and Derrida, *Sovereignities...*, pp. 65-96. On the gift, cf. esp. Derrida, *Donner le temps 1 : La fausse monnaie* (Paris: Galilée, 1991).

⁶⁴³ Trans. John Felstiner: "TO STAND, in the shadow / of a scar in the air. // Stand-for-no-one-and-nothing. / Unrecognized, / for you / alone. // With all that has room within it, / even without / language." (*Selected Poems and Prose*, p. 237.) The poem with the word "Wundgelesenes" is "Dein vom Wachen stößiger Traum" (*GW* 2:24).

Mit allem, was darin Raum hat,
auch ohne
Sprache.

Wundenmal instead of *Denkmal*: instead of a memorial or monument, [*das*] *Wundenmal in der Luft*: a stigma, a scar in the air — or *the stigma, the scar*, with a definite article. The noun *Mal*, the second constituent of the compound word *Wundenmal*, does not only mean a visible token or sign, a visible mark (such as a boundary stone or a tombstone), a stain or patch or blemish, a scar or stigma, but *Mal* means also a point in time (*Zeitpunkt*);⁶⁴⁴ also time in the sense of ‘one time’, ‘once’, ‘twice’, and so on: *einmal, zweimal, dreimal*.

But how on earth could a scar, let us say the scar of circumcision, hover in the air, if not by some strange trope? And would it be just a wordplay if we take the *Mal* out of *Wundenmal* and recall, not only *Denkmal* and so on, but also *Muttermal*, namely mole or birthmark, the mother’s mark, as the word suggests?

One’s voice is carried through the air, borne by the air.⁶⁴⁵ Voice, articulation, and pronunciation are, roughly speaking, produced by the movement of air passing through the organs of speech — and these organs of speech are precisely what is formed, ‘cut into shape’, so to say, trained like any muscle to learn a certain coordination, by learning the mother tongue in early childhood, in order to pronounce the native language in the right way. This learning and practise and formation makes the correct pronunciation of the domestic phonemes possible, but it also more or less excludes an indefinite wealth of foreign phonemes and their combinations, and the original state of the infant, for whom there were, at least in principle, unlimited possibilities of learning to speak any human language without foreign accent and to cope with its phonetic codes, becomes soon practically impossible to regain.

Shibboleth is originally “The Hebrew word used by Jephthah as a test-word with which to distinguish the fleeing Ephraimites [...] from his own men the Gileadites” (*OED*).⁶⁴⁶ The semantic dimension of the word, meaning originally an “ear of corn” or a “stream in flood”, plays practically no role with regard to its function: the Ephraimites could not pronounce ‘shibboleth’ but rather said ‘sibboleth’. The vocable became a matter of life and death

⁶⁴⁴ Let us remember that in the *Meridian* and the manuscript notes Celan writes that the poem has only this one and unique point in time: “das Gedicht selbst hat ja immer nur diese eine, einmalige, punktuelle Gegenwart” (*TCA/Meridian*, Endf. 36; GA 3, 198-199).

⁶⁴⁵ When we encounter the word *Luft* (“air”) or the expression “*in der Luft*” (“in the air”) in Celan, as in the *Meridian* speech for example, it seems often very relevant to say we are dealing with breath, speech, language, and sometimes with uprooted language (“In der Luft, da bleibt deine Wurzel, da, / in der Luft.” *GW* 1:290; cf. “Radix, Matrix,” *GW* 1:239). Let us also remember that Celan said that the only tomb or monument for his mother is in the poem “Todesfuge” — in the poem, in the song, in the air — in which a grave is being dug into the air, in the song (*GW* 3:63-4).

⁶⁴⁶ This original meaning — or rather function — of the word has been transferred, as the *OED* tells us, into any “word or sound which a person is unable to pronounce correctly; a word used as a test for detecting foreigners, or persons from another district, by their pronunciation”; and further, it has come to mean “A peculiarity of pronunciation or accent indicative of a person’s origin” (*OED*, 50222732, 1 June 2007).

for those who “could not frame to pronounce it right”, as it is said in the King James version of the passage in the Book of Judges.⁶⁴⁷

As Derrida notes, words meaning circumcision appear seldom in Paul Celan’s poetry, at least in the explicit form of the noun and verb *Beschneidung*, *beschneiden*. The poem “Einem, der vor der Tür Stand”, Celan’s only poem, as far as I know, where this verb literally appears, speaks of *circumcising the word*. The verb literally appears in this expression which seems all but literal: “*beschneide das Wort*”, “circumcise the word”.

To speak of circumcising the word appears to be metaphorical; the term referring to the mutilation of an infant’s genitals seems to be transferred to mean something more harmless than this painful operation on the flesh. But circumcision, also the mutilation of the body that is done as a “token of the covenant”, “seal of the covenant” (the Hebrew term translated also as “rite of circumcision” or “covenant of circumcision”, is transliterated as *brit milah* or *berit milah*), is always, among other things, a circumcision of the word.

Circumcision is always already “of the word”. The Latinic word tends to obfuscate this, just as the Greek *peritomia*, these unfaithful translations acting as if the consecrated operation could be reduced to the “carnal”⁶⁴⁸ meaning of “cutting round”. Here is how Derrida circumscribes the “minimal semantic network” as he says, the “at least three significations” associated with circumcision in the Jewish traditions:

1. La coupure, qui entaille le sexe mâle, l’entame et tourne autour de lui, formant un anneau circonvenant.
2. Un nom donné au moment de l’alliance et de l’entrée légitime dans la communauté : *shibboleth* qui coupe et partage, puis distingue par exemple, en vertu du langage et du nom donné, une circoncision d’une autre, l’opération égyptienne dont on dit qu’elle dérive, voire l’opération musulmane qui lui ressemble, ou tant d’autres encore.
3. L’expérience de la bénédiction et de la purification. [*Schibboleth*, pp. 99-100.]⁶⁴⁹

The fact that Derrida associates with circumcision the *shibboleth*, namely the password whose signification is insignificant while its signifying form, its correct pronunciation makes

⁶⁴⁷ “And the Gileadites took the passages of Jordan before the Ephraimites: and it was so, that when those Ephraimites which were escaped said, Let me go over; that the men of Gilead said unto him, Art thou an Ephraimite? If he said, Nay; / Then said they unto him, Say now Shibboleth: and he said Sibboleth: for he could not frame to pronounce it right. Then they took him, and slew him at the passages of Jordan: and there fell at that time of the Ephraimites forty and two thousand.” (Judges 12:5-6; King James Bible.)

⁶⁴⁸ Only at the very last stage of the final revision of the present chapter and the whole dissertation, I discovered a truly marvellous article by Daniel Boyarin, “‘This We Know to Be the Carnal Israel’: Circumcision and the Erotic Life of God and Israel” (*Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 18, No. 3 [Spring, 1992], pp. 474-505), a most powerful articulation of the traditional dualism of “carnal” and “spiritual” which has entrenched the borderline between Judaism and Christianity ever since Saint Paul and Saint Augustine.

⁶⁴⁹ Trans. Wilner and Dutoit (p. 55): “1. The cut, which incises the male sexual member, cuts into it, then turns around it to form a circumvenient ring; / 2. A name given to the moment of covenant or alliance and of legitimate entry into the community: a *shibboleth* that cuts and partitions, then distinguishes, for example, by virtue of the language and the name given to each of them, one circumcision from another, the Jewish operation from the Egyptian from which it is said to derive, or, indeed, the Muslim operation that resembles it, or many others. / 3. The experience of blessing and of purification.”

all the difference, and also the linguistic distinction involved in naming the operation, already suggests that the circumcision has something to do with language. And indeed, in the seventh and final chapter of *Schibboleth*, it is a question of a “*tropic* of circumcision”, and the tropic extension of Marina Tsvetayeva’s phrase “All poets are Jews”, cited by Celan, in Russian, as an epigraph to one of his poems in the book *Die Niemandsrose* (“Und mit dem Buch aus Tarussa”, *GW* 1:287), the tropic extension that eventually comes down to “locating the Jew not only *as* a poet but also in every man circumcised by language or led to circumcise a language [*tout homme circoncis par la langue ou porté à circoncire une langue*]” (*Sovereignities*, p. 54).⁶⁵⁰ Every man, and by the same tropic movement, every woman too, is circumcised, says Derrida. It is a question of names, the circumcision of names: “But does one ever circumcise without circumcising a word? a name? And how can one circumcise a name without touching upon the body?” It is a question, here, of being carnally marked and, “at once endowed with and deprived of singularity”, since the inscription of a “proper name” marking the locus of singularity, the “proper body”, also inscribes the named “in a network of other marks” (pp. 54-55).⁶⁵¹

A (human) community is always a speaking community, a linguistic community. The entry into a community is an entry into a network of marks, across a line of demarcation marked by a *shibboleth*. Circumcision is, I repeat, always already “of the word”: it is a sign of the covenant and marks the entry into the speaking community. Circumcision is always already of the lips, of the tongue, of the heart too. The entry into the community circumcises the body, quite corporeally (but this is said neither metaphorically nor literally, at least if we understand by ‘metaphor’ the spiritual *translatio* and by ‘literal’ the common parlance): the speech organs are formed, by this entry, from the moment that one becomes a member in a linguistic group (not only as receiving a name but also as being determined to speak a given language) and eventually, as the child learns his or her mother tongue, the pronunciation of certain phonemes is facilitated and others, the foreign ones, are excluded by something that would seem like a law of nature, but which rather overwrites the distinction between nature and culture. Thus the circumcision that pertains to one nation and linguistic group, naming the operation in their own way or not naming it at all, since the circumcision of the tongue or

⁶⁵⁰ Cf. *Sovereignities*, p. 50; *Schibboleth*, p. 99. Cf. p. 100: “Juif peut être quiconque, ou personne. Juif, nom de personne, le seul. La circoncision de personne.”

⁶⁵¹ On being “marked”, cf. Boyarin, “This We Know to Be the Carnal Israel”, p. 494: “The word Zion [Hebrew *Tsiyyon*] is taken as a noun derived from the root *ts / y / n* [to be marked], and accordingly the Daughters of Tsiyyon are read as the circumcised men of Israel.” Reading Boyarin’s article, Freud’s remarks on circumcision as a “surrogate” of castration certainly impose themselves (cf. below). — A reader’s unpleasant surprise, comparable to the discovery of, say, Baudelaire’s violent antisemitism, must be mentioned here, also with reference to Freud’s problematic notions of homosexuality that are displayed also in his texts concerning the castration complex. Judging by a few of the recently published “theoretical and critical fragments” and memoranda, Celan seems to have entertained a peculiar paranoid homophobia; cf. *Mikrolithen*, No. 200.5: “Das Tot- und Zuschandeschwätzen meines Namens: die Rache der Homosexuellen an dem in andern Lager Stehenden, der ein Dichter ist, anders als sie. Daher mein wahnsinniggesprochener Meridian, in dem ja der Mensch un die Liebe: Lucile – gegen die Nur-Kunst stehen.” (Cf. also Nos. 54.1, 55, 200.1, 200.3.)

lips is always there, regardless of whether the ritualistic circumcision is present in the society's cultural practices or not, or whether the circumcision happens *only in the name*, so to say, merely tropically but as a trope that always concerns the body in one way or the other, this particular circumcision, as the distinctive mark of the members of a community, always already names the *shibboleth* against the clumsy *sibboleth* of the "uncircumcised" foreigner.⁶⁵² The word meant death to the ones with uncircumcised lips or tongue.

"What is literality in this case?" we asked with Derrida. The literal or original meaning of circumcision, or *brit milah*, cannot be restricted to the "consecrated operation that consists [of] excising the foreskin"; rather, there is a plurality of significations already in the Jewish bible, as Derrida points out.

Je ne suis pas ici en mesure d'aborder la question de la charge sémantique de la circoncision ; je ne dénombrerai pas tous les usages que le riche lexique de la circoncision peut autoriser dans la langue des Écritures, bien au-delà de l'opération consacrée qui consiste à exciser le prépuce. La « spiritualisation », comme on dit souvent, l'intériorisation qui consiste à étendre le sens du mot bien au-delà de l'entaille charnelle ne date pas de Saint Paul, elle ne se limite pas à la circoncision de l'âme ou du cœur. [*Schibboleth*, p. 99.]⁶⁵³

The "carnal" circumcision is indeed *pregnant* with the "spiritual", the visible with the invisible.⁶⁵⁴ Or, on the other hand, the cut in the vulnerable flesh of the infant is always already verbal. But we must also, chiasmatically, turn the trope the other way around: "in all of what we are calling its tropic dimensions," Derrida writes, "circumcision remains a matter of the senses and of the body." (*Sovereignties*, p. 59.) Before Saint Paul, the Bible already speaks of

⁶⁵² For me, if I am allowed to speak from personal experience for a moment, the word *circumcision* is itself a shibboleth. As a non-native speaker of English, as an uncircumcised foreigner in most respects, whose mother tongue is Finnish, the English word 'circumcision' is relatively difficult to pronounce; the French *circoncision* is for me, personally, much easier for some reason.

⁶⁵³ Trans. Wilner and Dutoit: "I am not in a position here to take up the question of the semantic charge of circumcision; I will not enumerate all the usages that the rich lexicon of circumcision may authorize in the language of the Scriptures, well beyond the consecrated operation that consists in excising the foreskin. The 'spiritualization,' as one often says, the interiorization that consists in extending the meaning of the word well beyond the sense of the cut into the flesh does not date from Saint Paul; it is not limited to the circumcision of the soul or the heart." (*Sovereignties in Question*, p. 55.) The philological questions concerning the Hebrew expression traditionally translated as "uncircumcised lips" (the Hebrew is sometimes transliterated as *aral sefatayim*) are all but simple, as it seems: some have claimed that the translation implies a false etymology and that *aral* only means "obstructed", or in this case, "impeded speech". But of course, the 'error' is at least as old as the texts of the New Testament where Paul introduces the "inwardly circumcised Jew" (these are Marx's words adopted by Slavoj Žižek; in his Epistle to the Romans [2:29] Paul states: "He is a Jew, that is one inwardly: and the circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, not in the letter"). And on the other hand, it seems that the foreskin itself has been considered an 'obstruction' in the cultures where male circumcision is or has been performed.

⁶⁵⁴ The word 'pregnant' is often used in this sense by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and as we have already seen, in one of his working notes he uses it in affirming Heidegger's anti-metaphoric argument; cf. *Le Visible et l'Invisible* (repr. 2006), pp. 265-266. En. trans. *The Visible and the Invisible, Followed by Working Notes*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1968, repr. 2000), p. 216.

circumcised or uncircumcised tongues, lips, ears and hearts; it is certainly not only the Christian who is “inwardly circumcised”.⁶⁵⁵

The circumcision of a word is always “an event of the body”, as Derrida writes, and he continues: “There is an essential analogy between this event, on the one hand, and the diacritical difference between *shibboleth* and *sibboleth*, on the other.” (*Sovereignties*, p. 59.) The ‘essentiality’ in this analogy resides in the fact that it is not a question of a mere resemblance or proportional relation of relations, but a more ‘substantial’ connection, if we may say so, between these phenomena. It is the “already cultivated body”, as Derrida writes, the proper body which has been cultivated in a certain way, more or less once-and-for-all, that condemns the Ephraimites; their word is not properly circumcised; they say *sibboleth* and thus reveal their uncircumcised organs of speech. A fatal impotence in the hands of an enemy.⁶⁵⁶

“YOUR EYES SAW MY UNFORMED BODY”⁶⁵⁷

Here is finally the poem in which the term of circumcision appears explicitly and around which the final chapter of Derrida’s *Schibboleth* revolves:

⁶⁵⁵ “J’ai cité cette « alliance » [*the Covenant of Jehovah*] de Blake pour souligner que, dans toutes ses dimensions dites tropiques, la circoncision reste une chose des sens et du corps. Elle se donne à écrire et à lire sur le corps. Plutôt : le sens des sens, le corps se donne à penser, signifier, interpréter ainsi, depuis *cette* réponse à la question « qu’est-ce que le corps propre, dit propre? » : un lieu de circoncision. / Avant saint Paul [Rom. 2:25-29], la Bible donnait à lire la circoncision ou l’incirconcision des lèvres, c’est-à-dire, dans cette langue, de la langue (*Exode*, 6 : 12, 30), des oreilles (*Jérémie*, 6 : 10) et du cœur (*Levitique*, 26 : 41)” (*Schibboleth*, pp. 105-106).

⁶⁵⁶ “La circoncision d’une parole doit ainsi s’entendre comme un événement du corps. Analogie essentielle entre cet événement, d’une part, la différence diacritique entre *schibboleth* et *sibboleth*, d’autre part. C’est dans le corps, en raison d’une certaine impuissance *advenue* de leur organe vocal, mais d’une impuissance du corps *propre*, du corps déjà cultivé, limité par une barrière non organique, non naturelle, que les Éphraïmites ressentaient leur inaptitude à prononcer ce qu’ils savaient pourtant devoir être prononcé *schibboleth* — et non *sibboleth*.” (*Schibboleth*, p. 106.) Saint Paul’s emphasis on the circumcision of the heart is not such a distinctive mark as the Christian tradition would have sometimes had it: it just spiritualizes, and thus metaphorizes, the characteristic that always already belonged to the “semantic charge of circumcision”, to the apparently ‘carnal’ and ‘outward’ operation. But at the same time, the *always* corporeal aspect of the entry into covenant and community becomes obfuscated. Circumcision in the flesh and the allegedly primary, *spiritual* circumcision are contemporaneous, ‘equiprimordial’ indeed — they happen ‘at once’, at one and the same time. The circumcision of the heart (the heart does not only metaphorically name the innermost recess of man’s body, its literality is not only that of a muscle pumping blood), the circumcision of the lips and ears (it is well known that people cannot always distinguish the diacritical differences of pronunciation in a foreign language; therefore the impotence of the Ephraimites need not have been only a defect of the speech organs in the strict sense, but may have been a defect of the ‘ear’, the ‘inner ear’ as indistinguishable from the ‘outer’ in this respect), coincide perfectly — and most painfully — with each other and with their ‘spiritual’ counterpart in the ritual mutilation of a child’s body that happens in the name of God and his covenant.

⁶⁵⁷ Psalm 139:16 (New International Version). Cf. Daniel Boyarin’s quotation of this verse from *Midrash Rab-bah*: “My *golem* which Your eyes have seen” (“This We Know...”, p. 479).

EINEM, DER VOR DER TÜR STAND, eines
 Abends:
 ihm
 tat ich mein Wort auf —: zum
 Kielkropf sah ich ihn trotten, zum
 halb-
 schürigen, dem
 im kotigen Stiefel des Kriegsknechts
 geborenen Bruder, dem
 mit dem blutigen
 Gottes-
 gemächt, dem
 schilpenden Menschlein.

Rabbi, knirschte ich, Rabbi
 Löw:

Diesem
 beschneide das Wort,
 diesem
 schreib das lebendige
 Nichts ins Gemüt,
 diesem
 spreize die zwei
 Krüppelfinger zum heil-
 bringenden Spruch.
 Diesem.

.....
 Wirf auch die Abendtür zu, Rabbi.

Reiß die Morgentür auf, Ra- —⁶⁵⁸

⁶⁵⁸ *Die Niemandrose, GW 1:242-243. Trans. John Felstiner (Selected..., p. 171):*

TO ONE WHO STOOD BEFORE THE DOOR, one
 evening:

to him I opened my word —: toward the
 clod I saw him trot, toward
 the half-
 baked
 brother born in a
 doughboy's dung-caked boot,
 him with his god-
 like loins all
 bloody, the
 chattering manikin.

Rabbi, I gnashed, Rabbi
 Loew:

We have several *personae* here; their number is not immediately clear. Rabbi Loew is named: he is the one who created the Golem of Prague, according to the well-known legend from the sixteenth or seventeenth century. So we may indeed suppose that the Golem is also somehow present in the poem. But is the “one who stood before the door” the Golem or the Rabbi or perhaps the prophet Elijah who is expected to be present at the rite of circumcision? Is the “changeling [*Kielkropf*]” to be identified with the figure of the golem, or are there perhaps two or three malformed creatures here, the “clod” or “changeling”, namely the “chittering manikin”, on the one hand, the “one who stood before the door” and trotted toward the “brother”, on the other, and the rabbi with his “two cripplefingers”? And perhaps even the speaker has a speech impediment, “gnashing” his words out to the Rabbi? Perhaps even he has, at least momentarily, “uncircumcised lips”, resembling Moses in this respect?⁶⁵⁹

The “clod”,⁶⁶⁰ a changeling, here a baby boy as it seems, “half- / baked / brother born in a / doughboy’s dung-caked boot”, as Felstiner puns, borne in a boot instead of a womb, as it seems, a soldier’s, a mercenary’s dung-caked boot. The word *Kielkropf* may suggest that this “child of clay” is crawl-throated, malformed by struma, and there is a common superstition according to which a changeling is unable to speak and produces only inarticulate noises.

For this one —
circumcise his word,
for this one
scribe the living
Nothing on his soul,
for this one
spread your two
cripplefingers in the hale-
making blessing.
For this one.

.....
Slam the evening door shut, Rabbi.

.....
Fling the morning door open, Ra- —

In the several drafts of the poem (cf. *BCA* 6.2:157-162) the most notable differences compared to the final published version are the title, in French and apparently suggesting a circumstantial, biographical motivation, of the first known draft, “Que sont mes amis devenus?”, and the fact that in several draft versions Celan wrote “heil- / bringenden Fluch” (“hale- / making curse”, or “malediction” or “blasphemy”) instead of “Spruch”. Cf. also Wiedemann’s commentary in *DGKG*, pp. 688-689.

⁶⁵⁹ Cf. Ex. 6:12. On Moses’ “uncircumcised lips”, see the brilliant essay by Marc Shell, “Moses’ Tongue”, *Common Knowledge* 12:1 (2006), pp. 150-176. — I capitalize the word Golem now and then, since it is primarily, through the association with Rabbi Loew who is explicitly named, a question of the Golem of Prague and, in a certain sense, a character in the ‘scenario’ of the poem, and the name is not always generic here; in Hebrew, in the Torah, the word *golem* has its generic application, as we have already seen. Sometimes the Golem of Prague (associated with Rabbi Loew) has a first name too: he is called Joseph Golem; cf. Chayim Bloch, *Golem: Legends of the Ghetto of Prague*, trans. Harry Schneiderman (Whitefish: Kessinger, 1997), p. 69 *et passim*; this is a translation of *Der Prager Golem*, 1919.

⁶⁶⁰ Cf. *OED*, entry “clod, *n.*”: “4. *fig.* Applied depreciatively to the human body as being a mass of ‘clay’; also to a human being as a ‘child of clay’, or as ‘of the earth, earthy’” (*OED*, 50041743).

According to some popular variants of the golem legend, the man-made monster could not speak; its soul had vitality but not rationality, or it lacked “the true soul, *neshama*”, that could only be given by God.⁶⁶¹

A circumcision of the word is beseeched for this infant brother, this changeling — left in exchange in the boot, in exchange for the soldier’s real son, perhaps — this “clod” whose throat is malformed and who can only “chitter”, “twitter [*schilpen*]”. And who is of inferior wool, only half-woollen in a very specific sense which is not linsey-woolsey: the adjective *halbschürig* designates, normally, the wool that has been sheared after only a half-year’s growth. But here this bucolic term must be related —

mit dem blutigen
Gottes-
gemächt

— namely, with the loins not necessarily “god-like”, as Felstiner translates, but bloody and *belonging* to God in another sense, “consecrated to God” as Otto Pöggeler observes;⁶⁶² it seems that the “loins”, *Gemächte*, have already been cut in order to mark the entry into covenant and community, the order of God as the order of the community, bleeding but still only *half-sheared*, perhaps because lacking the operation *on the word* which the Rabbi is beseeched to perform, the inscription of the living Nothing in the infant’s heart. The blood-stained god’s-loins (“*Gottes-/gemächt*”), namely the exterior mark of the covenant, does not suffice: the scene is painfully comical, with an emphasis on the word ‘painful’ — almost like

⁶⁶¹ For a scholarly historical exposition of the evolution of the Golem legend, see Gershom Scholem, *Zur Kabbala und ihrer Symbolik* (Zürich: Rhein-Verlag, 1960), pp. 209-259, here p. 251 (i.e. “Fünftes Kapitel: Die Vorstellung vom Golem in ihren tellurischen und magischen Beziehungen”; the sentence quoted is my translation); for a popular account, cf. Chayim Bloch, *Golem* (here esp. p. 200). The word *Kielkropf* is more or less untranslatable and its ancient etymology seems unclear. The Grimm dictionary refers to the speculations which associate *Kiel* with *Kehle* (throat) rather than with the usual meanings of this word, as either quill or keel, or with *Quelle* (fountain), and thus this word *Kiel* together with the word usually meaning struma or goitre, *Kropf*, would add up to designate the malformed child as craw-throated, malformed by struma, but these surmises are denounced by the editors in favour of the meaning of *Kropf* in the Bavarian and Suabian dialects, in which it means a midget. Cf. DWB: “KIELKROPF, m. misgeburt, als teufelskind (zwergkind), 'wechselbalg' gedacht, [...] 5) den ursprung von kielkropf vermutete FRISCH 1, 513c in ahd. chelckropf struma (sp. 504). ADELUNG gibt sogar als erste bed. 'kropf an der kehle, bes. sofern er von kindern mit auf die welt gebracht wird', er denkt an kehle; das sieht aber aus wie der erklärung zu liebe hineingelegt, von kielkropf als kropf find ich sonst nichts, allerdings von kröpfen als zeichen der wechselbälge; bair. und schwäb. bezeichnet aber kropf allein einen verwachsenen menschen, zwerg” (Bd. 11 Sp. 680ff). Cf. Peter Horst Neumann’s commentary on the poem: “Im Volksaberglauben ist der Kielkropf ohne Sprache, er kann nur Laute ausstoßen” (“Einem, der vor der Tür stand”, in Jürgen Lehmann, ed., *Kommentar zu Paul Celans »Die Niemandsrose«* [Heidelberg: Winter, 1997], 173-177, here p. 176). Celan probably read the entry on *Kielkropf* in Grimm, and also knew this popular superstition, which might actually be considered as an objection to Grimm’s etymological reasoning. *Kielkropf* may well designate a malformation of the throat, namely one of the parts of the body needed to produce speech. Actually this is more or less confirmed by some of the *Meridian* fragments: “Das Krummnasige. Krummsprachige. Kielkröpfige” (*TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 130; cit. Wiedemann, “Kommentar”, *DGKG*, p. 689).

⁶⁶² “Der Ausdruck ‘Gottesgemächt’ meint nicht das Gemächt Gottes, sondern das Gemächt, das Gott geweiht ist” (*Der Stein hinterm Aug: Studien zu Celans Gedichten* [München: Fink, 2000], 111). This is part of Pöggeler’s counter-critique to Jean Bollack, who has interpreted the poem partly in terms of the myth of Ouranos castrating his father Cronos.

the accidental circumcision of Tristram Shandy by the falling sash window — with all the openings and shuttings of the door (perhaps associated with the values of entry and exclusion inherent also in the distinction between the circumcised and the uncircumcised, between the *shibboleth* and the Ephraimites' *sibboleth*?), with everything apparently only half-done, as if in a hurry.

The compound word divided by a line break, *Gottes-/gemächt*, does not, of course, refer only to *Gemächte*, the “loins” or genitalia, but also to anything God-created, “man, the world and everything”, as the Grimm dictionary explains.⁶⁶³ We may now see that this essential ambiguity joining the “loins” and Creation actually supports Felstiner’s decision to render the compound as “god- / like loins”: the allusion to man’s being made in God’s image is not so far-fetched after all, and it opens a whole new dimension, a new complex of relations toward which a reading of the poem could be opened.⁶⁶⁴ The ambiguity is essential, just as it might be in “possibly the most perplexing passage in all the Torah”,⁶⁶⁵ already cited as our epigraph, where we are not actually told whose feet Zipporah touches with her baby boy’s bloody, circumcised foreskin, the boy’s own, Moses’, or Yahweh’s. But when we deal with this ‘likeness’, we are perhaps not dealing with metaphors (not even the “originary metaphor” sometimes referred to by the ‘early’ Derrida), but rather with another kind of *Übertragung* (“transference”), with condensations and displacements; the discourse on the castration complex is not far when we deal with circumcision (which is of course, in Freud’s view, a “surrogate” for castration). But let us return closer to the ‘interior’ of the poem — as if we could ever rigorously distinguish between what is ‘intrinsic’ and what is ‘extrinsic’ here, while there is good reason to suggest that the poem’s scene of circumcision alludes even, among other things, to Freud’s “History of an Infantile Neurosis”, and especially the chapter on castration complex.⁶⁶⁶

The cutting of the exterior foreskin has been performed, judging by the blood on the “god’s-loins”, but the circumcision of the “heart’s foreskin” (cf. Deut. 10:16) seems to be missing, as if these operations could be separated as two distinct moments, whereas they should arrive *at once, at one and the same time*.

The malformed and twittering baby boy, whose origin is at least doubly obscure, this “clod” is borne in a soldier’s boot; but who put the changeling there? Here we must perhaps remember that it was Moses himself who was, according to the legend, found floating in a reed basket. But how on earth did the “brother” end up in this scene between Rabbi Loew and

⁶⁶³ Entry *Gemächt, Gemächte*: “(5) ursprünglich auch von gott und der natur, schöpfung, geschöpf, eigentlich im bilde des menschlichen künstlers . // a) gottes gemächte, der mensch, die welt und alles” (DWB, Bd. 5, Sp. 3147).

⁶⁶⁴ I am grateful to Jarkko Toikkanen who suggested the allusion during the discussion that followed my presentation at the *IAPL* conference session “Palimpsests of Poetry: Philosophy and/as/in Poetry”, June 6th, 2007 in Nicosia.

⁶⁶⁵ Allen, “The ‘Bloody Bridegroom’”, p. 259. It is a question of Exodus 4:24-26.

⁶⁶⁶ Clearly enough, this would call for a long excursion. Instead of that, we shall return briefly to this subject below.

the one who gnashes out his request at the Rabbi? Perhaps a fourth one is involved too: maybe Elijah, as Derrida suggests? Or maybe the Golem, as Otto Pöggeler sees fit to interpret, another ‘monster’ in addition to the changeling, the twittering manikin? According to a Talmudic legend, whose profane variant is the legend of Rabbi Loew and the Golem of Prague, the golem bore the inscription of a word on its forehead. It was the word *emeth*, meaning ‘truth’ — a sign of life and God’s creation. But when the golem would not stop working in the evening, or when it began acting like a monster, it had to be stopped. According to some variants of the story, it was either Elijah or Rabbi Loew who erased the aleph from the beginning of the word and only *meth*, meaning ‘death’, was left. It seems more than relevant to think of Elijah here, not only because the prophet is supposed to be present at each *brit milah* and expected to heal the wound (the role of the rabbi, from whom the “hale-making blessing”, healing and consecration is beseeched, may be associated with the role of Elijah here), but also because during the Passover feast, a door is at some point opened for him;⁶⁶⁷ it seems obvious that “the one who stood before the door” and for whom a word is being opened, a word of welcome no doubt, must be Elijah. But the one who “trotted” toward the “clod” could also be the golem, no doubt.

Perhaps the anonymity of “the one who stood before the door” is not just for the sake of riddling. The fact that we do not quite know whether to imagine Elijah or the Golem or some other unnamed guest just might be important and not just an obstacle to be torn down by an interpretative decision. “Right here,” Derrida writes, “the monster, or Elijah, the guest or the other, is standing before the door.” (*Sovereignties*, p. 57.) The one for whom the word or the door (the word ‘door’, the word-door, the door-word)⁶⁶⁸ is opened *in the poem* is not *just* someone, some specific person who stood “one evening” before the poet’s door — not *just* that, not only that person, even if the secret of such a circumstantial referent can never be simply excluded — but it could be anyone: Elijah, the golem, a stranger or the reader. The singular situation remains indefinitely reiterable.

Elijah arrives incognito. He is not only the prophet announcing the coming of the Messiah but also himself the other-to-come, the expected, unexpected guest who usually, in

⁶⁶⁷ For some reason, Derrida writes that “The prophet Elijah is not named by Celan, and perhaps he was not thinking of him”, even though he seems indeed familiar with the tradition of opening the door for Elijah, as he shows in the very next sentence: “I take the risk of recalling as well that Elijah is not only the guest, the one to whom, as *relationship* [rapport] itself, the door [*porte*] of the word [*parole*] must be opened”; Derrida continues to recall that Elijah is also supposed to be present in each *brit milah* and that the baby to be circumcised sits in “Elijah’s chair (*Kise Eliyahu*)” (*Sovereignties in Question*, p. 57). Otto Pöggeler’s readings of “Einem, der vor der Tür stand” can be found in at least two books: *Spur des Worts: Zur Lyrik Paul Celans* (Freiburg: Alber, 1986), pp. 342-350, and *Der Stein hinterm Aug*, pp. 91-93, 110-113. Pöggeler tells of one of the variants of the legend, in which Rabbi Loew once forgot to erase the aleph for the Sabbath and the soulless monster ranted at the door behind which there was a service going on, but since the Sabbath had not yet begun, the Rabbi had still time to erase the aleph from the monster’s forehead. But this scene of the Golem ranting at the door does not seem to fit the poem, although the threat of violence seems to be there.

⁶⁶⁸ Pöggeler suggests that the possible identity of the word and the door can be referred back to the “dwelling poetically” (*Spur des Worts*, p. 343). It is not at all inappropriate to think of the “house of being [*Haus des Seins*]” here.

the popular stories, also leaves the scene unrecognized. According to countless testimonies, in the Talmudic tradition, Hasidic tales as well as modern folklore, the prophet has appeared to people in various guises, for instance as a poor wanderer who arrives at the door of a rabbi during the Sabbath afternoon to test his hospitality. “Sometimes he looks like an ordinary man, sometimes he takes the appearance of an Arab, sometimes of a horseman, now he is a Roman court-official, now he is a harlot”.⁶⁶⁹ He is a stranger, *the* stranger whose identity is revealed only afterwards, if at all. So is it strictly unthinkable that we imagine him in a monstrous form, ‘malformed’, like a golem?

Perhaps the circumcision in the poem, the consecrated operation remains half-done because the sign of nothingness, namely the inscription of mortality is not inscribed in the living tissue of the malformed infant (maybe this “brother”, this “homunculus” is the little brother of the golem; but on the other hand, he might also be the “brother” to be protected from the one who “trotted” toward him; the circumcision of the word might be asked *for* his sake, “for this one [*Diesem*]” — the scenario leaves open many possibilities for dramatization); the entry into the human race, marked by finitude, is not fulfilled without this circumcision of the heart. The circumcision which first bestows to human beings their truth. The living nothingness in man’s heart, perhaps a sign of his time and essence, his time *as* his essence. The imminence of the internal limit of life, also in the form of a word opened to the other, for the other: it is the offering of a figure (*Gestalt*), a verbal body that lives on even in ‘my’ absence. An affirmation of mortality as an invitation for the other.

The inscription of “Nothing” can be seen as the inscription of finitude, mortality that constitutes the essence of being-there (*Dasein*). Derrida also acknowledges this possibility.⁶⁷⁰ But this essence of being-there is, at once, a non-essence, an absence of what is most proper, an essential non-essence. And at least at this fundamental level, the Heideggerian analysis of confronting “Nothing [*das Nichts*]” by passing through “anguish [*die Angst*]” resembles the experience of affirming Judaism. “I am Jewish in saying: the Jew is the other who has no essence, who has nothing of his own or whose own essence is to have none”, says Derrida (*Sovereignities*, p. 50). The more or less arbitrary “token of the covenant”, the absence of foreskin as an exterior sign, is a strange substitute for the non-inscription of essence or the inscription of non-essence, the incision of absence.⁶⁷¹

⁶⁶⁹ Louis Ginzberg, “Elijah”, in *The Legends of the Jews, Volume IV: From Joshua to Esther*, trans. Henrietta Szold and Paul Radin (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), pp. 195-235, here p. 203. See also e.g. Martin Buber, “Probe”, in *Die Erzählungen der Chassidim* (Zürich: Manesse, 1990), pp. 111-112.

⁶⁷⁰ Derrida mentions “the necessity of an immense parenthesis: for the question of Nothing and the meaning of being in Celan, of a truth of being that *passes* through the *experience* of Nothing [*la question du rien et du sens de l'être chez Celan, d'une vérité de l'être qui passe par l'expérience du rien*]” (*Sovereignities in Question*, p. 62; *Schibboleth*, p. 110). An obvious point of reference is Heidegger’s discussion of *das Nichts* and the experience of *Angst*, most notably in “Was ist Metaphysik” and *Sein und Zeit*.

⁶⁷¹ When we label circumcision as ‘arbitrary’, this is not to say that the Paulian “replace[ment of physical circumcision] by its spiritual signified” or canceling of “the significance of the physical practice of circumcision [...] by its spiritual meaning” (Boyarin, “This we know to be the Carnal Israel”, p. 487, 488), this spiritualization, interiorization and metaphorization (or, following Boyarin, allegorization) would mean a

“Circumcision is also a determination,” Derrida writes, continuing that “it defines and it decides. But to ask for circumcision is not to ask for something determinate, a meaning or an object.”⁶⁷² He associates the circumcision of a word with readability, but this readability “start[s] from *nothing*”; an essence is promised, an ‘appropriation’ or an identity — Jewish identity, for instance — is promised only through dis-identification, expropriation in the nothingness of non-essence, as he points out (*Sovereignities*, p. 62). When Daniel Boyarin remarks that circumcision is “the most complete sign of the connection of the Torah to the concrete body of Israel”, we might think of Paul Celan’s words of a “glowing / text-void [*glühenden / Leertext*]” — but we shall return to these words later.⁶⁷³

The circumcision of the word, the “hale-making blessing” is beseeched for, prayed “for this one [*Diesem*]”. It is not absolutely clear, judging by the syntax, whether “this one” is the “chattering manikin” or the anonymous “one who stood before the door”, even though it seems intuitively more plausible to think of the “homunculus” rather than the “one” trotting towards it. At the same time it is clear that the “clod” — and even if we would not accept Felstiner’s interpretative translation of *Kielkropf* — is itself, himself a *golem*.

“For this one”, the dative case pronoun *Diesem*, is repeated four times, in a pattern where one line separates the first two single lines containing only the pronoun, then two lines separate the next pair, then there are three lines before the last *Diesem* which constitutes not only a single line but also a single sentence. One might expect that after this laconic sort of

deliverance from arbitrariness. Philo at least acknowledged that the physical practice has a purpose: “the excision of pleasures which bewitch the mind” (*On the Special Laws*, trans. Colson; cit. Boyarin, p. 486). Philo sees in circumcision “the figure of the excision of excessive and superfluous pleasure, not only of one pleasure but of all the other pleasures signified by one, and that the most imperious” (*ibid.*). The Jewish Platonist at least acknowledged the necessity of physical excision against physical excitement. This still suggests, paradoxically enough, what Daniel Boyarin describes as “an entirely different hermeneutic structure from Platonic allegorizing”, saying that “even when it spiritualizes, the Rabbinic tradition does so entirely through the body. Spirit here is an aspect of body, almost, I would say, the same spirit that experiences the pleasure of sex through the body, and not something apart from, beyond, or above the body” (p. 492).

“Where Philo argued that circumcision both symbolizes and effects the excision of the passions — that is, it symbolizes the reduction of all passion by effecting in the flesh of the penis a reduction of sexual passion — Paul ‘ties the removal of the fleshly desires exclusively to the believer’s crucifixion with Christ’” (p. 487; Boyarin quotes Peder Borgen, Borgen, “Observations on the Theme ‘Paul and Philo’”; we return in a note below to the theme of “believer’s crucifixion” in Augustine). Boyarin opposes midrash to the Platonic allegoresis by pointing out that in the Jewish hermeneutic tradition, the “letter” is not opposed to the “spirit”, but “quickeneth” indeed (Boyarin cites 2 Cor. 3:6 as an epigraph: “For the letter kills but the spirit gives life”; or as the Douay-Rheims Bible has it: “For the letter killeth: but the spirit quickeneth”) and is the very constitution of spirit: “although a spiritual meaning is assigned to the corporeal act, the corporeal act is not the signifier of that meaning but its very constitution” (*loc. cit.*).

⁶⁷² *Sovereignities*, p. 62. It must be mentioned that the German verb *beschneiden* is currently, as to its common acceptations, far more polysemic than for instance the English ‘to circumcise’, and the (ritual) circumcision of the foreskin is only one of its acceptations. Therefore also the transferred extensions of the verb are more neutral in German; for instance Peter Szondi may quite appropriately use the verb as follows: “zwischen falsch und richtig, sinnfremd und sinnbezogen zu unterscheiden, ohne das manchmal objektiv mehrdeutige Wort und das kaum je eindeutige Motive um der präntierten Eindeutigkeit willen zu beschneiden.” (“Zur Erkenntnisproblematik in der Literaturwissenschaft” [a.k.a. “Über philologische Erkenntnis”], in *Die Neue Rundschau*, vol. 73 [1962], pp.146-165, here p. 164.)

⁶⁷³ Cf. Boyarin, “This We Know...”, p. 489; our quote from Celan is from the poem “Posaunenstelle”, *GW* 3:104.

sentence the pattern would continue with four lines, but rather there are the ellipses marked by two lines of dots.⁶⁷⁴ Whether it is a question of some (parody of) number mysticism and incantation or rather just “[t]he ellipsis and the caesura of discretion” is not an either-or question: in any case, the series or pattern appears to be interrupted just like the word “Rabbi” is, in the last line of the poem, and the *themes* of “ellipsis, discontinuity, caesura, or discretion” (Derrida, *Sovereignties*, pp. 27, 40) retain themselves in their own right, as thematic ‘content’ that remains inseparable from the ‘form’ of the poem even through any deciphering process of allegoresis.

Whether the request to the rabbi becomes complete when the single-word single-sentence line (“*Diesem.*”) is reached or whether we see it as an interrupted formula, anticipating the final interruption of the poem in the syllable *Ra-*, we may always ask whether “this one” remains the same during the repetition or whether “this one” also suggests some other body besides that of the “clod [*Kielkropf*]” — perhaps the verbal body of the poem itself, too? Does not “this one”, after all, thematize the poem itself? Does the request “for this one” not reflectively fold itself back to the words of the poem themselves, words of welcome opened to the other and words to be circumcised, healed and blessed — including the word ‘*heil*’ itself (implying healing and salvation, blessing and greeting), one of the most blatantly injured victims of the Nazi verbicide? The soldier’s “dung-caked boot” might be the “excrementitious / Husk” to be removed in a rite of purification (in Felstiner’s interpretation, “a liberating counter-step”, a counter-circumcision of sorts after all the violence done to the German language) — the possibilities for a historical allegoresis seem obvious. But such healing takes place only at the cost of violence: purification by circumcision implies mutilation, incision, excision, decision concerning what is to be included in the horizon against which the figure of the poem is circumscribed and what is to be excluded from it. And on the other hand, each word remains exposed to the danger of becoming “circumprostituted”, “whored about / by the flayer’s-ears [*umhurt von den Schinderohren*]”:⁶⁷⁵ there is no guarantee against violations of the ‘purified’ word.

⁶⁷⁴ I am grateful to Volker Kaiser who pointed out to me this pattern of 1-2-3-(4) and its interruption. The motivation for the pattern is not clear and it is not featured in the first known draft of the poem (cf. *BCA* 6.2:157f).

⁶⁷⁵ *GW* 1:138-139. The translation of the line “*umhurt von den Schinderohren*” is mine; cf. Hamburger: “whored about / by the bloodsucker ears”, and Felstiner: “enticed / by swindlers’ ears.” The word *Schinderhannes* names the figure of an antisemite. — Derrida cites a few lines from William Blake’s “Jerusalem” which speak of the senses “Circumscribing & Circumcising the excrementitious / Husk & Covering into Vacuum evaporating revealing the lineaments of Man” (ch. 4, plate 98, i.e. *The Complete Poetry & Prose of William Blake, Newly Revised Edition*, ed. David V. Erdman [New York: Doubleday, 1988], 257; cit. Derrida, *Sovereignties in Question*, p. 59). In his book *Paul Celan: Poet, Survivor, Jew*, Felstiner writes on this poem: “Celan gets a pun out of the Hebrew *Brit Mila*, the covenant of circumcision, since *mila* means ‘word’ as well as ‘circumcision’ [this seems to be a case of homophony rather than homonymy or polysemy, since the words are distinguished by being spelled differently] — a pun audible only in Hebrew overtones and thus not for Aryan ears. After Nazism construed circumcision as a fatal sign, to ‘circumcise the word’ is to take a liberating counterstep, bringing German words within the Covenant.” (*Paul Celan: Poet, Survivor, Jew* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995], 183.) Shibboleth, here too.

There is the ‘malformed’ infant and perhaps also the silent monster, both unable to speak for themselves. And there seems to be no escape from violence. The golem was meant to serve and, according to some variants of the legend, to protect the Jewish community against so-called blood accusations (“the accusation that the Jews used the blood of Christians for ritualistic purposes”),⁶⁷⁶ but it turned against its own; circumcision, the mutilation of babies was meant to distinguish the community from the others, like the *shibboleth* that should protect the frontiers against intruders. The circumcision of the word happens to everyone, it arrives with the name and through becoming a member of a linguistic community — that is, humanity. There are worse forms of violence, of course, than giving a name and teaching a child to speak — these are, generally speaking, the very least of all violences, to be sure, the most non-violent and anti-violent of all violences — these forms that at once both bestow and deprive singularity.⁶⁷⁷ But the marginality and essential universality of this form of violence does not mean that we should not try to think of this general form, the verbal or linguistic form, as a form of violence, a violence which indeed borders on non-violence.

In the end of the poem, “Rabbi” is cut in half, as it were, the word Rabbi is cut in half and what remains is, indeed, *Ra-* — which could be read as the name of the Egyptian sun-god, the god of the people who held Israel in bondage. The circumcision shows itself to be the ritual the *Egyptians* used to distinguish themselves from foreigners, the older ritual from which the Israelites have been claimed to inherit theirs. The distinction between different circumcisions, while the ritual itself is *more or less universal*, happens in the name, as Derrida points out (*Sovereignties*, p. 55). But the word and the name can be as vulnerable, as delicate as a baby boy’s skin.

The syllable *Ra-* may also allude, at least, to the Hebrew word meaning ‘evil’ (transliterated *ra’*), which connotes “dungy”,⁶⁷⁸ and so perhaps we may think that this connection

⁶⁷⁶ S. Zeitlin, “The Blood Accusation [review of Maurice Samuel, *Blood Accusation: The Strange History of the Beilless Case*], *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, New Ser., Vol. 59, No. 1. (Jul., 1968), pp. 76-80, here p. 76 (*JSTOR*). Cf. also Bloch, *Golem*, pp. 35, 51ff, 53ff, 69, 75ff, *et passim*.

⁶⁷⁷ Cf. Derrida, *Sovereignties in Question*, p. 54; *Schibboleth*, p. 98. On language as violence and non-violence, cf. Derrida’s critical reading of Levinas’s early work in “Violence et métaphysique” (in *L’écriture et la différence* [Paris: Seuil, 1967; repr. 1997], pp. 117-228, esp. pp. 217ff). Circumcision, which is “also a determination” as Derrida points out, “a determination [which] defines and decides”, is something that there must be — but we are not dealing here with the “appearance”, little more than a “simulacrum”, namely the mutilation of an infant’s genitals, but the necessity marked by this act of violence — this is what Derrida says: “There must be circumcision, circumcision of the word, writing, and it must take place once, precisely, each time one time, the unique time” (*Sovereignties*, p. 63). What cannot be avoided must be. Needless to say, I hope, that Derrida is strongly against so-called ‘literal’ circumcision and for “the annulment of all literal circumcision” (*ibid.*); but on the other hand, he also affirms the inevitable necessity of the circumcision of the word. So perhaps I might explain now, *après coup*, that it is this quasi ‘double bind’ that must have imposed the figure of Zipporah on me, as an exergue or legend for the present chapter. But perhaps there is not really a comparison for her situation.

⁶⁷⁸ Cf. Paul Haupt, “Heb. *ro’*, Evil=Arab. ‘*urr*”, *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 39, No. 3/4 (1920), pp. 152-155, 170-171, e.g.: “Heb. *ra’*, evil, originally means *excrementitious*, fecal, ordurous, filthy, dirty, nasty, foul, vile, offensive, fetid, noisome, disgusting, loathsome” (p. 154). I am grateful to Merle Williams who pointed out to me that “*Ra*” also suggests the Hebrew word for ‘evil’, and therefore it is another *shibboleth* and marks a palimpsest.

links the abrupt ending with the “dung-caked boot” of the “dough-boy” (*“kotigen Stiefel des Kriegsknechts”*). Moreover, the abrupt stifling in the middle of the word *Rabbi* at the end of the poem might also be taken as an allusion to a certain variant of the golem legend, or two almost identical versions cited by Gershom Scholem, in which the master of the overgrown golem asks this “servant [*Knecht*]” to pull off his boot in order to be able to erase the aleph from its forehead, but when the monster turns back into a bulk of lifeless clay, this heap collapses and buries him alive.⁶⁷⁹ And then we also have the Freudian connection between circumcision and all the other “prototype[s] of castration”, the complex consisting of interrelated displacements, such as the metonymically motivated alliteration *Gott–Kot* (“God–shit”), the “cruel God” demanding “a readiness to give up one’s masculinity”, or the father as “the terrifying figure that threaten[s] [...] with castration” and the same father as “the one who had been castrated and calling, therefore, for [his son’s, Freud’s patient’s] sympathy”, as well as cripples, beggars, “an old day-labourer” who “could not speak, ostensibly because his tongue had been cut out”, and another cripple (*Krüppel* is Freud’s word) who was “a Jew and a consumptive and had been an object of [the boy’s] compassion”, and the hallucination of the young patient who thought he had cut his finger “so that it was only hanging on by its skin”⁶⁸⁰ — all the vocabulary of the poem seems to suggest allusions to these “paths of association”, from the “dung-caked boot” to the “two / cripplefingers [*zwei / Krüppelfinger*]” of the rabbi.

None of these possible directions for exegesis are to be excluded at the outset, not because they all *belong* to the semantic network of the poem, not because they are all *meant* by the poem, but because these possible references that might be listed in a commentary may build up into a ‘horizon’ out of which the poem can be encountered again — a ‘horizon’ only in quotation marks, because it never becomes a complete and familiar circle of intimacy and a guarantee of comprehension, only an opening for a conversation-to-come. “Vacant”, “occupiable” are Celan’s terms for this hospitality; but it is also a question of a “*reciprocal* occupiability” which, as Sandro Zanetti has remarked, implies a request for transformation on *both* sides (the poem and its reader) and yet also, at the same time, an insistence on singularity on

⁶⁷⁹ Cf. Scholem, *Zur Kabbala und ihrer Symbolik*, pp. 209–259.

⁶⁸⁰ Cf. esp. the chapter “Anal Erotism and the Castration Complex”, from which I quote, in Freud’s “From the History of an Infantile Neurosis”, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. 17 (1917–1919): *An infantile neurosis and other works*, ed. and trans. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press and The Institute of Psycho-analysis, 1981), pp. 7–122, here pp. 72–88; original German text: “Aus der Geschichte einer infantilen Neurose”, in *Gesammelte Werke XII: Werke aus den Jahren 1917–1920*, ed. Anna Freud et al. (Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer, 1999), pp. 27–159, esp. pp. 103–121. — Volker Kaiser has very suggestively associated the “medusa’s head” in Celan (cf. *TCA/Meridian*, Endf. 15) with the way Freud deals with this image in his brief essay “Das Medusenhaupt” (vol. XVII, pp. 47–48); according to Kaiser it is only when they remember their exposure to the “cut”, to “(the fear of) castration” that the “I” and the poetry are able to speak: “einzig als solchermaßen ausgesetzte, d.h. dem Schnitt, der Kastration(-sangst) eingedenk bleibende Größen vermögen sie [i.e. das Ich und mit ihm die Dichtung] überhaupt zu sprechen.” (*Das Echo jeder Verschattung. Figur und Reflexion bei Rilke, Benn und Celan* [Wien: Passagen Verlag, 1993], p. 138.)

both sides:⁶⁸¹ the word-door or the door-word is open for the other, but an openness is also required of the one at the threshold of the poem, an openness for an incision, an intrusion of sorts. On the reader's side, it is a question of a transformation of the "horizon of expectation", but also an exposure to an alterity which exceeds all anticipations and horizons. And on the other hand, a complementary exposure takes place on the side of the poem (or let us say the 'text' of the poem in the usual sense, while the poem *is* actually this reciprocity itself), a request for the circumcision of a word and for a blessing — and such a request can never be a matter of certainty.⁶⁸²

ALLEGORIES OF ALLEGORY

Allegoresis, said I. The poem seems to call for an allegorical interpretation of some sort. Derrida writes: "Let us call this — by way of allegory — an *allegory*", conscious of his catachrestic application of the term. By this catachresis, Derrida refers to the opening of one's word at the beginning of the poem, "the bearing [*portée*] of a word for the other, to the other or from the other" (*Sovereignities*, p. 58).

Otto Pöggeler finds in the poems of *Die Niemandrose* an "allegorical trait" and claims that it is this characteristic that made this particular book so inaccessible to Heidegger, who complained to him about its "difficulty" (*Der Stein hinterm Aug*, p. 162). One of Pöggeler's discussions of "Einem, der vor der Tür stand" takes place under the heading "Symbol und Allegorie", in *Der Stein hinterm Aug* (2000), and Pöggeler reinterprets there the traditional (Goethean) distinction, if not opposition, of symbol and allegory in a rather unusual manner. Rather than the traditional formal characteristics of allegory (a narrative consisting of a literal "text" or "type" and another, non-literal "pretext" or "antitype" indirectly alluded to, etc.), Pöggeler takes a detour through some of its just as traditionally negative qualifications, namely by Goethe (according to whom allegory is characterized by the merely exemplary function of what is particular, while in the truly poetic symbol the particular never even alludes to the universal and yet makes us grasp it even without notice), and applies the notion of allegorical "void of meaning [*Sinnleere*]" to an "allegorical" image in one of Goethe's own poems of *West-östlicher Divan*: the cross, or a crucifix on the bosom of a Christian woman, a

⁶⁸¹ Celan, *TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 448, 449; Sandro Zanetti, »zeitoffen«: *Zur Chronographie Paul Celans* (München: Fink, 2006), p. 94n75: "Diese Besetzbarkeit impliziert auf beiden Seiten die Zulassung von Veränderung, gleichzeitig ein Beharren auf Singularität." On the "conversation-to-come", cf. p. 87: "[...] von einer »Gegenwart und Präsenz« des Gedichts (als eines werdenden Gesprächs) nur dann gesprochen werden kann, wenn diese Gegenwart nicht allein und von vornherein als Gegenwart eines Sprechens/Sprechers aufgefaßt wird, sondern als Gegenwart, die Gelegenheit zur Mitsprache gibt." Cf. also Werner Hamacher, "Premises": "Understanding is [...] a procedure of reciprocal affection and alteration" (trans. Peter Fenves, in *Premises: Essays on Philosophy and Literature from Kant to Celan* [Cambridge: Harvard U.P., 1996], p. 2).

⁶⁸² On 'complementarity', cf. *TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 452: "Der Dichtende und Verstehende bleiben komplementär zugeordnet." On the uncertainty of a blessing, cf. Derrida, *Schibboleth*, p. 76; *Sovereignities*, p. 42: "What would a blessing be that was sure of itself? A judgment, a certitude, a dogma."

token whose specific signification or significance is not recognized, or rather is not acknowledged by her Muslim lover who sees, or pretends to see, just a piece of wood across another piece of wood (“*Hölzchen quer auf Hölzchen*”), a dismal figure indeed (“*Solch ein Jammerbild am Holze!*”). While “sunrise”, for instance, is a more or less universal symbol for birth, a symbol whose motivation is immediately understood regardless of cultural differences, the signification of the cross would not be clear to someone without knowledge concerning — and more importantly, without the experience of — Christian faith. An allegorical sign is characterized, according to Pöggeler, by a “vacuity and distance of meaning”, a meaning which can only develop itself discursively through time (“historically” or “in a narrative [*in einer Geschichte*]”),⁶⁸³ and therefore the relation between the cross and its theological or religious signification and significance (redemption, etc.) may be called “allegorical”. Something similar happens to “snow” in Celan’s poetry, Pöggeler argues. The snow in his poems is neither a universal symbol of death nor “the snow we all know”, but a very specific snow: the snow of Ukraine in the winter of the poet’s parents’ death at the camps of Transnistria. Snow becomes an “allegory of death [*Todesallegorie*]” only with regard to the singularity of each death, and yet, its unicity is also “allegorically” applied more than once: “All these experiences of death” — the death of the poet’s newborn son and those of Hiroshima — “are now co-intended in the word ‘snow’ [*Alle diese Todeserfahrungen sind nun im Wort ›Schnee‹ mitgemeint*]”, says Pöggeler.⁶⁸⁴ This sort of “allegory”, the snow as an “allegorical sign”, does not represent or carry over some universal content, nor does it only register some specific in-

⁶⁸³ Cf. *Der Stein hinterm Aug*, pp. 89–118, here p. 90: “Eine Anschauung soll dann symbolisch heißen, wenn sie uns unmittelbar aus sich heraus ihre Bedeutung entgegenträgt und eine übertragene Bedeutung fest an den Grundsinn anschließt. In dieser Weise kann z.B. die Morgenröte für das neu beginnende Leben stehen. Allegorisch ist ein Zeichen, das in einer Sinnleere und -ferne doch wieder Sinn und Bedeutung gewinnt, wobei die Bedeutung sich langsam in einer Geschichte aufbaut. In dieser Weise konnte das Kreuz zu einem Heilszeichen werden.” A couple of paragraphs later Pöggeler remarks that often the relations of signification in Celan’s poems can be grasped and fixed only up to a certain point (p. 91): “Oft lassen sich die Sinnbezüge eines Celanschen Gedichts nur an einem bestimmten Zipfel fassen und festmachen.” But he also notes that “allegory” in Celan of course differs from the Renaissance and Baroque allegories, even though these are closer to his poetry than the symbols of young Goethe (p. 90), and that his later poetry differs also from the “concrete and clearly expressed allusions to the Jewish and mystical traditions that gave the volume *Die Niemandsrose* its new character” (p. 89). Actually the “allegorical trait” itself (cf. p. 162) has changed considerably in the later poetry of, for instance, the *Atemkristall* cycle: “Die kleinen Gedichte sind fremd und verschlossen; sie öffnen sich erst, wenn wir vielen versteckten Bezügen nachgegangen sind. Dann kann freilich plötzlich der Funken springen und ein schönes, überzeugendes Gebilde vor uns stehen. Lesen wir das Gedicht, das uns in dieser Weise anspricht, nach einigen Wochen neu, dann ist es zuerst wieder fremd [...]” (p. 89). This description of Celan’s late ‘allegories’ corresponds very well to the “always again only for once” of “carrying tropes and metaphors *ad absurdum*” in the *Meridian* speech.

⁶⁸⁴ “So muß diese Kunst ›allegorisch‹ sein, nämlich aus der Sinnleere heraus doch wieder Sinn aufbauen, diesen Sinn als das Nichtselbstverständliche und niemals unmittelbar Verständliche durch ein neues und anderes Leben bewahren. Deshalb ist der Schnee bei Celan gerade nicht der Schnee, den jedermann kennt, sondern diese bestimmte Schnee der Ukraine, in dem die Eltern des Dichters zum Tode gebracht wurden. [...] Doch ›Schnee‹ [cf. Celan, *GW* 2:11] meint ›allegorisch‹ auch mehr als dieses bestimmte einzelne. Mit dem Tod des ersten Kindes François fiel dem Dichter ›Schnee‹ auf ein sonnendurchschwommenes Meer; der Band *Vom Schwelle* hat in dieser Erfahrung (wie Celan selbst sagte) seine Mitte [cf. *GW* 1:109]. Der Zyklus *Atemkristall* setzt dazu auch die Todeserfahrung von Hiroshima voraus — am ehesten die Bedrohung der Zukunft! Alle diese Todeserfahrungen sind nun im Wort ›Schnee‹ mitgemeint.” (Pöggeler, *Der Stein hinterm Aug*, p. 99; the word *Todesallegorie* is on p. 103.)

cident, and it is not a question of a “symbolical” shortcut between snow and death either, according to which snow would resemble death in various imaginable ways that can be arranged as a four-term proportion (snow is like death because it covers up vegetal life just like death covers up animal life, etc. etc.), but it “concentrates”, as we might say, on borrowing terms from the *Meridian* speech, and “commemorates” the singularity of each “date” and its loss. Always again only for once.⁶⁸⁵

Pöggeler points out that Celan had nothing against a reader who would approach his poems from another historical-biographical horizon of experience and saw the deadly snow of Ukraine from the perspective of another snow, the one that was falling still on May 1st, 1945, on the last roads of retreat and upon the bodies of those German soldiers who had been hanged by the SS as deserters (*Der Stein hinterm Aug*, p. 8). In the conversation with the poem — “this one”, as if the ostension was a sufficient guarantee of the exposed singularity (and this ‘as if’ is one of the elements in the tragicomedy of ‘this’ poem: there is no guarantee of the integrity of “this one”) — whatever question you pose, whatever you address to the poem, it repeats the same thing, the same words. It insists, twitters, lallates: “*lallen und lallen*” (cf. “Tübingen, Jänner”, *GW* 1:226). Like a baby without a father, as Socrates would say. The ‘allegory’ fumbles along like a golem, without the assistance of its father, uncircumcised.⁶⁸⁶ And at the same time, the word opens itself to an indefinite repetition also in the form of readings, ‘perceptions’ from different angles or positions, different horizons.

Allegory is of course “a notoriously slippery category”, as for instance Daniel Boyarin has remarked,⁶⁸⁷ and so is the category of symbol. The title of Boyarin’s superb article “‘This We Know to Be the Carnal Israel’: Circumcision and the Erotic Life of God and Israel” (1992) quotes Augustine, who adopts “Paul’s usage of ‘in the flesh’ and ‘in the spirit’ respectively to mean literal and figurative” and keeps referring this distinction not only to the hermeneutical but also to the anthropological characteristics of Judaism and Christianity, Jews and Christians or the “fleshly Israel” and the “spiritual Israel”. Allegory is, according to Boyarin, “in [Augustine’s] theory, a mode of relating to the body” (pp. 474, 475);⁶⁸⁸ the author would probably agree that this relating is actually a *disrelating*. “Midrash and Platonic allegory are alternate techniques of the body” (p. 477). Allegory or allegoresis in Boyarin’s sense is a method of disembodiment and the Rabbinic “refusal of allegorization” was a scandal to the “Fathers and Augustine in particular” (p. 493). The anthropological dimension of this hermeneutical trenching extends so far that Boyarin sees in the “*Dialogue of Justin, Phi-*

⁶⁸⁵ Cf. *TCA/Meridian*, Endf. 35, 39.

⁶⁸⁶ This monstrosity of the un-living or the automaton is perhaps the motivation for Derrida’s wish to write, in his *Circonfession*, “un écrit soi-disant idiomatique, inentamable, illisible, non circoncis, tenu non plus à l’assistance du père” (Derrida, “Circonfession”, in Geoffrey Bennington and Jacques Derrida, *Jacques Derrida* [Paris: Seuil, 1991], p. 181).

⁶⁸⁷ Cf. Boyarin, “This We Know...”, p. 497n71; cf. also below.

⁶⁸⁸ For the “spiritual Israel [...] distinguished from the fleshly Israel”, cf. Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, 3.114.

osopher and Martyr, with Trypho, a Jew, perhaps the last occasion in late antiquity when something like a true dialogue between the two communities would be produced, that is, a dialogue in which the Jew is not merely a trope but a speaking subject” (p. 488); a dialogue still without the particularism (concerning the “bodily filiation” inherent to Judaism; cf. p. 489) “that threatens ideologically and in practice to allegorize the Jews out of existence” (pp. 490-491).

The slippery tradition of the notion of allegory does not discourage Boyarin from applying the term to the hermeneutical practice of the early Christians and Hellenistic Jews, Paul and Philo for instance, as well as Augustine, a reading practice “founded on a binary opposition in which the meaning as a disembodied substance exists prior to its incarnation in language, that is, in a dualistic system in which spirit precedes and is primary over body” (pp. 476-477); this dualism and all the Platonic “inner-outer, visible-invisible, body-soul dichotomies of allegorical reading” seem to be refused by the “hermeneutic system” of Midrash (p. 477). In this Rabbinic tradition, there seems to be “no translation of the text onto another abstract meaning plane, no opposition of the letter, the carnal form of language, to its spirit, its inner, invisible meaning” (p. 479). If we should be unhappy with the association of this scheme of “translation of the text onto another abstract meaning plane” with allegory (since it is incompatible with Pöggeler’s revision of the Goethean notion, for instance), we might still retain the Latin equivalent *translatio* as used by Augustine (often in the form *verba translata*) and usually translated back to the term ‘metaphor’.⁶⁸⁹ Boyarin does indeed admit to the slipperiness of the term and delimits it with reference to a very specific tradition of allegoresis and to the counter-tradition of the “explicit resistance to being allegorized”, the Rabbinic tradition or Midrash from which “allegory, in the strict sense, is absent or nearly so” (pp. 493, 498n71):

In Rabbinic religion there is no invisible God manifested in an Incarnation. God himself is visible (and therefore corporeal). Language also is not divided into a carnal and a spiritual being. Accordingly, there can be no allegory. [Boyarin adds a footnote here:] I would like to clarify [...] that allegory, both as a genre of text production and as a reading practice, is a notoriously slippery category. Therefore it should be clear that when I say “allegoresis” I mean allegorical reading of the Philonic-Origenic type, which has a fairly clear structure as well as explicit theoretical underpinnings. It is a hermeneutic structure in which narrative on the physical or worldly level is taken as a sign of invisible and spiritual structures on the level of ideas. [“This we know...”, pp. 497, 497n71.]

⁶⁸⁹ Cf. *De Doctrina Christiana*, 3.40-41; trans. R. P. H. Green, p. 151: “‘Those who belong to Jesus Christ have crucified their flesh along with its passions and desires.’ Even here, admittedly, some words are used metaphorically, such as [...] ‘crucified’, but they are not so many, or so unclear in expression, as to hide the sense and create allegory or obscurity, which is what I mean by figurative expression in the strict sense. [*qui autem Iesu Christi sunt, carnem suam crucifixerunt cum passionibus et concupiscentiis. Nisi quia et hic quaedam verba translata tractantur, sicuti est ‘ira dei’ et ‘crucifixerunt’; sed non tam multa sunt vel ita posita ut obtegant sensum et allegoriam vel aenigma faciant, quam proprie figuratam locutionem voco.*.]”

Here it should be noted, however, that one of the traditional distinguishing features of allegory with respect to metaphor has been that while allegory “says one thing and means another” (which is certainly not a sufficient definition yet), it *does not cease* to mean the one thing when the other has been grasped or at least anticipated. Allegory, according to *this* tradition that may well be incompatible with the tradition that Boyarin refers to, says and means *both* one thing *and* another. It *insists* on the letter even when it insinuates (suggests, implies) the spirit. This feature has been denied to metaphor, which establishes a “dissolution of meanings [*Bedeutungsverschmelzung*]” instead of keeping them apart, and this effacement of the ‘carnal’ or ‘literal’ dimension is crucial with respect to the disembodiment (“disembodiment of history in allegoresis”) that Boyarin so effectively describes.⁶⁹⁰ But history has indeed made allegory, just like symbol or symbolism and even metaphor, a notoriously slippery category.

“AND THE LORD WILL PASS OVER THE DOOR”⁶⁹¹

To repeat what Derrida said, there is an essential analogy between the event of circumcision and *shibboleth*, between circumcision and the diacritical difference that constitutes the significance of the “insignificant, arbitrary mark”, “the discriminative, decisive and divisive” phonemic difference, more significant than the actual signification of the word *shibboleth*.⁶⁹² We might extend this analogy — essential and not just formal, just as Derrida suggests of the analogy between the “affirmation of Judaism” and “the date” (*Sovereignities*, p. 49) — to cover also the “void and distance” as characteristics of the “allegorical sign” in Pöggeler’s reformulation of this term. We find ourselves addressed by a demand (*Anspruch*) for recip-

⁶⁹⁰ The distinction hereby summarized has been emphasized by Gerhard Kurz, who argues that this double meaning (ambiguity in a certain sense: Kurz uses the adjective *zweideutig*; allegory has an “initial” meaning and, besides, another “implicit” meaning, but these two separate meanings are not “dissolved into one”) is the feature that disqualifies the common identification between metaphor and allegory, or the view of allegory as “extended metaphor”; cf. *Metapher, Allegorie, Symbol* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988), pp. 5, 31–34. For “disembodiment of history”, see Boyarin’s article, p. 499.

⁶⁹¹ Exodus 12:23; cited by Boyarin (p. 495) from Elliot R. Wolfson, “Circumcision, vision of God, and Textual Interpretation: From Midrashic Trope to Mystical Symbol”, *History of Religions* 27 (Nov. 1987): 189–215, here pp. 198f: “Rabbi Yose said, Why is it written, ‘And the Lord will pass over the door [literally opening]’ (Exod. 12:23)? [...] ‘Over the opening,’ read it literally as ‘opening!’ That is, the opening of the body. And what is the opening of the body? That is the circumcision.” The whole problematic of “the tropic of circumcision” is here summarized. To “read literally” seems not quite ‘literal’ here, but it is rather a question of referring the word (“door”) back to its most general signification (“opening”) and then applying this “opening” — it is also an opening, *disseminal* opening of signification — onto the body. And further, the body, the ‘visible’ body is “pregnant with the invisible”!

⁶⁹² Cf. *Sovereignities in Question*, pp. 26, 59. In her “Counter-Obituary for Jacques Derrida”, with specific reference to *Circonfession* and *Ulysse Gramophone*, Inge-Birgitte Siegumfeldt suggests that we pay attention to the way Derrida sought “to bind words to their wounds, to write by the escarre. This is one of the legacies of Jacques Derrida: the translation of the Jewish ritual of circumcision into a figure for *différance*. It came to signify, in a manner beyond all doctrinal affiliation, the universal wound (or cut) by which all discourses and alliances are contracted” (“*Milah*: A Counter-Obituary for Jacques Derrida”, *SubStance* #106, Vol. 34 [2005], No. 1:32–34, here p. 34).

rocity that insists on singularity (to repeat Zanetti's insight) and retains the distance in the heart of the encounter, the essential non-essential void.

One of the *Fadensonnen* (1968) poems names "The trace of a bite in Nowhere" to be struggled against, engaged in combat against (once again, *the* trace, with a determined article just like in the case of *the* scar in the air):

DIE SPUR EINES BISSES im Nirgends.

Auch sie
mußt du bekämpfen,
von hier aus.⁶⁹³

The poem "Chymisch" addresses "You with the pale, / bitten-open bud [*Du mit der fahlen, / aufgebissenen Knospe*]" and "the light, so light / souls- / rings [*den leichten, so leichten / Seelen- / ringen*]"⁶⁹⁴. A trace of being *bitten nowhere*: this nowhere is essentially ambiguous, the place of the trace as a non-place. An unnameable place. *Perhaps* it is *there*: but it is nowhere to be seen. As if a child complained of being bitten (by a 'monster') but there was no visible mark on the body. *It is nothing*, nothing at all, you've been bitten nowhere, dear child, you've imagined the whole thing, now would you please stop crying. Hush little baby... We remember the monster eating the novices, or at least biting off their foreskins (*pars pro toto*), in the ritual of the bullroarers. A scar of nothing, nowhere, or in the air.

Language, the gift of a poem, may offer a porous space for silence and solitude, words may circumscribe that which is "without language", but only *in the shadow of the scar in the air*. As Derrida writes, a "poem unveils a secret only to confirm that there is something secret there, withdrawn, forever beyond the reach of hermeneutic exhaustion". This does not, of course, exempt us from doing all the hermeneutic toil we can.⁶⁹⁵

The interrupted word *Ra-* suggests several directions to be taken in the exegesis or allegoresis of the poem: the palimpsestic presence of Hebrew and the word for 'evil' on the one hand, and its coincidence with the name of the Egyptian sun-god on the other, to mention only two contrasting and interlaced, even contiguous elements in a certain sense and from a certain perspective. The suggestion of the Hebrew word is a shibboleth of inclusion-exclusion, marking the limit of a language and community. But on the other hand, the word is

⁶⁹³ *TCA/Fadensonnen*, p. 13. Trans. Felstiner: "THE TRACE OF A BITE in Nowhere. // It too / you must combat, / from here out."

⁶⁹⁴ *GW* 1:227. Trans. Robert Clarke (<http://german.berkeley.edu/poetry/chymisch.php>). On the "bitten- / open bud" and the "souls- / rings" with "so much land" upon them (cf. below), it must be noted that in certain Jewish traditions, as well as in some other cultures observing the rite of circumcision, the excised foreskins are buried in the ground.

⁶⁹⁵ The quote is from *Sovereignties in Question*, p. 26. On the limit and dialogue between a "hermeneutical response to the *Anspruch* of the poem" and, as Derrida says, "the experience that I call disseminal" which "undergoes and takes on, in and through the hermeneutic moment itself, the test of an interruption, of a caesura or of an ellipsis, of an inaugural cut or opening", cf. Derrida's homage to Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Rams: Uninterrupted Dialogue — Between Two Infinities, the Poem" (*Sovereignties in Question*, pp. 135-163, here p. 152; originally in *Béliers*, 2003).

not only ‘evil’ but also homonymous with the name of another people’s god, Ra. There is a hazard at the threshold: risk and chance. The *quasi*-allegoricity of the poem resides in this primordial equivocality.

At the same time, the interrupted word ending the poem also signals the limit of interpretation: the undecidable equivocality at the limit of hermeneutics, the disseminal, pre-semantic, pre-thematic thrust, a manifestation of a secret that invites us to “study the other”: this study of the other means, perhaps, both the interpretative effort (hermeneutics) and a kind of phenomenology drafted by Celan himself, a phenomenology paying attention to the non-phenomenal or ‘invisible’ (in Celan’s sense which is indeed not far from Merleau-Ponty’s), to that which is indeed “beyond the reach of hermeneutic exhaustion”, an enigma that is not just a riddle to be solved. With regard to hermeneutical response and responsibility, the thrust (or the “interruption”, “caesura”, “ellipsis”, “inaugural cut or opening”; cf. Derrida, *Sovereignities*, p. 152) indeed takes place *in anticipation of* meaning, but, with regard to what we just called phenomenology of the non-phenomenal, it also draws our attention to that which is in excess of meaning — in excess or, at the same time, devoid of meaning.

Who was the one who stood before the door? Some specific person who stood at the poet’s door “one evening”? Prophet Elijah? The golem? Rabbi Loew? Anyone who approaches the poem, the reader at the threshold? The horizon of these possibilities must be folded back upon “the one” and “this one”, whether these are one and the same or one and another: literally, in the poem it is a question of none but “the one”, “this one”. The insistent ostensive singularization of ‘someone’ (“*the* one”, “*this* one” must be *someone* specific), or perhaps two specific *personae*, is at the same time an opening for ‘anyone’, the most general vacancy that may remind us of Hegel’s famous discussion of “sense-certainty”, as well as for ‘no one’. The poem’s request “for this one” concerns not only the figure of the “chattering manikin” in the poem’s scenario, and not only the poem itself in its self-reflexive dimension either. The request may always concern also anyone who “stood” at the threshold, as if in a prophetic dream, in a past that remains to come, a past announcing a future — or rather *à-venir* — that is also *revenge*. As Derrida says in an important paragraph that concerns not only all words but also all of us and our experience of language as an experience of mortality, the experience of death as an experience of mourning: “*All* words, from their first emergence, partake of *revenge*” (*Sovereignities*, p. 53).⁶⁹⁶

⁶⁹⁶ Emphasis added to the word *revenge*; cf. *Schibboleth*, p. 96: “La *revenge* est le partage de *tous* le mots, dès leur premier surgissement. Ils auront toujours été des fantômes, et cette loi régit en eux le rapport de l’âme et du corps. On ne peut pas dire que nous le sachions *parce que* nous avons l’expérience de la mort et du deuil. Cette expérience nous vient de notre rapport à cette *revenge* de la marque, puis du langage, puis du mot, puis du nom. Ce qu’on appelle poésie ou littérature, l’art même (ne distinguons pas pour l’instant), autrement dit une certaine expérience de la langue, de la marque ou du trait *comme tels*, ce n’est peut-être qu’une intense familiarité avec l’inéluctable originarité du spectre. On peut naturellement la traduire en perte inéluctable de l’origine.”

The “Nothing” of the poem becomes “living” only when inscribed, incised into the invisible depths of another body, another heart (“*das lebendige / Nichts ins Gemüt*”).⁶⁹⁷ There must be a chiasmic wounding as a “token of a covenant”, a “double vacancy”, “reciprocal occupiability”. The heart as a place of inscription is a very traditional *topos*, of course.⁶⁹⁸ But here, as the inscription beseeched for is an inscription of “Nothing”, there is no metaphor. Rather something less than metaphor, as Rudolf Carnap argued in his polemic against Heidegger’s “metaphysical” language.⁶⁹⁹ The wound of nothing inscribed into the heart is neither literal nor metaphorical, neither purely carnal nor purely spiritual. It is a corporeal wound even when it is invisible, in the heart or soul (*Gemüt*) or “in the air”.

And this “Nothing” is nothing but nothing: this void, this vacancy ‘is’ less than any determined negation. It ‘is’ not a lack, a longing for something determinate. It ‘is’ a radical hospitality for that which — for “the one who” — arrives “always again only once”, before we know it, before identification, “beyond knowledge”.

Like Elijah, perhaps. Like a stranger, like an Other, “‘wholly Other’ and an ‘other’ which” — or an other who — “is not far removed, which [or who] is very near”.⁷⁰⁰

⁶⁹⁷ Cf. *DWB*, entry “Gemüt, n.”: “*das gemüt ist ursprünglich, wie der mut, u n s e r i n n e r e s überhaupt im unterschied vom körper oder leib, daher leib und gemüt u. ä., wie leib und seele*” (Bd. 5, Sp. 3294). It is not only the ‘soul’ or the ‘mind’, in opposition to ‘body’, but the ‘heart’, and that is not only the organ that can be operated on but ‘heart’ also names the innermost recess of the human body or body-and-soul in general, singularity in general, the non-phenomenal nucleus (*Herzpunkt*) of the phenomenal ‘person’. And perhaps here all we have to say is that *Gemüt* names nothing but the *invisible* ‘stationery’ on which “the living / Nothing” is to be “scribed”.

⁶⁹⁸ To mention only one example out of a myriad: “You are our letter, written not with ink but with the spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on the fleshy tablets of the heart [*in tabulis cordis carnalibus*].” 2 Cor 3:2-3; cit. Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, trans. Green, p. 183 (3.112). For a contrast, cf. Boyarin, p. 491: “In contrast to Paul and his followers, for whom the interpretation of circumcision was a rejection of the body, for the Rabbis of the midrash it is a sign of the sanctification of that very physical body; the cut in the penis completes the inscription of God’s name on the body.” According to *Midrash Tanhuma* 14, cited by Boyarin, “the Holy Blessed One placed His name on Israel” in circumcision, and the name is ShaDaY: “The Shi’n [the first letter of the root], he placed in the nose, the Dale’t, He placed in the hand, and the Yo’d in the circumcision.” (Cit. *ibid.*)

⁶⁹⁹ Cf. above the brief discussion of a passage in Carnap’s “The Overcoming of Metaphysics through Logical Analysis of Language”, which we hereby repeat: “We pointed out before that the meaningless words of metaphysics usually owe their origin to the fact that a meaningful word is deprived of its meaning through its metaphorical use in metaphysics. But here [in the case of the verb *nichten*, derived from the noun *das Nichts*] we confront one of those rare cases where a new word is introduced which never had a meaning to begin with” (pp. 24-25).

⁷⁰⁰ “Vielleicht, so muß ich mir jetzt sagen, – vielleicht ist sogar ein Zusammentreffen dieses »ganz Anderen« – ich gebrauche hier ein bekanntes Hilfswort – mit einem nicht allzu fernen, einem ganz nahen »anderen« denkbar – immer und wieder denkbar.” (*TCA/Meridian*, Endf. 31c; trans. Glenn, in the “Appendix” to Derrida’s *Sovereignities in Question*, p. 180.) — With regard to the poem “Einem, der vor der Tür stand”, much is left undiscussed here, of course. I have not found satisfactory answers to the questions concerning the “morning door” and “evening door” and their relation to the “one who stood before the door, one / evening”, for instance (I find P. H. Neumann’s reference to Psalm 92 a little bit vague; cf. his commentary on the poem in Jürgen Lehmann, ed., *Kommentar zu Paul Celans »Die Niemandrose«*, pp. 173-177, here pp. 175, 176-177). The words “eines / Abends” do not *only* signal that there may be a specific reference to some biographical incident, nor do they *only* manifest that there is, as there always is, some such singular experience, that *there is a secret*, let alone that it would be just a casual remark (as ‘one evening’ would often be, in other contexts), but it should obviously be related *also* to the last two verses, separated from each other and the rest of the poem by the enigmatic ellipses. However, inasmuch as we can only ‘explain’ the morning door and evening door by some vague ‘symbolical’ identifications (birth and death, for instance), I

TRANSPLANTATION

In one of the poems in the book *Lichtzwang*, we seem to be invited to grasp something like a solitary hand in prayer — not only to grasp it, but to cut it, with eye-scissors (*GW* 2:273):

SCHNEID DIE GEBETSHAND
aus
der Luft
mit der Augen-
schere,
kapp ihre Finger
mit deinem Kuß:

Gefaltetes geht jetzt
atemberaubend vor sich.⁷⁰¹

Here, as always, the word *Finger* might point us toward a complex configuration in Celan's work — *Handwerk*⁷⁰² — of poetry. But *Finger* — in this case fingers, in plural — is not just another figure among others. Fingers, hands, eyes, lips, lungs, in Celan's poems, are not metaphors even though they may be understood as metonymies; they are no mere figures of speech but speech seeking a figure (*Gestalt*). They are *pars pro toto*, on their way through the atmosphere like meteors, and heading toward an "occupiable" reality: *besetzbar* is a word often used by Celan in the material for the *Meridian* speech.⁷⁰³

⁷⁰¹ would rather leave them their universally 'allegorical' openness, their chance and risk of repetition.
My translation:

CUT THE PRAYER-HAND
off
the air
with the eye-
scissors,
cap its fingers
with your kiss:

the folded goes now
breath-robbing before itself.

The Tübingen edition of *Lichtzwang* tells that the word *Gebetshand* is Celan's citation from Rudolf Bilz, *Die unbewältigte Vergangenheit des Menschengeschlechts. Beiträge zu einer Paläoanthropologie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1967), p. 109: "Ich gehe nicht auf die Gebetshand ein, im besonderen den physiognomischen Wechsel, der sich vollzogen hat." (*TCA/Lichtzwang*, p. 80n.)

⁷⁰² "Brief an Hans Bender" (*GW* 3:177): "Handwerk – das ist Sache der Hände. Und diese Hände wiederum gehören nur *einem* Menschen, d.h. einem einmaligen und sterblichen Seelenwesen, das mit seiner Stimme und seiner Stummheit einen Weg sucht. / Nur wahre Hände schreiben wahre Gedichte. Ich sehe keinen prinzipiellen Unterschied zwischen Händedruck und Gedicht."

⁷⁰³ Cf. *TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 490, *passim*. For instance, one of the many fragments in which this *besetzbar* occurs, says that we should not imagine the "strangest" but to *think* it: "Das Gedicht [...] muß unentwegt auf jenes Fremdeste zuhalten, das es – immer noch – als ansprechbar, besetzbar, zumindest nennbar denkt (nicht: imaginiert)" (*TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 30).

The poem heads towards an other, wants to move toward an Other, “it needs this Other, it needs an Over-against”; each thing, each human being is, for the poem, a figure of this Other, as it is said in the *Meridian*.⁷⁰⁴ And the word seeks to become flesh again, it wants to be voiced, perhaps even to be incorporated into your flesh, both embodied and disembodied at the same time, but it will remain foreign, a foreign body within yours: “*harzt, will nicht / vernarben*.” (“resins, will not / scar over.”) (*GW* 1:149; trans. Felstiner.)

The imperative “*kapp ihre Finger / mit deinem Kuß*”, which I would translate “cap its fingers / with your kiss”, the verb “cap” meaning first and foremost, according to the *OED*, “To put a cap on ([for instance, on] the nipple of a gun)”, but also “To take away the cap from (a person)”; the German verb *kappen* would usually mean the same as *schneiden*, “to cut”, or even “to capon” (that is “to castrate a cock”), but it also means “to toe-cap, to tip”, which is to say in the shoemakers’ idiom, “[to cover the toe of a boot or shoe with] a cap of leather”, and the imperative “*kapp ihre Finger / mit deinem Kuß*”, “cap its fingers / with your kiss”, certainly combines these two opposite moves: to cut away the tip, tips, yes, but only to remove them from sight, to cover from sight and even to furnish, with your lips, new cover, new caps of leather.⁷⁰⁵ I say “certainly” because this inevitably happens to the words read aloud, learned by heart, and recited.

The theme of circumcision imposes itself here, of course. And is it perhaps a question of circumcising a word, again? “*SCHNEID DIE GEBETSHAND*”: could it be that this imperative concerns *the word*, the word *die Gebetshand*, the thing that is inseparable from this word as it arrives through the atmosphere, or the poem as a word, the handshake as a whole — “*kapp ihre Finger / mit deinem Kuß*”? Could it be that to cut the fingers — or the word *Finger*, the word-thing that arrives through the air or on the paper, like an airmail letter whose envelope you must cut open with the eye-scissors, but always an *open* letter — could it be that to *cap* the fingers, to cut them out of sight and thus to give them their new leather tips, is to give the

⁷⁰⁴ “Das Gedicht will zu einem Anderen, es braucht dieses Andere, es braucht ein Gegenüber. Es sucht es auf, es spricht sich ihm zu. / Jedes Ding, jeder Mensch ist dem Gedicht, das auf das Andere zuhält, eine Gestalt dieses Anderen.” (*TCA/Meridian*, Endf. 35a-b; *GW* 3:198.) Trans. Felstiner, p. 409: “The poem wants to reach an Other, it needs this Other, it needs an Over-against. It seeks it out, speaks toward it. / For the poem making toward an other, each thing, each human being is a form of this Other.”

⁷⁰⁵ Another poem, “Sibirisch”, in the earlier book *Die Niemandsrose* (1963), begins with the word “Bogengebete”, “bow-prayers”, and ends “mit abgehäutetem / Finger.” With a flayed finger, with which “I speak to you [*ich ... rede zu dir*]”. To say that I speak to you “with [*mit*]” a finger whose skin is peeled off, does not of course have to mean that I speak “through” my finger or write “with it”, as I write with a pen or computer, but that I speak to you while my finger is skinned. But does one not speak in person, with all the parts of one’s body joined in? The poem begins: “Bogengebete — du / sprachst sie nicht mit, es waren, / du denkst es, die deinen.” (“Bow-prayers — you / did not speak with them [*mitsprechen*: you did not (just) ‘join in’; also: you didn’t speak ‘with’ the words, didn’t just use them as an instrument of expression, let alone only mention them], those that were, / you think so, of your own.”) *Bogengebete* are related to the title’s Siberia, they are prayers spoken over the hunter’s bow, as a spell. (*GW* 1:248. My translation.) Cf. Hans-Michael Speier’s commentary on the poem in Lehmann, ed., *Kommentar zu Paul Celans »Die Niemandsrose*, p. 196. Cf. also Werner Hamacher, “Bogengebete”, in Norbert Haas, Rainer Nägele, Hans-Jörg Rheinberger, eds., *Aufmerksamkeit* (Liechtensteiner Exkurse III) (Eggingen: Edition Klaus Isele 1998), pp. 11-43.

hand what is missing, the missing part; to put the cap on would be to give it the voice it lacks, to “entrust [him] with [his] mouth”, too? To voice this letter in the bottle, and to drink its contents: to voice it, and to incorporate its secret.

Watch your mouth! Pronounce before a mirror, read your lips, eye them. The typical German pronunciation of the word *Finger*, slightly unlike the Oxford English ‘finger’, somewhat widening the orifice of the mouth more toward the end, lets them all in, or out, at one mouthful, four or five of them: *die Finger* in plural (singular of this masculine noun would be *der Finger*). But *Kuß* — read your lips, eye them, feel them, think them — unlike the English ‘kiss’, lets in, or out, only one. One at a time. One by one. For the kiss, no, by *der Kuß* the fingers are separated, as if to receive a ring: the ring that *is* the kiss, a ring of flesh.

Insofar as the prayer-hand remains suspended, *so to say*, in the air, “*en l’air*”, “*in der Luft*”, that is: insofar as it remains a figure of speech only, you have not grasped the hand yet. The paronomasia or false etymology that suggests itself between finger and figure or fiction (*fingere*) should not lead us astray from what Celan believed: “*Fingierte Dichtung: das gibt es nicht.*” (*TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 641.) The poem need not be a mere figment of the imagination, a feigned poem. But, on the other hand, the grasping itself has to happen *in the air*, literally, in the atmosphere: it becomes — the word becomes flesh only when “materialized”, when spoken or when written, written in a way that it compels one to cite and recite, to learn by heart, which is something that transcends or traverses the limit between the outside and the inside. In German the equivalent of “learning by heart” or *apprendre par cœur* is *auswendig lernen*: so it seems that in order to speak of the phenomenon of “learning by heart”, one language is not enough. What is “by heart” is still *auswendig*, by rote. “Like a prayer”, as Derrida claims in “Che cos’è la poesia”.⁷⁰⁶ A piece of poetry learned by heart remains other — neither out nor in, or both within and without. But it need be nothing *out* of this world, its element is the “atmospheric air” that, according to the *OED*, “envelopes the earth”, the air we have for breathing (“*in der Luft, die wir zu atmen haben*”).⁷⁰⁷

To cut the prayer-hand out of the air with the eye-scissors may be a violent manner of grasping the hand, but it could also be a manner of putting the fingers out of sight or, also, out of hearing range, and even, protecting them. To take them from the air is to take them from the air we breath, the air moved when we speak, the air that carries our words; to cut it out with the eye-scissors might be, perhaps, to read silently, to see the word-digits as written or with the mind’s eye; but perhaps they must be put *into* the air before they can be taken *out* of

⁷⁰⁶ Derrida, “Che cos’è la poesia (1995), pp. 294/295 (bilingual, French/English, En. trans. Peggy Kamuf).

⁷⁰⁷ Celan, *Der Meridian* (GW 3:192; *TCA/Meridian*, Endf. 18c; trans. Felstiner, p. 405: “the air we have to breath”). *OED*: “air, *n.* / A. I. Atmospheric air. / 1. a. The transparent, invisible, inodorous, and tasteless gaseous substance which envelopes the earth, and is breathed by all land animals.” Furthermore, corresponding to the French expression *en l’air* and also to the German *in der Luft* (cf. Celan, *Die Niemandrose*, GW 1:290: “IN DER LUFT, da bleibt deine Wurzel, [...]”: “[3.] c. in the air. *fig.* 1. [...] b. in an unfixed or uncertain state, in doubt; colloq. phr. (up) in the air, of persons: in doubt, uncertain; of ideas or theories: speculative, hypothetical; [...]” (*OED*, 50004908; 20 Feb. 2004.)

the air, so they are written to be spoken, to be given their voice, to be voiced, cited and recited but also to be learned by heart. To cite Derrida's words, or at least their translation, the poem compels one to cite and recite, to learn by heart, without knowing, beyond knowledge.⁷⁰⁸ The apostrophe of the poem interrupts breath and claims our breath as its own: "The gift of the poem", as Derrida writes in "Che cos'è la poesia", "comes along without your expecting it, cutting short the breath".⁷⁰⁹ It is breathtaking, to the letter.

Gefaltetes: "folded", or "crossed": this participle alludes, of course, to the hands folded in praying. But it is also incompatible with the word "*die Gebetshand*", since this is a feminine word while *Gefaltetes* is neuter. This neuter form refers to an undetermined grammatical and logical subject, something unnamed, unnamed in the poem except by this very participle *Gefaltetes*: this word itself is *gefaltet*, folded, into itself. It is as if it were to be apposed, not to a preceding word within the poem but to the gap between the verses that actually precedes it on the page and separates the parts of the poem, indeed folds them together and apart, forming a strange *envoi* of the second 'stanza', as is so often the case with Celan's poems: they end with an *envoi* of sorts that seizes you more or less immediately, something like an aphorism, but an aphorism that never ceases to bother you by its foreign air, an aphorism that can never be detached from itself, from its own verbal body *as* detached from a body, *pars pro toto*. Not just a figure of speech, though, carrying a theme or a message, but speech seeking a figure. Before we know whether it is a question of a folded hand, reaching toward us, or folded scissors, *eye-scissors*, it has already robbed our breath. Before knowing, we offer our body to it.⁷¹⁰

To cut the prayer-hand out of the air is an operation of the eye, an operation that takes the word out of sight, or perhaps out of its *own* sight. It is to pronounce it, to cite it, and perhaps to learn it by heart. To learn by heart, to cite and recite — I am citing Derrida again — *like a prayer*. *By heart*, nearby, but with a distance, not quite *inwendig*: *auswendig* remains the German equivalent for *apprendre par cœur*, to learn by heart. To pick up (*aufnehmen*) and to carry by heart, as if incised into the flesh, but as a precarious surface that is folded back *from* and still *toward* the outside. The heart's recesses must recede, must draw back from within and wander toward sense, make themselves 'sensed', 'sensible'. Even when they bring to light only their own movement, the movement of giving signs, even if only a "sign of nothing"⁷¹¹ — perhaps nothing but "the living Nothing" incised into the innermost of body and soul (*Gemüt*)? The transplanted surface remains a foreign body within your system, it

⁷⁰⁸ Cf. Derrida, "Che cos'è la poesia?", *Donner la mort* (1999) and *Poétique et politique du témoignage* (2005; En. trans. "Poetics and Politics of Witnessing", in *Sovereignities in Question*, 2005).

⁷⁰⁹ Derrida "Che cos'è la poesia?", pp. 296/297. ("Le don du poème [...] survient sans que tu t'y attendes, coupant le souffle, [...]").

⁷¹⁰ Thomas Schestag gives a very remarkable reading of this poem in his book *Mantisrelikte* (Basel: Engeler, 1998), pp. 130-144. I had already written my reading of the poem (late 2003) when I read Schestag's, and I have not taken his analysis into account in mine.

⁷¹¹ Emmanuel Levinas, "Paul Celan: From Being to the Other", in *Proper Names* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), p. 40.

doesn't *quite* heal even as the grafted organ — or a voice, or a noise — or words, carried through the air we have to breath, grow *back into* flesh (the word *Finger*, for instance, perhaps *in your everyman's hands that pick something up*), it will not *quite* scar over.⁷¹²

The word *Augenschere* is not a metaphoric coinage, a neologism. *Augenschere*, a word that may be hard to find in the average dictionary, is quite lexical, however, and it means “eye-scissors”: an instrument used in eye surgery, nowadays for example in the retina transplantations that are “routinely performed on experimental animals”, as we may read from ophthalmological abstracts.⁷¹³ Celan uses ophthalmological vocabulary from time to time.⁷¹⁴ Such concreteness, and references to specific vocabularies, is very characteristic of Celan, and the reader should perhaps always remember this poet's vehement opposition to searching for metaphors or coinages, more or less arbitrary neologisms, in his poems, which is imperative at least as an opening, an invitation to be on the alert, to the possibility of finding something else, for instance *Augenschere*, eye-scissors; the finger-holes, the eye-holes in the handles of this instrument strangely resembling spectacles, the model preferred by Sigmund Freud for example. Aren't the *Augenschere*, the eye-scissors an instrument with two loops for fingers, fingerholds, like rings furnished with blades?

In one of Celan's earlier poems we find eyes borne like rings around fingers (*GW* 1:29). And in *Lichtzwang* an *Irish* palmister reads “your” hand; the name “Die Irin” seems to allude to the *iris* (while there undoubtedly is or was *some* Irishwoman, a real chiromancer or *chiromantic* — which is an old synonym for chiromancer — to whom this poem *refers*, and of whom we, or at least I, know nothing: the singular, often anonymous dedication carried by every poem is also encrypted within the folded appeal, while the anonymous appeal is itself folded between singularities, face to face in the darkness), and indeed, the blue of her gaze grows through the hand, through *your* hand, “*du, / augenfingrige / Ferne.*” The distant “you” addressed in the poem is someone who, perhaps, becomes “eye-fingered” *in* the poem, *through* the poem, whose *fate*, divined by the *Irishwoman*, is to carry the blue of her gaze in her fingers, forever. This *iris transplantation* means *both* losing *and* winning, at once:

DIE IRIN, die abschiedsgefleckte,
beliest deine Hand,
schneller als
schnell.

⁷¹² Cf. “*Keine / Stimme*” (*GW* 1:149); “*Es ist alles anders*” (*GW* 1:284); “*Die hellen / Steine*” (*GW* 1:255); “*Erst wenn*” (*GW* 3:76); cf. *TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 57/485. Cf. Derrida, *Béliers* (2003), esp. pp. 71ff.

⁷¹³ “Retina transplantations were regarded as impossible up until about 15 years ago, but today, they are routinely performed on experimental animals in several different experimental laboratories.” Berndt Ehinger, “Transplantation of photoreceptors and of full thickness retina”, an abstract in the *Abstracts Book of the 10th Retina International World Conference in Lugano* (<http://www.retina-international.org/conference/1998/abstract.htm>).

⁷¹⁴ *Netzhaut* meaning retina, *Augapfel* meaning concretely eye-ball and not only “apple of the eye”.

Ihrer Blicke Bläue durchwächst sie,
Verlust und Gewinn
in einem:

du,
augenfingrige
Ferne.⁷¹⁵

The reading of the hand tells the destiny, but not as something that already was there, it rather produces the destiny: you are never quite the same after such an event.

The word learned by heart has become “*the invisible word*” and a word for the wholly other, “a witness that others can’t see, and who is therefore *at the same time other than me and more intimate with me than myself*”; a secret that can remain a secret even for myself, as for instance a formula learned by heart “beyond any semantic comprehension”. Derrida’s example of such a formula is the one repeated over and over again in *Donner la mort*: “*Tout autre est tout autre.*” Another one would be: “*Die Welt ist fort, ich muß dich tragen.*”⁷¹⁶

⁷¹⁵ *GW* 2:288; the poem was written in Paris, 27.9.1967. This is yet another poem discussed in Thomas Schestag’s *Mantisrelikte* (1998); what I said earlier about not having taken advantage of Schestag’s readings applies also here.

⁷¹⁶ Cf. Derrida, *Donner la mort*, pp. 133, 147, *passim*; En. trans. (1995), pp. 97, 108-109. God’s commandment to Abraham to slay his own son is of course the most horrible instance of such a secret, a secret that the man must carry in his heart without knowing *why*, and without being able to reveal it to anyone. — The line “*Die Welt ist fort, ich muß dich tragen*” is the concluding line of the poem “Grosse, glühende Wölbung” (*TCA/Atemwende*, 167), discussed at length by Derrida in *Béliers (passim)* (En. trans. “Rams”, in *Sovereignities in Question*).

IN LIFE, LIKE A SECRET

... for example between Celan and Szondi

DU LIEGST im großen Gelausche,
umbuscht, umflockt.

Geh du zur Spree, geh zur Havel,
geh zu den Fleischerhaken,
zu den roten Äpfelstaken 5
aus Schweden –

Es kommt der Tisch mit den Gaben,
er biegt um ein Eden –

Der Mann ward zum Sieb, die Frau
mußte schwimmen, die Sau, 10
für sich, für keinen, für jeden –

Der Landwehrkanal wird nicht rauschen.
Nichts
stockt.⁷¹⁷

⁷¹⁷ GW 2:334. Translated by John Felstiner (*Selected Poems and Prose of Paul Celan*, p. 329):

YOU LIE amid a great listening,
enbushed, enflaked.

Go to the Spree, to the Havel,
go to the meathooks,
to the red apple stakes
from Sweden —

Here comes the gift table,
it turns around an Eden —

The man became a sieve, the Frau
had to swim, the sow,

for herself, for no one, for everyone —
The Landwehr Canal won't make a murmur.
Nothing
stops.

The title of this chapter translates a few improvised words by Jacques Derrida in a colloquy on Peter Szondi's work, held in Paris in June 1979. The words were presented in a discussion following a paper delivered by Thomas Fries on Szondi's "Celan-studies", a paper and discussion concentrating especially on the famous essay fragment "Eden" (cf. below). This is part of Derrida's contribution to the discussion: "[...] où et comment va fonctionner cette opposition entre le dehors et le dedans ? est-ce qu'on va se contenter de dire que, au fond, il y a le dedans du poème qui est cette chose écrite là, et puis que tout ce qui sera dans la vie comme un secret par exemple entre Celan et Szondi, etc., c'est le dehors du poème ? [...] Quand un poète inscrit la date ou le lieu d'une poème, et même sa propre signature, le topos de cette inscription est très difficile à assigner. Il est très difficile de dire qu'il est hors du poème ou dans le poème, et à ce moment

Peter Szondi's epoch-making, posthumously published essay fragment entitled "Eden" (1971),⁷¹⁸ which consists of an analysis of this single poem by his friend Paul Celan, "DU LIEGST im großen Gelausche", appears to challenge the traditional frontiers between so-called intrinsic and extrinsic criticism, between intrinsic and extrinsic evidence, and it has not failed to leave its distinctive marks on the disciplines and counter-disciplines of reading poetry. For instance, the question of the relation between the extrinsic and intrinsic *date* of the poem, a central theme in Jacques Derrida's book *Schibboleth — pour Paul Celan* (1986), is in a certain manner inherited by Derrida from his friend and colleague Szondi. Derrida's reference to "Eden" actually concerns, first and foremost, a relatively public fact: whereas the first publication of the poem "DU LIEGST im großen Gelausche" bears the date of its composition ("Berlin, 22./23.12.1967"),⁷¹⁹ this inscription was omitted thereafter by the poet himself, together with the early title "Wintergedicht".⁷²⁰ This omission of the date — which can be called an omission only because it *was* there, since Celan practically always dated his manuscripts, and this time the date of composition was featured also in the first published version of the poem — was customary to him, as Szondi points out. But this effacement of the "external date" never annuls what Derrida calls "*la datation interne*".⁷²¹

Szondi's work on Celan also solicits the issues of "intrinsic" and "extrinsic", reading and interpretation, immanence and transcendence in the longer essay "Lecture de Strette" (1971),⁷²² but apparently from the other side of the frontier: in that spectacular reading of the poem "Engführung", he tries to remain as 'immanent' and as close to the letter as possible,

le biographique, une théorie de la datation, de la signature etc., de la localisation de ce topos très difficile à situer, une telle théorie devra naturellement considérer ce qu'on appelle vulgairement le biographique comme faisant partie (à sa manière, de manière hétérogène évidemment, de manière spécifique) du texte. Dès lors le secret que Szondi pouvait prétendre connaître de tel poème de Celan et à partir duquel, lui, engage une lecture ne doit pas scandaliser. Il y a toujours dans tout poème une adresse, un poème est dédié d'une manière ou d'une autre. Et cette adresse-là est à la fois secrète, elle est toujours secrète de toute manière, et son secret donne à lire, il se détourne de lui-même, c'est ça la langue. Dès lors que ce secret est inscrit dans la langue, il reste secret et il donne à lire." (Jacques Derrida, with Thomas Fries, Jean Bollack, Michel Deguy, Martine Broda, Henri Meschonnic, Bernhard Böschenstein, Wolfgang Fietkau, Hans Hagen Hildebrandt, "Discussion", in Mayotte Bollack, ed., *L'acte critique. Un colloque sur l'oeuvre de Peter Szondi*, Paris, 21-23 juin 1979; Cahiers de philologie, Vol. 5 [Lille: Presses Universitaires de Lille, 1985], here pp. 239-240.) The article by Fries ("Critical Relation: Peter Szondi's Studies on Celan") as well as the "Discussion on Fries" have been translated into English by James G. Hughes, in *boundary 2*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (Spring 1983), The Criticism of Peter Szondi, pp. 139-154, 155-167.

⁷¹⁸ *Schriften 2*, ed. Wolfgang Fietkau (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1978), pp. 390-398; "Celan-Studien" therein (pp. 319-398, 423-442) are edited by Jean Bollack, Henriette Beese, Wolfgang Fietkau, Hans-Hagen Hildebrandt, Gert Mattenklott, Senta Metz, Helen Stierlin. English trans. Susan Bernofsky, in Szondi, *Celan Studies*, trans. Bernofsky with Harvey Mendelsohn (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), pp. 83-95.

⁷¹⁹ In Otto F. Best, ed., *Hommage für Peter Huchel, zum 3. April 1968*, München 1968, p. 16; cit. Szondi, *Schriften 2*, p. 390.

⁷²⁰ That is, in Celan's final typescript copy for *Schneepart*, which was posthumously published in 1971, but already prepared for publication by the poet himself.

⁷²¹ Cf. Szondi, "Eden", in *Schriften 2*, pp. 390-391; Jacques Derrida, *Schibboleth — pour Paul Celan* (Paris: Galilée, 1986), pp. 34-36, here p. 36.

⁷²² "Reading 'Engführung'", trans. Bernofsky, in *Celan Studies*, pp. 27-82, which we have already discussed.

while most of the unfinished essay fragment “Eden” seems to consist of a certain promulgation of private knowledge, evidently ‘external’ to the poem’s text, as it seems. But even if it remains a fragment, an unfinished essay, Szondi makes it quite clear that it is altogether questionable whether the biographical information shared by the friend and the events reported in the essay could, in the end, “serve to support any reading at all”. Let us cite the central ‘theoretical’ question of the essay *in extenso*, in Susan Bernofsky’s translation:

This biographical report (others could no doubt make similar remarks apropos of other Celan poems), is not intended as the justification for a reading of the poem “Du liegst im großen Gelausche.” Rather, we might ask whether such information can serve to support any reading at all. To what extent does understanding the poem depend on a knowledge of the biographical/historical framework? Or, in more general terms, to what extent is the poem determined by things external to it, and this determination from without invalidated by the poem’s own internal logic? Obviously Celan’s poem would never have been written — at least not in this form — had it not been for the experiences of his stay in Berlin, which were determined more by his friends and by chance than by the poet himself. Without the drive to the Havel, to the Landwehr Canal, past the Eden, without the visit to the Christmas market, the execution chamber at Plötzensee, without Celan’s having read the Luxemburg/Liebknacht documentation, the poem would have been impossible. [We shall shortly return to these ‘external’ conditions of possibility, as reported by Szondi.] Yet Celan also saw, read, and experienced many other things during the same few days that left no traces in the poem. But the poem’s determination by everyday coincidence is already limited — indeed precluded — by the process of selection, which, no less than these more or less chance occurrences themselves, was a necessary precondition for the poem, part of its genesis. We might ask whether the determination from without, the real-life referent, is not balanced out by the poem’s self-determination: the interdependence of its various elements, by means of which even the real events referred to are transformed. [*Celan Studies*, pp. 88-89.]

“Eden” testifies to the rare fact that a privileged reader has been able to closely witness the incidents in the poet’s life which, in a very specific way, led to the poem. The few pages of the essay reveal how practically each line and each word of the poem may be traced back to some incident of Celan’s stay in Berlin just before Christmas 1967, while the poem can never be reduced to these details, however, as Szondi himself emphasizes (cf. *Celan Studies*, p. 85). Let us summarize briefly what Szondi can tell us of Celan’s experiences in Berlin. Celan was staying at the Academy of Fine Arts, in a room whose large panorama window looks out on the Tiergarten Park, and there he wrote the poem late at night, between the 22nd and 23rd of December, 1967. The opening lines refer to the bushes and the snowflakes seen through that window. The next four lines (3-6) refer to places Celan visited and objects he saw during the preceding day or two, including the Plötzensee Prison meat hooks from which Hitler’s would-be assassins and their suspected associates were hanged after the assassination attempt of the 20th of July 1944 and, as a scandalous rhyme-word for these *Fleischerhaken*, the Christmas decoration (the Swedish wreaths, *Äppelstaken*) that were on display at the Europa-Center shopping complex. The next two lines, isolated by the two dashes (7-8), refer to the

luxury apartment house named Eden that was built, as if to attest to sheer outrageous indifference, right on the site of the former Hotel Eden, where Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht were held and beaten before they were lynched, on January 15th, 1919. During Celan's visit to Berlin, he asked his friend for something to read, and Szondi gave him a new book about this political assassination.⁷²³ Lines 9-10 only slightly transform the words that are documented in the book as the murderers' description of their deed.⁷²⁴ The bodies, turned into a "sieve" and a "sow", as the assassins would have it, were thrown into the Landwehr Canal which, afterwards, "will make no noise" (line 12).

Szondi is not the privileged reader of this poem *only* because he happened to witness these events more or less personally, but, more importantly, because his *Celan Studies* and other readings of literature are exceptional in their force and insight.⁷²⁵ The importance of "Eden" does not lie only in the 'anecdotal' details, nor is it essentially devalued by the fact that he never finished it and thus never had the chance to "reconstruct the logic of the

⁷²³ E. Hannover-Drück, H. Hannover, eds., *Der Mord an Rosa Luxemburg und Karl Liebknecht. Dokumentation eines politischen Verbrechens* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1968 [1st ed. 1967]).

⁷²⁴ "Der Mann ward zum Sieb, die Frau / mußte schwimmen, die Sau, / [...]" An excerpt from a court testimony by "Walter Alker, 28 Jahre alt, katholisch": "Nach ungefähr einer Stunde kam Runge zurück und machte Anstalten, sich schlafen zu legen. In dem Moment kam auch eine Abteilung zurück, die wahrscheinlich Dr. Liebknecht weggebracht haben mochte. Die unterhielten sich angeregt und hatten auch zwei Flaschen Wein und mehrere hundert Zigarretten, die sie untereinander verteilt haben. Ich ging nun an den Tisch heran und fragte, ob Dr. Liebknecht schon wirklich tot sei, worauf mir von einem der Kameraden zur Antwort gegeben wurde, daß Liebknecht durchlöchert wäre, wie ein Sieb. Ich fragte auch, von wem sie die Zigarretten und den Wein hätten. Da wurde mir ebenfalls gesagt: Das ist von Offizieren gestiftet worden." (*Der Mord an R.L. und K.L.*, p. 99). And another excerpt, from the written confession by the non-commissioned officer Runge, who reportedly hit Luxemburg heavily with his rifle-butt two or three times as she was being taken from the Hotel Eden to a car, and who reports having been told after the murders were committed — and after he, as it is told in the testimony just quoted, returned to the hotel one hour after killing or trying to kill her (she was shot with a pistol in the car after the blows and then thrown into the canal), in order to get some sleep — the following: "Über Luxemburg hieß es: »Die alte Sau schwimmt schon.«" (*Der Mord an R.L. und K.L.*, p. 129.) There are actually several places in the book by Hannover-Drück and Hannover where you can find the reference, almost word for word, of Celan's citation, most notably the citation from a newspaper article: "Es konnte nicht allein die Parole sein, die den beiden revolutionären Führern den Tod brachte, jene Worte, die an dem verhängnisvollen Abend durch die Halle des Luxushotels geschmettert wurden: »Die Sau muß schwimmen!«, an einem Fluch stirbt niemand, [...]" (*Berliner Tageblatt*, April 29th, 1929, "Die rote Robe"; cit. *Der Mord...*, p. 166.) "Z[euge:] Ich [Röpke] meldete Herrn Hauptmann Weller: »Eben ist die Rosa Luxemburg ins Wasser geworfen worden, man kann sie noch schwimmen sehen.« Der Kanal trug nämlich die Leiche an der Oberfläche, unter der Brücke durch, so daß man sie bequem beobachten konnte, und verschwand. [...] / E [=Kriegsgerichtsrat Ehrhardt:] Was sagten Sie nun zu dem Angeklagten Weller? / Z »Herr Hauptmann, eben ist die Rosa Luxemburg ins Wasser geworfen worden, man kann sie noch schwimmen sehen.«" (*Der Mord...*, p. 104.) "»Die ist erledigt, die schwimmt schon.« [...] »die ist erledigt, die schwimmt schon längst! Wir sind nicht weit gefahren damit!«" (An expression reportedly overheard by the hotel porter from a sentry only fifteen minutes after Rosa Luxemburg's transport; *Der Mord...*, p. 146.)

⁷²⁵ Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe asserts that Szondi's "Eden" "is, along with two essays by Blanchot and by Levinas published in 1972 [...], among the very few illuminating commentaries on Celan". Blanchot's and Levinas's essays are of course very different from what Lacoue-Labarthe himself calls Szondi's "complete deciphering of the poem", and the "gnomic" character of their essays is recognized, with reference to Adorno's critique of Heidegger's interpretation of Hölderlin, by Lacoue-Labarthe himself (in *Poetry as Experience*, trans. Andrea Tarnowski [Stanford: Stanford U.P., 1999], p. 14; *La poésie comme expérience* [Paris: Christian Bourgois Editeur, 1986], p. 26).

poem”⁷²⁶ as effectively as could have been expected. “Eden” is far from being a triumph of naïve biographical interpretation. Szondi emphasizes that it is impossible, impossible for him at least, for the very reader — Szondi speaks of himself variably in the first person and in the third person singular as “this reader, who was fortunate enough to spend these days in Celan’s company” and as “a friend” — to reduce the poem to these “dates and facts”. Revealing the facts opens the view not only into “the history of the poem’s genesis” but also “to the path that led from the actual experiences to their transformation in the poem”, to their “constellation” and “crystallization” (*Celan Studies*, pp. 85, 86). Szondi himself warns against having recourse to what he calls empirical premisses without posing the question about their (poetic) motivation, and against reducing this motivation or this specific *Wirklichkeit* to subjective contingencies. The motivation or “secret basis [*geheimen Grund*]” (*Celan Studies*, p. 90; *Schriften 2*, p. 396) for the connection of the murders with the feast of the nativity (i.e. Christmas) in Celan’s poem is neither an arbitrary combination of indifferent coincidences nor a result of the poet’s indifference. A non-indifference towards indifference would perhaps be considered as a more accurate motivation for this poem. But the poem doesn’t *state* this non-indifference, it is not a statement, nor is its mode of speaking essentially that of a constation.

The rhyme juxtaposes, sets across *Fleischerhaken* and *Äppelstaken*, and this figure of indifference, this *Skandalon* (*Indifferenz* or *In-Differenz* is Szondi’s key word in *Eden*, and the connection of the “double motif” of the assassinations and executions with the tokens of Christmas Eve is of course a scandal) may be seen to extend itself and touch almost everything, every word *within* the poem, within its texture, at least as long as we more or less know how to distinguish this ‘within’ from what lies *outside* the poem. The figure of indifference and ambivalence, the *scandalon*, extends from the meat hooks, rhymed together with the Christmas decoration, to the rhyme between “*im großen Gelausche*” on the first line and “*wird nicht rauschen*” near the end of the poem (as if the great harkening, the great attendance in the still of the night meant anticipation of a Christmastide miracle that never happens) and through, not only the rhyme “*umflockt ... nichts stockt*”, but also the etymological connotation of *Äppelstaken* against this “*nichts stockt*”, all the way to the indifference that allows for the erection of the luxury apartment building of the name Eden, the same name as of the former hotel on the same site which served as the headquarters for the paramilitary *Freikorps* troops division called the *Garde-Kavallerie-Schützen-Division*.

In the *scandalon*, the collision of *Fleischerhaken* with *Äppelstaken*, Szondi recognizes “metaphor” in the Jakobsonian sense (*Schriften 2*, p. 398; *Celan Studies*, p. 92). This technical term is of course something quite different from the traditional concept of metaphor, which has been so vehemently denounced by Celan as an instrument of interpreting poetry,

⁷²⁶ Cf. Gadamer, *Wer bin Ich und wer bist Du?*, p. 125; cf. Szondi, “[...] to what extent is the poem determined by the things external to it, and this determination from without invalidated by the poem’s own internal logic?” (Trans. Bernofsky, *Celan Studies*, p. 88.)

and actually the the term ‘metaphor’ is in Roman Jakobson’s use a sort of *bricolage*, a transformed or ‘metaphorical’ use of the term ‘metaphor’.⁷²⁷ However, in the double exposure of *Fleischerhaken* and *Äppelstaken* neither of these two terms is in itself metaphorical. These nouns refer to altogether concrete objects in the world, as Szondi himself tells us, the meat-hooks of Plötzensee and the Christmas decorations at the Europa-Center very near to the former Hotel Eden in Berlin. This syntactic operation over vocabulary, this juxtaposition by rhyme happens, of course, according to the linguistic procedure that Jakobson characterizes as “metaphor”, and we may understand *Fleischerhaken* and *Äppelstaken* as two metonymies that collide. They collide just like the crucifix and the dagger in a certain piece of “metaphorical montage” in Eisenstein’s *Potemkin*,⁷²⁸ and just like the scorpions’ tails hilariously juxtaposed with bishop’s crooks in the *incipit* of Buñuel’s and Dali’s *L’age d’Or*. But these two “objects”, *Fleischerhaken* & *Äppelstaken*, are “metaphorical” here only as according to the syntactical double exposure, or indeed as constituents of the ‘montage’ of the poem, and not as according to the more traditional, Aristotelian or post-Aristotelian understanding of metaphor. Moreover, Szondi adds a note that was not originally published as part of the fragmentary essay: “Rhyme for Celan is not, as for Karl Kraus, *das Ufer, wo sie landen / sind zwei Gedanken einverstanden* [the shore, where two thoughts land, / we take them together and as one understand].”⁷²⁹

The only phrases of the poem where we unmistakably, easily and obviously can locate metaphor in the traditional sense are the two quotations of the murderers’ words, namely, as Felstiner translates, where “The man became a sieve, the Frau / had to swim, the sow”: these two metaphors are only a slightly transformed version — precisely in order that they would compose a rhyme — transformed from the words that the assassins used to describe their deed. The man, Karl Liebknecht, was shot full of bullet holes, that is, according to his murderers, he turned into a sieve, and the other “Bolshevik”, the Jewish woman, the female corpse of Rosa Luxemburg, *die Frau*, was thrown into the canal and “had to swim”, the sow as the assassins would have it.

⁷²⁷ Cf. Roman Jakobson, “Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances”. Szondi writes: “Das Gedicht als Sprachgewebe [...] konkretisiert die Gedankensassoziation nicht so sehr diskursiv, im Nacheinander der Satzaussage, als vielmehr in dem vom Sprachmaterial bereitgestellten Ineinander, in Roman Jakobsons Terminologie: nicht metonymisch, sondern metaphorisch.” (*Schriften* 2, p. 398.) Jakobson associates metonymy with prose and metaphor with poetry. But we can see that the words *Fleischerhaken* and *Äppelstaken*, even as they are the constituents of the rhyme and the “metaphorical montage” juxtaposing them, are by no means metaphorical by themselves: they are quite ‘concrete’ and they metonymically refer to the concrete reality of Berlin; they are not poetic ‘transformations’ of that reality but belong to it, whereas to call a man a sieve and a *Frau* a sow rather indicate a dissimulation of reality in order to annihilate it.

⁷²⁸ Precisely the same ‘metaphorical’ collision-collusion of two metonymies takes place in a photograph of a crucifix-shaped dagger in Breton’s and Éluard’s *Dictionnaire abrégé du surréalisme* (Paris: José Corti, 1991).

⁷²⁹ Szondi, *Schriften* 2, p. 430; my translation. Cf. *Celan Studies*, p. 95: “the shore where they land / are two thoughts in accord.”

These two metaphors appear in the poem as instruments of violence, the most repugnant verbal violence, as banal metaphors turning human beings into what the speakers represent to themselves as animals and inanimate things. Is it perhaps precisely through such metaphorical ‘filters’ that human beings, such as the young soldiers who used such words during the trial, are able to lose their conscience, so to say, or to keep it separate and commit murder?

Jean Bollack hears in the imperative *geh*, “go”, and in the triplet “*ein Eden, aus Schweden, für jeden*” a parody of commercial advertising. Following him, we might also recognize a double emblem of Eve and Adam in the composite *Äppelstaken*: the apple and the stake. This emblem would then “basically mean”, as Bollack puts it, “the pair of persecuted Jews who are driven away from Paradise and bloodily offered”.⁷³⁰ But I think the poem itself precludes such typological identification. It certainly offers this emblem like an apple on a stake, and certainly it also suggests the sense of offering, but at the same time it problematizes such emblematic representation. An association between the meat-hooks and the Christian emblem of a cross is not far-fetched, I think. The cross too was originally a gibbet, and the original *skandalon* indeed.⁷³¹ If we consider this association further in relation to the line “*für sich, für einen, für jeden*”, and these in relation to the advertisement-like character of the chain “*ein Eden, aus Schweden, für jeden*”, the banal aspect of this “*für jeden*” may be brought into relief. Through the context we might think that this “*für jeden*” is associated with martyrdom and sacrifice: the martyr was offered for everyone’s sake. This association might suggest that also the typological *figura* that identifies Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht with Adam and Eve through the emblem or the composite *Äppelstaken*, in which the apple is penetrated by the rod (cf. Bollack, “»Eden« nach Szondi”, pp. 86ff), is both macabre and banal: that emblem is macabre ‘like’ the meat hooks and banal ‘like’ the metaphors that identify the two victims with a sieve and a sow, or *vice versa*. All these tokens are penetrated by their failure to penetrate.

The couplet “*Es kommt der Tisch mit den Gaben, / er biegt um ein Eden*” remains strange, enigmatic and undeciphered in regard of its, so to say, grammatical motivation. But we could take it as a sort of rebus or pun, so that “the table [*der Tisch*]” is transformed into something like a snake that “bends round an Eden”, the serpent who tempts someone by offering “the gifts”; and we can, of course, think of an abundance the weight of which bends the table. But it is not clear *who* is tempted by the table with the gifts, as it seems that it certainly cannot be the alleged Eve of this Eden, if there is an Eve to this Eden at all: the tempting apple stake is a grotesque motive for such typological identification suggested by Bollack. On the one hand, insofar as we have happened to come across the book that was given to Celan by Szondi, and this could indeed happen, with Szondi’s assistance (one may always

⁷³⁰ Jean Bollack, “‘Eden’ nach Szondi”, trans. by Beatrice Schulz, in Hans-Michael Speier, ed., *Celan-Jahrbuch 2* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1988), p. 84.

⁷³¹ Cf. *OED* (50226041) and *I Cor.* i. 23.

speculate whether the hints given by the poem could have pointed the reader to that specific book without Szondi's assistance; I do not see why it couldn't have), we might associate the table with the gifts with the wine and cigarettes that seemed like part of the reward for the *Freikorps* men after "the old sow was swimming". We also learn from Szondi about the table of gifts in the new Eden of the 1967 Christmastide, and are thus able to make this uncanny association between the presents, between the dates of January 15th, 1919 and December 22nd, 1967, while the association between these wintery scenes accentuates the *indifference* so strongly thematized by him. On the other hand, these possible associations only accentuate the absurdity of the imposing, tempting association of the victims with Eve and Adam. There are no Eves and Adams in this Eden.

In the poem, there is the crystallization of lived experience into a constellation, to use Szondi's vocabulary (cf. *Celan Studies*, p. 85). There are the objects hanging from the ceiling, first of the Plötzensee and then of the Europa-Center, and their double exposure mediated by rhyme (the "metaphorical montage", so to say, of the two non-metaphorical tokens of reality); there are the bushes of the Tiergarten and the flakes of snow and the silence of the Advent. On the other hand, there is the experience of *reading* about what happened in January 1919 and *what was said then*, according to the documentation contained in the book read by the poet. Both of these types of experience are *types of reading*, they are already *typed by reading* in a peculiar way, they are on their way to be read as soon as *the poet* experiences and perceives these things *as a poet*: his perceptions of the bushes and the snowflakes, the meat hooks and the Christmas decorations, are "offered for a reading", they are perceived by the poet *as a poet* and perceived (*wahrgenommen*) "always again only for once" by the poem, or *in the poem* — let us say, by the Thou (*Du*) endowed to the poem; the Thou is, *Thou art*, the "you" in the poem is endowed to the poem as much as its "I" is.⁷³² It is "you" who is, you who are "em-bushed, en-flaked" in the poem's winter night. The guest room of the Berlin Academy of Fine Arts, in which the poem was once written on a night just before Christmas ("Berlin, 22./23.12.1967"), has transformed itself into a strange residence in the poem: the snowflakes outside the window have crystallized themselves into the single word *umflockt*, and the poem appears as a constellation surrounding the strange presence-absence of the unnamed "you", unnamed yet summoned to appear as (if) "you" were already there, addressed with an uncanny precision. Uncanny, for instance because we can hear an uncanny echo in the participle *umbuscht*, of the word 'ambushed' (*embûché, embusqué, embuscade*,

⁷³² In the *Meridian*: "Das Gedicht ist einsam. Es ist einsam und unterwegs. Wer es schreibt, bleibt ihm mitgegeben." (*TCA/Meridian*, Endf. 34a. "The poem is lonely. It is lonely and underway. Whoever writes one stays mated with it." Trans. John Felstiner, *Selected...*, p. 409.) In the manuscript: "Das Gedicht ist nie aktuell, sondern aktualisierbar. Das ist, auch zeitlich, die 'Besetzbarkeit' des Gedichts: das Du, an das es gerichtet ist, ist ihm mitgegeben auf dem Weg zu diesem Du. Das Du ist, noch ehe es gekommen ist, da." (*TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 489, 490. "The poem is never up-to-date, but it is *actualizable*. That is, also temporally, the 'occupiability' of the poem: the thou, towards whom it is orientated, is endowed to it on its way to this thou. The thou is, even before it has come, there." My translation.) The clause "offered for a reading" is from Derrida's contribution to the "Discussion [on Fries]", trans. Hughes, p. 156.

imboscata). Thus the prefix *um-*, in *umbuscht*, *umflockt*, is perhaps not *only* a sign of security or protection (*Schutz*) here, as Hans-Georg Gadamer would have it, seeking to legitimize a hermeneutic interpretation that remains independent of the “information”, “biographical details” and “special knowledge” shared by Szondi.⁷³³

The shifts between past, present and future tense, between the second person singular and the third person, between indicative and imperative, should merit our attention in reading the poem. The first two lines address themselves to a “thou” who “is”, to *you who are* already there, vocative and locative at once:

DU LIEGST im großen Gelausche,
umbuscht, umflockt.

This incipit in the form of a constation *locates you*, in the present, which makes it hard to decide whether it is actually a constation or a strange sort of performative, even more unconditional than the imperative that follows on the next four lines, composing the second strophe, an imperative to go, still in the second person singular:

Geh du zur Spree, geh zur Havel,
geh zu den Fleischerhaken,
zu den roten Äppelstaken
aus Schweden –

Here, if we think of the silent and solitary hour of writing the poem or the one preceding its composition, the moment iterated by the poem — crystallized and constellated *in* or *into* the poem — these lines rather recollect the day, invite ‘you’ to repeat or memorize the day’s walk in Berlin in ‘your’ mind. The next couplet, with the return of the indicative mood and beginning with the impersonal neuter pronoun “*Es*”, seems to tell what arrives next into such recollection, the next ‘images’ that come to mind on this sleepless and apparently immobile, interiorized walk, returning visions transformed into their nocturnal counterparts:

Es kommt der Tisch mit den Gaben,
er biegt um ein Eden –

Then, there is the three-verse strophe, first recollecting and transforming into a poetic form the statements of the accused in the trial, documented in the book given by the friend:

Der Mann ward zum Sieb, die Frau
mußte schwimmen, die Sau,

⁷³³ “Was erfährt man noch aus dem Gedicht selbst? ›Umbuscht‹ und ›umflockt‹ wird man wohl auf das winterliche Berlin beziehen, aber gewiß nicht auf den Blick aus dem Fenster, den Celan bei seinem Besuch von Bett aus hatte. Eher wird man in Busch und Flocke Schutz (um-buscht, um-flockt) und nach innen lauschende Stille (daher: im großen Gelausche) verstehen.” (*Wer bin Ich und wer bist Du?*, pp. 127; cf. pp. 125 ff.)

These two lines are followed by the verse rhyming with the preceding strophes, perhaps alluding to martyrdom, to bearing witness and to the impossibility of bearing witness for the witness,⁷³⁴ as was already suggested —

für sich, für keinen, für jeden —

— or perhaps not, and on the other hand, to the sarcastic echoes of advertising jargon suggested by Jean Bollack (the rhyme forms the sequence “*aus Schweden — ein Eden — für jeden*”). The conclusion responds — negatively, as it seems — to the “great listening” of the first line and the silent movement of the snowflakes on the second, crystallized into the word *umflockt*:

Der Landwehrkanal wird nicht rauschen.
Nichts
stockt.

To the ending Szondi attached the following comment that was however not included in the final copy and subsequent publication: “The poem stops short because nothing is stopping./ The fact that nothing stops makes the poem stop short. [*Darüber, daß nichts stockt, stockt das Gedicht. / Daß nichts stockt, macht das Gedicht stocken.*]” (*Schriften 2*, p. 429; *Celan Studies*, p. 94.)

The standard reading, shared for instance by Bollack and Fries but not by Gadamer and Derrida,⁷³⁵ which not only identifies and locates the poet Celan himself in the room of the Berlin Academy of the Arts next to the Tiergarten, watching in midwinter midnight silence the bushes and snowflakes outside his window, but also identifies the addressee of the poem as the selfsame person, as if he was only talking to himself and using the singular “you”, “thou” only as a detour to denote “me”, is perplexing. I do not see why this imperative should be seen as merely a rhetorical device of Celan’s to address himself in a monologue that only recapitulates the events during the past few days. Why should he tell himself to “go” if he already went? A rhetorical question, perhaps. But perhaps this imperative is far from being a question of rhetoric.

This is not to say that the poem is addressed to some other determined individual *alone*, to *only* some single privileged addressee of a determined message, such a friend and reader alone as Peter Szondi for example, sharing a secret and “cultivating intimacy” upon this very specific horizon. In the colloquy of 1979 Derrida suddenly contributed to the discussion in a manner that, as we may imagine from the absence of response to this assertion, may have stopped the dialogue for a perplexed instant: “There is no dialogue with a deter-

⁷³⁴ Cf. Celan, “Aschenglorie” (*GW 2:72*): “Niemand / zeugt für den / Zeugen.” Cf. Jacques Derrida, *Poétique et politique du témoignage* (Paris: L’Herne, 2005); En. trans. Outi Pasanen, “Poetics and Politics of Witnessing”, in Derrida, *Sovereignities in Question*, pp. 65-96.

⁷³⁵ On Derrida’s part, cf. “Discussion”, in *L’acte critique*, p. 240.

minable individual, with an empirically determinable addressee or correspondent, which does not mean that there is no dialogue.”⁷³⁶ This is an odd and abrupt sentence, to be sure. There is dialogue, as Derrida affirms. But nothing guarantees that this encounter called dialogue (*Begegnung*, *Gespräch* are the words from the *Meridian*) stays between the twain: “*se détourne[r] de lui-même, c’est ça la langue*.”⁷³⁷ To deviate, that’s it, that’s language.

There is a certain piece of dialogue, among many others, in the record of the court martial, contained in the book given by Szondi for Celan to read,⁷³⁸ a piece of dialogue reported as part of the testimony by a certain Captain Pabst who tells the court of the following conversation after the arrest: “I asked: Are you Mrs. Rosa Luxemburg? To that she replied: Decide for yourself please. Then I said: Judging by the picture you must be her. She answered to that: When you say so.”⁷³⁹ A counter-word, her answer, both like and unlike Lucile’s *Gegenwort*. I would not put words into her mouth, these are mine — it is *as if* she said: *You will have to decide who I am*. You will have to decide whether I am who you think I am. Whether you will address me by that name — whether you will address a name and for what — for what cause, too, that is something you will have to decide for yourself, if you will.⁷⁴⁰

If the addressee *is* the poet, even if this Thou is not the only Thou of the poem but a Thou among others, *as* the poet certainly may be identified as the “privileged, or ‘exemplary’” addressee of the poem⁷⁴¹ — with this reservation just made, *among others*, — where does the address come from? Perhaps from the ‘ambush’. We are not invited simply to pay heed to what befell Celan in Berlin but what befalls him *as a poet*. Perhaps the imperative comes to the poet from the surrounding silence, comes *to* the poet *as* a poet, from the silence of the Tiergarten and Landwehrkanal and from the non-stop Berlin life — and death. From the non-stop living and dying. Perhaps his speaking, the speaking of this poem, is a consequence of listening.⁷⁴² Perhaps the poet is addressed *as a poet*, as someone who should say his word, by this silence and non-stop rumour of the city. We must not be content with the verisimilitude according to which the address, the imperative (“go”) is connected to the facts

⁷³⁶ “Discussion on Fries”, trans. Hughes, p. 161; *L’acte critique*, p. 245.

⁷³⁷ Derrida in “Discussion”, *L’acte critique*, p. 240; trans. Hughes: “There is always an address in each poem, a poem is dedicated in one way or another. And this address is at one and the same time secret, it is always secret in every way, and its secret offers something to read, it turns away from itself, that’s what *langue* is.” (“Discussion on Fries”, p. 157.) I think the word *langue* could just as well be translated, simply, as “language”; I do not see any real reason for retaining *langue*.

⁷³⁸ Yes, court martial (*Kriegsgericht*) but not military justice (*Militärgericht*), a distinction of which the Judge Advocate Ehrhardt wanted to remind the press, namely the *Freiheit* newspaper, in the name of the impartiality of the Court of Justice: “Vor Gericht gibt es keine Politik.” (In *Der Mord an R.L. und K.L.*, p. 79).

⁷³⁹ “Ich fragte: Sind Sie Frau Rosa Luxemburg? Darauf sagte sie: Entscheiden Sie bitte selber. Da sagte ich: Nach dem Bilde müßten Sie es sein. Darauf entgegnete sie: Wenn Sie es sagen.” (In *Der Mord an R.L. und K.L.*, p. 67.)

⁷⁴⁰ On names — “What’s in a name?” — cf. Jacques Derrida, “L’aphorisme à contretemps”, in *Psyché* [edition of 1987], pp. 519-533 (En. trans. in *Acts of Literature*, pp. 416-433).

⁷⁴¹ Cf. Bollack, in Derrida et al., “Discussion” (*L’acte critique*, 1985), p. 272.

⁷⁴² “Speaking: a consequence of giving ear, a naming and making-visible [*Das Sprechen: ein Ergebnis des Lauschens, ein Nennen und Sichtbarmachen*] —” (*TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 826. My trans.)

and experiences that are brought into a monological rhetoric, but ask for the motivation of such “monologue” — perhaps not a monologue anymore, since the surrounding silence speaks in it. Speaks and does not speak. This poem is not the short Odyssey of a selfsame subject who is both the addresser and the addressee. The silence addresses itself, gives itself a voice through the imperative, through the address to the poet, while remaining what it is, silence. A silence full of voices. And there is nothing miraculous or fantastic about this haunting; the miracle rather fails to happen, the Landwehrkanal will not roar and nothing stops — therefore the poem has to stop. Therefore the haunting, the non-stop sleepless walk in the pre-Christmas city of Berlin.

We noticed that there were only two obvious metaphors in the poem: the transformation of the man into a sieve and of the *Frau* into a sow who “had to swim”. But if we understand the poem as a transformation of what the poet saw, heard and read, thought and felt on a certain day and night in Berlin, a transformation of something that is “in life, like a secret”, the lived experience in person, presumably “external” with respect to the poem itself — as if the poem itself had an interior severed from the world, as if it were a hermetically sealed container with no mouth in it, a misconception of poetry which Celan famously objected to — we see that the crystallization and constellation has happened in a very artistic, aesthetically excellent manner indeed, with the “metaphorical montage” juxtaposing the two metonymies of indifference, *Fleischerhaken* — *Äppelstaken*, with the rhyme that structures the whole poem, and so forth. Poetry, “which still has to take the path of art”.⁷⁴³ This surviving residue in the perfect form of a poem is indeed self-reflective. And it is a non-stop self-reflection, “itself its own rhyme [*sich selber der Reim*]”: the rhyme of in-difference, namely the rhythm that juxtaposes seemingly incompatible motives and undermines their incompatibility, *showing* thus the scandal of indifference. The rhyme and the metaphorical montage, bringing together the Christmas decorations and the instruments of torturous murder, and the metaphors themselves, the sieve and the sow, all belong to this counter-figurative figure. The poem addresses itself — to the world. Calling *you* to stop where nothing stops.

TEXT-VOID

I would consider the case of the poem “Die Posaunenstelle” almost another instance of something that Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe calls, in regard of Szondi’s “Eden”, a “complete deciphering of the poem” (*La poésie comme expérience*, p. 14). In the case of “Die Posaunenstelle” the deciphering is not due to some personal attestation but rather to observations by

⁷⁴³ “Und Dichtung? Dichtung, die doch den Weg der Kunst zu gehen hat?” *TCA/Meridian*, Endf. 21; *GW* 3:193. Trans. Felstiner, p. 406: “And poetry? Poetry, which still has to take the path of art?”

several scholars, and John Felstiner seems to cap these by paying very special attention to the imperative in the poem. The most important fact or *datum* here seems to be the wonderful archeological find, made just before Celan's visit to Jerusalem in 1969, of a fragment of writing incised on a fragment of stone, a piece of a parapet from the Second Temple that was crushed by the Romans during the Jewish revolt in 70 A.D., the Hebrew words (transcribed as *L'veit haTekiah*) that Felstiner translates in his semi-biographical book on Celan as "place of the shofar blast".⁷⁴⁴ I will not go through all the details of his analysis here but rather concentrate on the imperative that ends the poem:

DIE POSAUNENSTELLE
tief im glühenden
Leertext,
in Fackelhöhe,
im Zeitloch:

hör dich ein
mit dem Mund.⁷⁴⁵

The unusual verb *ein hören* is not lexical. But it is not a completely new coinage either, although its sense can easily be understood and translated as something like "hear yourself in / with the mouth", "hear deep in / with your mouth", or "listen in / with the mouth",⁷⁴⁶ thus a combination of hearing and perhaps entrance, belonging, participation. However, Felstiner reveals to us what we should hear ourselves into: "Here a common Yiddish command makes itself heard, one used also in Talmudic study — *her dikh ayn*, 'pay attention', 'listen up'" (*Poet, Survivor, Jew*, p. 274). Now the "glowing / text-void", through the pun that connects *Leertext* with *Lehrtext*, associates itself with the Torah and, of course, with its very *incipit*, the void and the light of Genesis 1:2-3. The Lutheran language — *Posaune*, "trombone", for *shofar* (a ram's horn) and also for the trumpets (σάλπιγγας) blown by the angels in the Revelation of Saint John (8:6ff) — conceals the Hebrew and Yiddish expressions to the extent that several interpreters have recognized the New Testament passage as the main reference of this poem, the seven trumpets (trombones in Luther's Bible, *Posaunen*) corresponding to the seven lines of the poems. This interpretation seems to leave the text-void rather hollow, however. Celan does indeed take the detour of Luther's German, albeit he "had direct access to the Hebrew Bible", as Felstiner reminds: "His term *Posaune* accepts yet implicates Luther's usage and points 'deep' toward a founding text." (*Poet, Survivor, Jew*, p. 273.) Thus the encryption is at least double: if you come across the "trumpet passage" of Luther's New Testament, you should also "hear into" the text-void (*Leertext*) the palimpsest, deep below

⁷⁴⁴ John Felstiner, *Paul Celan: Poet, Survivor, Jew* (New Haven: Yale U.P., 1995), pp. 271-275.

⁷⁴⁵ *Zeitgehöft*, GW 3:104. "THE SHOFAR PLACE / deep in the glowing / text-void, / at torch height, / in the time-hole: // hear deep in / with your mouth." (Trans. Felstiner, *Selected Poems and Prose of P.C.*, p. 361.)

⁷⁴⁶ The last version of the two last lines is from Ken Frieden's translation of Stéphane Mosès' essay on this poem (cf. below): "THE TRUMPET PLACE / deep in the glowing / empty-text, / at torch-height, / in the time-hole: // listen in / with the mouth."

the more directly accessible detour. But how could he *not* have taken the detour? The German language “Christianized” by Luther is not simply Celan’s *choice* of language, it is still his language, the language that remained “not lost”, or *unlost* as I would translate the word *unverloren*, in spite of everything.⁷⁴⁷ The very paradox of the echo of the Yiddish imperative, *her dikh ayn*, is that it still resounds in German, and that these seven lines reverberate — although in a more hollow manner, as it comes to the question of motivation — also the Lutheran New Testament passage. So here in “Die Posaunenstelle” we find the traces of Yiddish and Hebrew, but only as a *shibboleth* encrypted within the German.

What these two almost “complete decipherings” by Szondi and by Felstiner reveal does not exhaust the “message” of these two poems — the message that is not essentially a message, a piece of information, a constation of a fact. A constation of facts could be exhausted. But what is revealed in these two readings, in their “special knowledge”, is rather that there *is* a secret in the poem, a secret that is not revealed as some specific content, but manifested *as* a secret. And what is inexhaustible in these poems is not due to some indefinitely proliferating potency of content issuing from *within* them, but their *address*, their imperative: the imperative “*hör dich ein / mit dem Mund*” is not exhausted *as an imperative* but rather accentuated by the fact that the Yiddish imperative *can be* heard through, insofar as this imperative is pronounced and listened to, if not with already established familiarity, then *with proper regard to its unfamiliarity*, and insofar as this character is not overlooked as mere artful coinage, as some modern novelty instead of being perhaps something very old, at once *also* something very old. The rash de-scandalization, the ignorance of the internal *shibboleth* of the poem, is an ethical and not only an aesthetic problem. Yes, we see from the case of “Die Posaunenstelle” that sometimes the familiar appearance may work as a “false” *shibboleth* and protect, as it were, the true secret, preventing its revelation, its divulgence. But perhaps one may be true to the secret *as* a secret even without access to it. “The avowal of not understanding”, as Gadamer very well says, “is in most cases, in facing Celan’s work, commanded by epistemic honesty”.⁷⁴⁸ Gadamer’s position, with all the problems we may recognize in *Wer bin Ich und wer bist Du?* and with regard to Szondi’s “Eden”, cannot be objected to on grounds of his alleged quest for “phenomenological significations”, especially if “phenomenological” is all too quickly and vaguely identified with “general”, as Jean Bollack does (cf. *L’Acte critique*, p. 269).

“Hear yourself in”, “hear deep in”, “*hör dich ein*”: this sounds like signalling a parable (*Gleichnissignal*), pointing out that there is an allegorical *double entente* to be listened to: “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.” Discussing allegory and its signals, exhortations

⁷⁴⁷ “Sie, die Sprache, blieb unverloren, ja, trotz allem.” (*Ansprache anlässlich der Entgegennahme des Literaturpreises der freien Hansestadt Bremen*, January 26th, 1958; *GW* 3:185 .) Cf. Jean Bollack’s polemic against Gadamer and Pöggeler: “Et s’il ne s’y trouvait *pas* chez lui [la langue, la «communauté linguistique»], ou bien à la fois «chez lui» et *pas*, parce que c’est sa langue (maternelle) et *pas* sa langue?” (*L’Acte critique*, p. 285.)

⁷⁴⁸ *Wer bin Ich und wer bist Du?*, pp. 132-133; my translation.

for those who are able to translate the carnal letter into its spiritual “antitype”, or the “initial text” into its “allegorical pretext”, Gerhard Kurz takes his example from the Parable of the Sower: “Hearken; Behold, there went out a sower to sow [*Höret zu!*] [etc.]” (Mark 4:3).⁷⁴⁹ But here, in the case of the poem “Posaunenstelle”, “hearing yourself in” happens “with your mouth”: it is not a question of a purely spiritual initiation through understanding (*entente*), an “inward circumcision”, but one that solicits the *limit* between the inward and the outward. There is a shibboleth and a palimpsest in the poem, but it is not primarily a question of another signification buried beneath the literal surface, but, before any discovery or deciphering of such encrypted content can take place, there must be a certain corporeal experience of otherness, a minimal distance retaining itself even when I pronounce the words as if they were all mine. That is, even when I have them by heart. If the password — and, at the same time, *envoi* — of the poem signals here some kind of an access, it is not to some wealth of *parousia* and to the “cultivation of intimacy” within a linguistic or discursive community, but a “text-void” and a “time-hole”, a space that is indeed “vacant” and “occupiable”, and precisely because it is a question of *writing*, “speech of the absent”.

While the gathering of all the information and knowledge obtainable concerning the poem and its genesis is absolutely indispensable in its own right, a phenomenological approach to the poem cannot be dispensed with either. In principle, every true reading is and should be phenomenological in a certain sense. Only a non-transcendent reading can pay heed to the transcendence of the written (namely that which has ‘turned into’ the written text in the empirical sense; I think that poetry is “anti-biographic”, for Celan, because biographies are also texts, they are ‘graphies’ and not ‘lives’) and pay respect to the irreducible remainder, that which, in the poem, remains absolutely unattainable, in the poem and at once “in life”, or in death, “like a secret”. A certainty of an impossibility, an acknowledgement of uncertainty, knowing the limits of the knowable. Jacques Derrida spoke on several occasions of this necessity of a non-transcendent reading and of the limit to interpretation, the line not to be crossed that runs within the poem, a line within the poem, a line which is the poem, holding apart and together the intrinsic and the extrinsic evidence, the evidence and the limits of all evidence, the limits pertaining to its absolute singularity and the unlimited expansion of the sense and reference of the poem (here Derrida speaks of Celan’s poem “Aschenglorie”, ending with the famous, often cited *envoi*, “*Niemand / zeugt für den / Zeugen*”):

Au-delà ou en deçà de tout ce qu’on peut penser, lire ou dire de ce poème [“Aschenglorie”], selon le « peut-être », la probabilité et l’acte de foi qu’est une expérience poétique, au-delà ou en deçà de toutes les traductions possibles, une marque reste et se re-marque ici : c’est une certaine limite de l’interprétation. Finalement, il est en toute certitude impossible d’arrêter le sens ou la référence de ce poème, le sens ou la référence dont il témoigne ou répond. Quoi qu’on puisse en dire, et cela peut se déployer à l’infini, *il y a une ligne*. Elle n’est pas seulement marquée par le poème. Elle

⁷⁴⁹ Gerhard Kurz, *Metapher, Allegorie, Symbol* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988), p. 52; on “initial text — allegorical pretext”, or “type” and “antitype”, cf. pp. 41–45.

est le poème, le poétique et la poétique du poème – qui se dissimule en exhibant sa dissimulation *comme telle*. Mais c'est ce « comme tel » qui se trouve voué au « peut-être ». Probable et improbable (possible mais soustrait à la preuve) ce « comme tel » a lieu comme poème, comme *ce* poème, irremplaçablement, en lui, et *là* où rien ni personne ne peut répondre à sa place, *là* où il se tait, *là* où il garde son secret, tout en disant qu'il y a du secret, révélant le secret qu'il garde *comme* secret, ne le révélant pas, tandis qu'il témoigne encore qu'on ne peut pas témoigner pour le témoin, qui finalement reste seul et sans témoin. Dans *Le pas au-delà*, Blanchot parle d'une « parole encore à dire au-delà des vivants et des morts, *témoignant pour l'absence d'attestation* ». ⁷⁵⁰

Blanchot's sentence opens up, by its very laconic gesture of referring to the famous *envoi* of "Aschenglorie", something very essential of another poem, "Fadensonnen". ⁷⁵¹

FADENSONNEN
über der grauschwarzen Ödnis.
Ein baumhoher
Gedanke
greift sich den Lichtton: es sind
noch Lieder zu singen jenseits
der Menschen. ⁷⁵²

Blanchot's laconic sentence reveals, with one stroke or two, the essential scene of this poem that no survey of its vocabulary could set up all by itself (while such commentaries, furnishing us with a sort of "interlinear version" of the poem in question, are altogether indispensable in their own right): the definite solitude toward which the poem, as a piece of language, is inevitably heading. An address to no one, to (the) no one who speaks after the last to speak ⁷⁵³ and bears witness to the absence of attestation. No one addressing itself to no one. But still a song to be sung, a singable residue that survives all human attestation, making way towards the proximity of the utterly distant, *language addressing itself* beyond the living and the dead. Not *only* a despairing dialogue but *also* an act of faith, a leap of faith "*i kraft af det Absurde*" as Kierkegaard would say. By virtue of the Absurd. After all the gatherable information gathered — an inexhaustible task it can show itself to be — the leap to be taken may still be missing.

⁷⁵⁰ Derrida, *Poétique et politique du témoignage* (Paris: L'Herne, 2005), p. 76-77. Cf. Outi Pasanen's translation, "Poetics and Politics of Witnessing", in *Sovereignities in Question*, pp. 65-96.

⁷⁵¹ *Le pas au-delà* (Paris: Gallimard, cop. 1973), p. 107. The whole 'fragment' or section in *Le pas au-delà* is as follows: "Le Neutre, la douce interdiction du mourir, là où, de seuil en seuil, œil sans regard, le silence nous porte dans la proximité du lointain. Parole encore à dire au-delà des vivants et des morts, *témoignant pour l'absence d'attestation*."

⁷⁵² *TCA/Atemwende*, p. 37 (dated "27.11.63"). Trans. Michael Hamburger: "THREAD SUNS / above the grey-black wilderness. / A tree- / high thought / tunes in to light's pitch: there are / still songs to be sung on the other side / of mankind." (*Poems of Paul Celan* [2002], p. 211.) Cf. Felstiner: "Threadsunns / over the gray-black wasteness. / A tree- / high thought / strikes the light-tone: there are / still songs to sing beyond / humankind." (*Selected...*, p. 241.)

⁷⁵³ Blanchot's essay on Celan is entitled "Le dernier à parler" (reprinted in *Une voix venue d'ailleurs* [Paris: Gallimard, 2002], pp. 69-108), borrowing its title from the poem "Sprich auch du" (*Von Schwelle zu Schwelle*, *GW* 1:135). *Le pas au-delà* is a book in which Celan is never named explicitly but constantly referred to, by sentences which translate his poetry almost *verbatim*.

In this poem, the words *Fadensonnen* and *Lichtton* are not exactly neologisms, they are not “the very coynage of your brain” as it is said in *Hamlet* (III.4.139), but they may always bear reference to very specific contexts, possibly several contexts, and objects. The commentaries of this poem have pointed out that there is an instrument called a *Fadensonnenzeiger*, also known as *filargnomon* or *méridienne filaire*, introduced in the early 18th century, a certain type of sundial used for determining place and time, and *Lichtton* can be read either as a cinematographical term (relating to the recording of sound: *Lichttonverfahren*)⁷⁵⁴ or perhaps even with reference to the musical instrument called a *Lichtton-Organ* developed in 1936 by Edwin Welte. These possible ‘lexicological’ citations must be considered with each apparent neologism or metaphorical coinage. The sheer possibility of such associations or references must be considered, even when their function in the poem may remain obscure. The use of rare but lexical words in Celan’s poetry, such as specific technical terminology drawn from the domains of geology, botany or medicine, etc., especially in his later poetry, is well known.

On the other hand, there are the possible references to other poems, poems by Celan himself or by others, such as Rilke or Brecht, on whose poems he commented more than once.⁷⁵⁵ With regard to Astrid Poppenhusen’s very suggestive construal of the term *Durchkreuzen*, which she relates to the figure of syllepsis (or *zeugma*, a less ordinary word for the same figure of speech) and in which two acceptations of a term “cross” each other out, namely a figurative and a literal meaning,⁷⁵⁶ we might want to suggest that the word *Fadensonnen* in the poem has at least a double reference. As for instance König observes, the two-word compound *Fadensonnen* forms a part of the three-word compound term

⁷⁵⁴ Cf. esp. Peter König, “Der Fadensonnenzeiger: Zu Paul Celans Gedicht »Fadensonnen«”, in Gerhard Buhr and Roland Reuß, eds., *Paul Celan: »Atemwende«. Materialien* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1991), pp. 35-52; on *Lichtton*, pp. 46ff.

⁷⁵⁵ Cf. Ian Fairley, “When and Where? Paul Celan’s Fadensonnen”, in Celan, *Fathomsuns and Benighted*, trans. Ian Fairley (Manchester: Carcanet, 2001), pp. 4ff. One of Brecht’s poems possibly commented on here is this chiasmic epigram: “In den finsternen Zeiten / Wird da auch gesungen werden? / Da wird auch gesungen werden. / Von den finsternen Zeiten.” (Cit. Fairley, p. 6.) Another one is “An die Nachgeborenen”: “Was sind das für Zeiten, wo / Ein Gespräch über Bäume fast ein Verbrechen ist / Weil es ein Schweigen über so viele Untaten einschließt!” Celan’s reply to this poem takes place in one of his *Schneepart* poems: “EIN BLATT, baumlos / für Bertolt Brecht: // Was sind das für Zeiten, / wo ein Gespräch / beinahe ein Verbrechen ist, / weil es soviel Gesagtes / mit einschließt?” (*GW* 3:385.)

⁷⁵⁶ Cf. Poppenhusen, *Durchkreuzung der Tropen*, pp. 195ff, *et passim*. Cf. also Zanetti, »zeitoffen«, pp. 174-5. And cf. also Christoph Schwerin, “Bitterer Brunnen des Herzens: Erinnerungen an Paul Celan”, in *Der Monat* 279 (April/Juni 1981), pp. 73-81, here p. 74: Schwerin tells how Celan referred to a letter by Dylan Thomas containing for instance the following statement on the destructive and constructive — by one word, deconstructive — “dialectic” of poetic images: “Each image holds within it the seed of its own destruction, and my dialectical method, as I understand it, is a constant building up and breaking down of the images that come out of the central seed, which is itself destructive and constructive at the same time.” (A letter to Henry Treece, March 23, 1938, in *The Collected Letters of Dylan Thomas*, ed. Paul Ferris [London: Dent, 1985], p. 281.) Schwerin also mentions Celan’s statement on “founding each image”, with reference to René Char this time: “Wie in den Dichtungen Chars, die er [P.C.] später übersetzte, sei ein jedes Bild zu begründen, so erklärte er mir.” (*Loc. cit.*) This founding of images is not the opposite of their self-deconstruction described by Thomas: if there is a well-founded image (or ‘metaphor’), does it not cease to be ‘just’ an image, or (fully) metaphorical? Doesn’t the well-motivated trope actually become a pseudo-figure, a non-figurative trope, a catachresis? The best ‘metaphor’ is no longer metaphor.

Fadensonnenzeiger, just as *Lichtton* forms part of the technical term composed of four distinct verbal elements, *Lichttonverfahren*. So there is a sort of elliptical reference to the techniques and instruments denoted by these terms, and as König observes, an insinuation of an underlying dialogue with a certain scientist of the 18th century, Christian Gottlieb Kratzenstein. But, at the same time, Otto Pöggeler seems to be right in pointing out that the word *Fadensonnen* relates simply to the perception of the sun's rays piercing through dark clouds.⁷⁵⁷ Taking these two directions into account, both at the same time, we may see that the word *Fadensonnen* is in at least two distinct ways *un-* or *premetaphorical*: on the one hand, it relates to a certain already existing technico-scientific terminology, and perhaps also to the historical fact of this concept formation (by Ch. G. Kratzenstein); on the other, it takes advantage of the possibility of forming such terms catachrestically by combining extant simple words and thus refers also to this 'archaic' possibility of 'concept formation' itself. It is perhaps these two antagonistic but intimately related moments that are brought together in this kind of "crossing-through", *Durchkreuzen*.

In his reading of "Posaunenstelle", one from which also Felstiner draws some ingredients of his interpretation, Stéphane Mosès makes a remarkable distinction between the metonymical and metaphorical interpretation with respect to the Jewish mystical tradition:

In the Jewish mystical tradition, the Shofar, as an instrument of Revelation, refers by metonymy to the structure of Revelation itself. Its three parts designate the three steps of the process of emanation by which divine Wisdom flows into the world. The mouthpiece corresponds to the origin of the divine breath; the body of the instrument corresponds to the process by which this breath descends into the lower worlds; and the bell corresponds to the transformation of breath into voice, that is, into an articulate series of sounds. At the same time, this mystical process refers to the anthropological or organic transformation of ambient air into human voice (as the physiological basis of speech). According to the logic of Jewish mysticism, this relation should not be understood as metaphorical, but as properly metonymic. The production of the human voice is not an image of Revelation, but rather, on the level of human experience, it is Revelation itself. Therefore, Celan's poem does not merely *represent* the image of the Shofar. Even if such representation is, in some way, inscribed in the linguistic structure of the text, the poem achieves much more: it sets breathing in motion, and actualizes the process by which physical breath is transformed into human voice.⁷⁵⁸

In the very transformation "the pure phonic essence of voice", as Mosès writes, "is heard in its originary violence: a rasping of the breath which, beyond speech, nevertheless makes all speech possible" (p. 218). The grain of the voice, as Barthes would say. But Mosès is here

⁷⁵⁷ "Symbol und Allegorie", in Buhr and Reuß, eds., *Paul Celan: »Atemwende«. Materialien* (1991), p. 347; this is the first version of a text that would become a chapter, "Symbol und Allegorie. Goethes »Divan« und Celans »Atemkristall«", in Pöggeler's book *Der Stein hinterm Aug. Studien zu Celans Gedichten* (München: Fink, 2000), pp. 89-118, here p. 94. In the same volume with the first version of Pöggeler's article and König's article (*Paul Celans »Atemwende«*), cf. also Hendrik Birus, "Celan — wörtlich" (pp. 125-166).

⁷⁵⁸ Stéphane Mosès, "Patterns of Negativity in Paul Celan's 'The Trumpet Place'", trans. Ken Frieden, in Sanford Budick and Wolfgang Iser, eds., *Languages of the Unsayable. The Play of Negativity in Literature and Literary Theory*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996 (first publ. 1987), pp. 209-223, here p. 222.

speaking of the Jewish New Year's liturgy and the instant when "the recitation of prayer is interrupted so that the sounding of the Shofar may be produced", with regard to Celan's word *Zeitloch*; now let us hear how he continues: "But this caesura of speech (in the ongoing process of the liturgy) is itself the reflection or the repetition of a more general caesura of time, of a break through which radical otherness can manifest itself. Here the 'time-hole' would indicate the suspension of profane time for the sake of another experience, that of the festival ritual." ("Patterns of Negativity", p. 218.) I will not cite more of Mosès's rich essay on Celan's "Posaunenstelle"; however, another citation from a text by Stéphane Mosès, this time not directly concerned with Celan, will be related to this one, a few pages later.

What we have is the grain of the voice, the corporeal singularity underlying every spoken word (and the reference to the body is retained in every written text, too, even in a poem written by a computer, which too is still a poem and thus an anti-computer, as Celan has reportedly said), but this singular voice is always also a palimpsest of others, forgotten voices and remembered voices, bygone voices and voices still to come.

"MY / SOUL WINKLED AT YOU"

MEINE
 dir zugewinkelte Seele
 hört dich
 gewittern,

 in deiner Halsgrube lernt
 mein Stern, wie man wegsackt
 und wahr wird,

 ich fingre ihn wieder heraus –
 komm, besprich dich mit ihm,
 noch heute.⁷⁵⁹

⁷⁵⁹ *Zeitgehöft* (posth., 1976); *GW* 3:90. The poem was written Sept. 13th, 1969. My translation:

MY
 soul winkled at you
 hears you
 thundering,

 in your throat-pit
 my star learns how one packs away
 and becomes true,

 I finger it out again —
 come, bespeak yourself with it,
 yet today.

I translate the expression *dir zugewinkelte* by "winkled at you", anticipating *mein Stern* and thinking of the angular shape of the star — or the pentagram. On the verb *wegsacken*, cf. *DWB*: "wegsacken, *untersinken*,

The word does what it says: *zu-ge-win-ke-l-te*. You pronounce the soul (*Seele*) with the very angles of this vocable and not without them: the participle *zugewinkelt* is here not a predicate separable from its subject, from “[*die*] *Seele*” or “*MEINE* [...] *Seele*”, from the soul that could survive without it, without being *dir zugewinkelt*. This expression has its ownmost angle that cannot be anglicized, but I would translate it — or evade translating it — by “winkled at you”, bearing in mind *mein Stern* in the next strophe, and the angular shape of this star that perhaps “winkles” and twinkles and winks at you. The subject is not there without the articulation, *this* articulation that should take place here and now, in the here and now of the poem, always again only for once. The words “*MEINE / dir zugewinkelte Seele*” give a name to what is inseparably given in this poematic instant. Inseparably given, since, as part of the instant, the vocable demands to be pronounced, instantly articulated (“*besprich [...] noch heute*”).

Gewittern (to thunder), too, has its ‘onomatopoetic’ sensibility. “My soul”, the soul of the addresser, *Meine Seele*, the soul of the *hearer* rather than the speaker of this poem — or rather: not the soul of the hearer but the soul who hears, the soul that silently hears the speaker of this poem who you are, who you must become in order to be its addressee. The addresser, as well as the addressee, are constituted by the address: the addresser, *as if beforehand*, by anticipation (*noch heute*: yet today, still today, in a today that is comprised of two todays of which one anticipates the other and the second commemorates the first), hears the addresser speak, hears “you” recite the poem already, “my soul” hears how “you” speak “my soul”, it hears how the angular syllables resound in their — in *your* — throat-pit (*in deiner Halsgrube*), where “my star”, this angular shape of the soul (*Atemkristall?*) learns how to pack away (*wegsacken*: one might perhaps associate this with the process of a star shrinking and becoming a *compact* star) and become true, become real. Now “your” hand has “my fingers”, and therefore — as “my star”, which I can now touch *again* with “my” *new* fingers, has learnt how to become real or true by dying *and* thus living in your throat-pit, throat-grave, — you should now come and bespeak yourself, *as soon as today* you should. This is indeed a detour from you to you and a sort of home-coming, of which the “Meridian” speaks.⁷⁶⁰ A becoming true, becoming real.

*unters wasser oder den horizont STENZEL seemänn. wb. 460a: zwischendurch knallten sie ein paar seeräuber entzwei, dasz sie mit mann und maus wegsackten E. G. SELIGER top (1910) 84. aus dem nd., vgl. sacken III th. 8, 1622, ndl. wegzakken.” (Bd. 27, Sp. 3018.) The proximity to the next subentry, *wegsagen*, might be considered significant: “*wegsagen, durch sagen abwenden: um ein böses omen abzuwenden, wirft man die am leibe herab hangenden arme nach hinten und sagt dazu: 'weg gesagt' SCHLEICHER volksthüml. aus Sonneberg. 144. von der brust, dem herzen, der leber wegsagen 'frei heraus sagen' s. sp. 2937.” (Ibid.) Cf. the entry sacken, “III. intransitives und reflexives sacken, sich senken, sinken, sich setzen. diese bedeutung findet sich nur im niederdeutschen und in dem gemeinen hochdeutsch der ursprünglich niederdeutschen gegenden; nicht zu sack, sondern zu der sippe von sinken (s. d.) gehörend, aber in beziehung zu sack gedacht: das bier musz sacken, die hefen im biere müssen sich setzen; das haus sackt sich, es senkt sich; das wasser ist im sacken, im fallen; der schnee sackt sich, wenn er zusammenschmilzt; in besonderer anwendung: sacken, bey den Elbschiffen, das schiff mit fleisz mit dem hintertheil den strohm abwärts gehen lassen. FRISCH 2, 140c.” (Bd. 14, Sp. 1622.) I translated *wegsackt* as “pack away”, thinking also of the process of the shrinking of compact stars.**

⁷⁶⁰ “Ich bin... mir selbst begegnet. / Geht man also, wenn man an Gedichte denkt, geht man mit Gedichten

The hearer and the speaker of this address are not separable anymore, not separable from the event of this apostrophe. As if they perfectly coincided.

But, at the same time, we cannot overlook the separation and distance involved in the poem, inherent to the poem, its constitutive obscurity as its constitutive distance. We *cannot*, in the double sense of the word ‘cannot’: we *must* not and we *may* not. To name only one possibility and impossibility in this poem, properly unnameable in fact: we cannot overlook the possibility that the poem may be addressed to the Other of all others, to *deus absconditus*, the unnameable in whose name none of us has the absolute authority to speak. It could well be that the five syllables in their angular articulation, *zugewinkelte*, encrypt a certain unnameable name represented by a pentagram (or tetragram). But on the other hand, the unspeakable, unpronounceable name of this Other of all the others is also the name of all names. This name of the Wholly Other names the names of all the others.

Halsgrube is, once again, no metaphorical coinage, but an anatomical term, meaning the throat pit, the “triangular depression at the front of the neck, between the collar-bones at the point where they articulate with the breastbone” (*OED*). While the Latin name for the breastbone is *sternum*, the “star” in the poem, *mein Stern*, may well be a pun on this false etymology. This pun could be motivated by the strange transformation, through the recitable apostrophe of the poem, of your “sternum” into “*mein Stern*” and vice versa: your fingers that have now become *mine*, once again through this strange transplantation of what stands *pars pro toto*, *my* fingers, as you are pronouncing *my* body that has taken on the form of a verbal body, these fingers may feel *my* soul, my star — distant in time and space, yet perceptible — as it travels through *your* throat-pit, *in the form of the word*, the angular shape of the star-word, as you are voicing the poem. You voice the poem, you feel the word that touches your very interior without touching, you feel its movement in *your* throat-pit, feel it with *my* fingers, and *bespeak yourself* with the word, the star-word, the soul-word, already today. Your words, your ownmost innermost words are the words of another, always: bespeak yourself with the word, the word of no-one’s possession and thus, if anything, a pure gift. Bespeak yourself with it, already today.

SINGABLE RESIDUE

In response to the “glowing void-text” just discussed, I would like to cite another text by Stéphane Mosès, a passage also cited by Jacques Derrida as a conclusion to his close reading of a letter by Gershom Scholem to Franz Rosenzweig:

solche Wege? Sind diese Wege nur Um-Wege, Umwege von dir zu dir? Aber es sind ja zugleich auch, unter wie vielen anderen Wegen, Wege, auf denen die Sprache stimmhaft wird, es sind Begegnungen, Wege einer Stimme zu einem wahrnehmenden Du, kreatürliche Wege, Daseinsentwürfe vielleicht, ein Sichvoraus-schicken zu sich selbst, auf der Suche nach sich selbst... Eine Art Heimkehr.” (*TCA/Meridian*, Endf. 46; *GW* 3:201.)

Il semble que dans son texte de 1926 [lettre à Rosenzweig] Scholem veut dire que l'usage incontrôlé de la langue hébraïque implique, en quelque sorte, le risque d'une « magie pratique » involontaire. En effet, la dimension symbolique de l'hébreu, telle qu'elle apparaît dans ses textes sacrés, y disparaît au profit d'un emploi purement utilitaire de la langue. Certes, dans notre monde désacralisé il ne s'agit plus de manipuler consciemment les virtualités magiques du langage pour en tirer quelque bénéfice personnel. Mais lorsqu'une société tout entière détourne la langue qui fut celle de sa tradition religieuse à des fins purement matérielles, lorsqu'elle en fait un simple instrument au service de ses intérêts immédiats, elle retrouve sans le savoir l'attitude des magiciens de jadis. « Imitation grossière » de la langue des textes sacrés, l'hébreu moderne a vidé les mots anciens de leur signification symbolique et religieuse pour les réduire à de simples indices de la réalité matérielle. Mais, pour Scholem, ces significations symboliques continuent à vivre au fond du langage, ou, si l'on veut, dans l'inconscient de la culture qui prétend de les nier. La question est alors de savoir s'il n'y aura pas un jour un « retour du refoulé », où les contenus religieux reviendront sous une forme aujourd'hui imprévisible, mais qui risque d'être — pour employer un terme dont Scholem ne se serait pas servi, mais qui traduit pourtant sa pensée — celle d'une névrose collective.

« Le jour où la langue se retournera contre ceux qui la parlent » : dans cette formule où la théorie mystique de la langue s'achève en eschatologie se résume l'intention du texte de Scholem dédié à Franz Rosenzweig. Car si les significations symboliques qu'abrite la langue sacrée risquent, lorsqu'elles réapparaîtront au grand jour, de se révéler comme funestes et destructrices, c'est, paradoxalement, parce qu'elle sont, en elles-mêmes, dépourvues d'un contenu identifiable. Pour la mystique juive, en effet, la dimension sémantique du langage n'apparaît qu'avec l'exercice du discours par l'homme ; la spécificité des significations est liée à la multiplicité qui caractérise le monde matériel dans lequel l'homme, créature finie, est immergé. Le langage divin au contraire, tel qu'il se révèle dans le texte de la Tora, et surtout dans sa texture linguistique secrète, est d'une telle généralité qu'il se présente plutôt sous la forme de structures abstraites (qui correspondent aux noms divins et à leurs diverses combinaisons). Ces structures ne transmettent pas un sens déterminé, et par conséquence limité, mais sont porteuses d'une infinité des interprétations possibles. Dire que la Tora est un texte divin signifie qu'elle est infiniment ouverte à l'interprétation [n.: *Le Nom et les Symboles de Dieu...*, p. 86]. Le jour où « les noms et les sigles de jadis », aujourd'hui enfouis dans l'inconscient de la culture séculière, émergeront de nouveau à la lumière, nul ne peut dire comment il seront réinterprétés. Mais le risque est grand, selon Scholem, de voir leur retour, après une longue période de refoulement collectif, prendre la forme d'une explosion anarchique de forces religieuses incontrôlées.⁷⁶¹

Scholem's sacred horror is indeed strange to the secular-minded reader. But is this original void, yet full of implicit "symbolical" power, not the condition of all language, of the secular language which is still the only language we have access to, the *condition humaine* — at the same time as it is also the *condition inhumaine* — of all language? Also *condition inhumaine*, because this power, this pre-semantic virtuality inherent in all language, the essential indeterminacy and openness of its constituents to an indefinite iteration, is never fully mastered by a speaking subject, an individual or a community.

⁷⁶¹ Stéphane Mosès, *L'Ange de l'histoire : Rosenzweig, Benjamin, Scholem* (Paris: Seuil, 1992), pp. 254-255. Also cit. Derrida, *Les yeux de la langue* (Paris: L'Herne, 2005), pp. 99-101.

As a reader, Celan entertained a more or less intimate relation with the tradition of Jewish mysticism and knew for instance the texts by Scholem and Rosenzweig very well. He did not have to share young Scholem's strange and uncanny, prophetic relation to the sacred Hebrew, sacred to the very letter (Scholem's letter to Rosenzweig he could not have known, of course, since it has been only lately discovered), in order to have known some of the most fundamental features of the "linguistic theory of the Kabbala", and to have enciphered these features in his poetry. Enciphered, for instance, in the poem referring to the "glühende Leer-text", the Yiddish idiom as a palimpsest within the pseudo-German expression "*hör dich ein*", indeed an instance of "extinguished sense-giving", an archaic residue glowing darkly through the language called modern German and its poetic use.

It is there, visible in the palimpsest, the imperative or optative visibly there to be pronounced, to be given voice, to be trusted with the mouth that belongs to it ("*glaubst du mir meinen / Mund*"), to be "learned by heart" and "cited-recited beyond knowledge",⁷⁶² intrinsic and extrinsic at once, by virtue of the strange dialectic that translates the German idiom of *auswendig lernen* by the French *apprendre par cœur* and the English "to learn by heart":

hör dich ein
mit dem Mund.

This learning by heart, this giving one's voice, granting one's mouth and heart to the unknown who bids it, the unknown voice or piece of writing "begging for the earth-mouths [*betteln um Erdenmünder*]" — always handwriting, even when "incised in a spaceship [*ins Raumschiff gekerbt*]" (*GW* 2:27) — undecidably and equivocally between intrinsic and extrinsic, this ownmost token irreducibly foreign at the same time: is this not the "living nought", "*lebendige Nichts*" to be inscribed, incised in the heart? A token of the absent, withdrawn, and most literally and corporeally present in one's interior? Like language. Like language, always the language of another: another bygone ("*eines / Sinnes mit diesem / Vorbei*"), and another to come.

The text-void glows like a meteor and is to be voiced by another, it glows like dark eyes beneath "comet-brows" and like an "un-mouthed lip":

SINGBARER REST – der Umriß
dessen, der durch
die Sichelschrift lautlos hindurchbrach,
abseits, am Schneeort.

⁷⁶² Cf. Derrida, "'A Self-Unsealing Poetic Text': Poetics and Politics of Witnessing", trans. Rachel Bowlby (2000), p. 201 ("our compulsion to cite-recite it without knowing, beyond knowledge"); the slightly revised original French text, *Poétique et politique du témoignage* (Paris: L'Herne, 2005), here p. 65, has been newly translated by Outi Pasanen, in *Sovereignties in Question* (New York: Fordham U.P., 2005), here p. 90.

Quirlend
 unter Kometenbrauen
 die Blickmasse, auf
 die der verfinsterte winzige
 Herztrabant zutreibt
 mit dem
 draußen erjagten Funken.

– Entmündigte Lippe, melde,
 daß etwas geschieht, noch immer,
 unweit von dir.⁷⁶³

This “singable residue”, this “disempowered”, “un-author-ized lip” is to be mouthed again, it is to be restored its voice which is not the *same* voice anymore, but *another voice as its very own*, according to the “secret of the encounter”, the paradoxical self-encounter which is at once an encounter with the irreducibly other. The sundered lip becomes re-embodied in another mouth which becomes its ownmost *Herzmund*, re-embodied in its proper singularity, once and again, again and again only for once. This transposition, this transplantation is not a metaphor. No content, no message is carried over, only the “disempowered lip”, the *pledge* of the absent voice. A *sumbolon*, a metonymy or quasi-metonymy. Only “quasi-”, though, insofar as this tropological term, metonymy, still also tends to bear the traits of inauthenticity, sundered from the carnal and earthy, atmospheric reality. Like a spaceship, *Sputnik* perhaps, or a metaphor. But the *landing* of this trope, its reaching the “heartland perhaps”, means also the *reductio ad absurdum* of metaphor. The image, the trope becomes reality, more real than any allegedly pre-existent reality, it searches for and attains reality, *wins* reality (cf. *GW* 3:167). More proper than the pretended proper meaning ever was, without losing its irreducible otherness however, without ever being ripe for full assimilation, for being fully interiorized or appropriated.⁷⁶⁴ *Unweit von dir* — by heart, *par cœur*, but *auswendig*. Neither internal nor external, but both at once.

“*Entmündigte Lippe*”: the un-mouthed lip, the lip without authorization and without the performative power, the disembodied lip becomes re-embodied in the moment it announces that “something happens, always still, / not far from you”. In the moment it finds a voice, its own voice as the voice of another. An unforeseeable event, no doubt.

⁷⁶³ “Singbarer Rest”, in *TCA/Atemwende*, p. 53 (*GW* 2:36). “*Entmündigen*” is of course an extant verb, meaning “to place under disability” (cf. *DWB*: “*ENTMÜNDIGEN*, *sui impotentem declarare*, *auszer mündigkeit setzen*, *unter curatel stellen*, z. b. *wegen geistesschwäche*, *verschwendung*: / wir aber hatten uns entmündigt. / SCHENKENDORF” [Bd. 3, Sp. 574].) But in the expression *entmündigte Lippe* this verb is also punned with regard to the homonymy (or pseudo-homonymy which is rather a metonymical relation) between the *DWB* entries “*MÜNDIG*, *adj. einen mund habend*, *in einmündig*, *s. d.*” and “*MÜNDIG*, *adj. gewalt habend*; [...]” (Bd. 12 Sp. 2688ff.); both must be thought at once, together: the “unmouthed lip” as the “dis-empowered lip”. The disempowered lip articulates the art of literature: it is not licensed to a performative speech act (the license to perform is an essential condition of the performative), it is essentially powerless. But on the other hand, the dis-empowered lip also exerts its power to become re-embodied in reality.

⁷⁶⁴ In 1968, Celan wrote the following note, signed in Hebrew letters: “celle qui apprend à respecter l’autre dans son altérité, sans se livrer aux équations et identifications faciles” (*Mikrolithen*, No. 216.)

As if every poem said:

Abtrünnig erst bin ich treu.
Ich bin du, wenn ich ich bin.⁷⁶⁵

This maxim articulates its own condition of impossibility, or rather, of the impossibility of following it; it articulates the condition of both the possibility and impossibility of remaining true to it. *Abtrünnig*:⁷⁶⁶ *fidem fallens*, apostate or disloyal, rebel or renegade — if apostasy or rebellion is how to be true to the maxim itself, the maxim itself remains impossible to follow, it rebels against maxims. It withdraws and yet, withstands. Desists, yet, insists. If you want to be true, be untrue, be true.

To restore to the words their original bloom would be to restore to them their freedom: freedom of signification. That is: their freedom to signify, albeit multiply and in an originarily, undecidably equivocal manner, and on the other hand, their freedom not to signify, their freedom from signifying things, their right to say anything and their right to remain silent, their freedom to protect silence, as non-sense or non-signification, or rather, silence as a form of signification, a form of sense, an audible silence. An absurdity making sense, coming to appear. In May 1968, Celan wrote one of his anarchic aphorisms:

Etwas, das sich auch Semantik nennt, ist ein Feind der Bedeutungen⁷⁶⁷

“LIKE IN A RETORT” – OR AN AIR-CROWN

There are metaphors, no doubt. But they are pertinent only within the restricted economy of give-and-take, in which poetry’s function is seen to be the enrichment of extant vocabulary. But when the poem is a “gift of oneself”,⁷⁶⁸ and when it speaks the words that traverse time (without transcending time), traverse several times, the words that from times immemorial struggle for expression, as Celan says in his 1948 essay on Jené (cf. *GW* 3:156-157), when the poem struggles with these words that have also gathered the cinders of centuries, when it struggles with these words and struggles *for* them, it can become a breath-crystal. This is not just to say that it can condense and crystallize something otherwise loose and impure into a pithy aphoristic form, purified of the accidents that have befallen and may still befall the

⁷⁶⁵ “Lob der Ferne”, in *Mohn und Gedächtnis* (1952) (*GW* 1:33).

⁷⁶⁶ Cf. *DWB*: “*ABTRÜNNIG, fidem fallens, ahd. abtrunnig (GRAFF 5, 533) transfuga, apostata, mhd. abetrünnec, von dem verlorenen stamm trinnan tran trunnun herzuleiten, aus welchem auch trennan f. trannian separare, (wie aus rinnan rennan) und mhd. trünne ein gesonderter haufe, trupp fließt. war trinnan secedere, fugere, so ist abtrunni anttrunni profugus, ein abgetronnener, entronnener, entronnener [...]*” (Bd. 1 Sp. 145.)

⁷⁶⁷ *Mikrolithen*, p. 56, No. 98; this fragment bears the date “10.5.68”.

⁷⁶⁸ Cf. Broda (“À personne adressé”, p. 17, *loc. cit.*): “Ce qu’il y a dans cette bouteille hermétique comme le poème, c’est le poète, son don de lui-même — le poème, son destin chiffré.”

word. To be a breath-crystal is, perhaps, to be a token of an individual breath, but also a reflection of an indefinite multiplicity of breaths, voices, bygone and still to come, to go by.

The combinations of a word with others are limited by what is called the language system, a system which itself evolves and revolves. A breath-crystal may reflect and refract an unlimited multiplicity of relations, also those to come: it reaches for reality, it seeks to be true. Poems can be cited and recited, for better and for worse, and all kinds of accidents may befall them.⁷⁶⁹

Language deploys itself in time. Time brings opposites together: often it is clearly time, “as the formal unity of contradictory predicates”, which constitutes the “oxymora” in Celan’s poems, as Hamacher remarks.⁷⁷⁰ One of the major poetic principles for Celan was the attention paid to time and history *in* language, stated already in the 1948 essay, in which he remarks that the sedimented slag of centuries of lying is not just an addition to the given or an attribute of the proper and authentic (“*Zusätzliches zu Gegebenem, [...] Attribut des Eigentlichen*”); this historical dimension of the words, or language or sign-giving in general, including bodily gestures, cannot simply be cast away; rather, what has struggled since time immemorial to find expression has gathered into itself all the cinders, all the ashes of extinguished sense-giving, *and not only these*:

So mußte ich auch erkennen, daß sich zu dem, was zutiefst in seinem Innern seit unvordenklichen Zeiten nach Ausdruck rang, auch noch die Asche ausgebrannter Sinngebung gesellt hatte und nicht nur diese! [GW 3:156-157.]

Not only that, but perhaps also a trace of all that was “burnt together with” the names, with “all the co-incin- / erated / names”: “*alle die mit- / verbrannten / Namen*” (GW 1:227)?

Ash — *Asche* — is not always cinder or slag. A figure without figure, without a track, a great grey figure without figure and without slag, ash without cinder:

CHYMISCH

Schweigen, wie Gold gekocht, in
verkohlten
Händen.

Große, graue,
wie alles Verlorene nahe
Schwestergestalt:

⁷⁶⁹ Cf. *Mikrolithen*, p. 99, No. 163.6: “Es gehört, so glaube ich, zu den Grundzügen der Dichtung, daß sie sich dem Mißverständnis ausgesetzt weiß.* / Das Gedicht nimmt selbst seinen Autor nur für die Dauer seines Entstehens ganz ins Verständnis – und entläßt sodann auch ihn[.] / * [n.:] Dadurch weiß sie sich auch auf dem Wege zu jenen, die noch gewillt sind, sich bedenklich stimmen zu lassen.”

⁷⁷⁰ “The Second of Inversion”, trans. Jewett, p. 285 (*loc. cit.*). We have of course already seen that Celan himself denied them being oxymora or any other mere figures of speech.

Alle die Namen, alle die mit-
verbrannten
Namen. Soviel
zu segnende Asche. Soviel
gewonnenes Land

über
den leichten, so leichten
Seelen-
ringen.

Große. Graue. Schlacken-
lose.

Du, damals.
Du mit der fahlen,
aufgebissenen Knospe.
Du in der Weinflut.

(Nicht wahr, auch uns
entließ diese Uhr?
Gut,
gut, wie dein Wort hier vorbeistarb.)

Schweigen, wie Gold gekocht, in
verkohlten, verkohlten
Händen.
Finger, rauchdünn. Wie Kronen, Luftkronen
um — —

Große. Graue. Fährte-
lose.
König-
liche.⁷⁷¹

⁷⁷¹ GW 1:227. Trans. Robert Clarke (<http://german.berkeley.edu/poetry/chymisch.php>):

CHYMICAL

Silence, like gold, cooked, in
coaled
hands.

Great, grey,
like all the lost nigh
sister-figure:

All the names, all the co-incin-
erated
names. So much
ash to bless. So much
land won
over
the light, so light
souls-

Silence is golden. Silence is golden on this poem, silence is golden in this poem: but the cliché is literalized rather than brought to new life as a resurrected metaphor.⁷⁷² The crown-like shapes formed by coaled hands are like gold, but they are silence; they are air-crowns, like gold they are in coaled hands, like gold that is cooked, like an alchemist's handicraft, that is; but literally, silence, and literally, not crowns but *air-crowns*, air-crowns "around — —". An air-crown: what else is it but the word 'crown'? And fingers (*Finger* could be either singular or plural here: the absence of an article and the shape of a crown would suggest plural), smoke thin: what else but fingers in the air, word-fingers, the word 'fingers'?

This poem can be read, and has been read, as Celan's counter-word to those critics who saw in his early poetry just "verbal alchemy and esoteric art of combination [*Sprachalchimie und esoterische Kombinationskunst*]"; artificial, malformed metaphors, poetic changelings: "*keine geglückten Metaphern, es sind poetische Wechselbälge, künstlich, wie in der Retorte gezüchtet.*"⁷⁷³

More and more clearly, the later poems show themselves *as words gathered around silence*, protecting the unseen crown of silence like gold between the airily cupped fingers, the smoke-thin fingers of the coaled hands. A secret they manifest, in the air, visible and invisible, audible and inaudible, together at once: the vocal things with their mute consonants of the singularity they still belong to, the figure of the other-to-come they are devoted to. The other-to-come, awaited in silence, with the air-crown between the fingers. The secret thus

rings.

Great. Grey. Cinder-
less.

You, back then.
You with the pale,
bitten-open bud.
You in the wineflood.

(Is it not true, this watch
discharged even us?
Good,
good, as your word here to death overtook.)

Silence, like gold, cooked, in
coaled, coaled
hands.
Fingers, smokethin. Like crowns,
aircrowns
round — —

Great. Grey. Track-
less.
Majes-
tic.

⁷⁷² In German the phrase is: "Reden ist Silber, Schweigen ist Gold."

⁷⁷³ Cit. Wiedemann, "Kommentar", in *DGKG*, p. 682.

protected is not a jealous “cultivation of intimacy”, esoteric or hermetic; it is open for the other to come, but on the other hand, the Thou of the poem is indeed endowed to it, already, as much as its I is. The Thou comes by the poem, comes into, or maybe *as* the occupiable vacant form that the poet’s heart is,⁷⁷⁴ the heart reached toward the other, opaque and open, both at once: occupiable *in its* opacity, in the opacity of anyone’s heart, recognized in the handshake.

Indeed, the handshake, as any gesture whatsoever, any piece of language in general, can harbour bad faith. Bad faith, perjury, or mere mechanism. There is absolutely no way to penetrate beyond this risk of inauthenticity, beyond the hazard involved in encountering the other, the strangers that are, “*dicht beieinander*”:⁷⁷⁵ one of these others can always be an uncanny automat, indistinguishable from the other wholly other. This is the risk and the chance involved in every encounter. As Jacques Derrida emphasizes, there is no way to prove that the other has lied. There is absolutely no way in which I could take the other’s place, be in the other’s head. The other is secret: “The secret is the very essence of otherness.”⁷⁷⁶ No one bears witness for the witness.⁷⁷⁷ And this does not have to be a matter of despair, even if it can be also that. Even if nothing illustrates this state of affairs better than the possibility of lying and the invisible line between good and bad faith:

Il y a dans chaque texte poétique, mais aussi bien dans chaque parole, dans chaque manifestation hors littérature, un secret inaccessible auquel aucune preuve ne sera jamais adéquate. Dans la vie courante par exemple, je sais que j’ai souvent surpris mes étudiants quand je leur ai dit: « On ne pourra jamais prouver que quelqu’un a menti ». On ne pourra jamais le prouver, ni dans la vie courante ni en justice. Un témoignage peut être *faux* mais on ne pourra jamais prouver qu’il ya un *faux témoignage*. Pourquoi ? Parce que, de l’autre côté, du côté du témoin, comme du côté du poète, il y a toujours la ressource de dire : ce que je dis est peut-être faux, je me suis trompé, mais je l’ai fait de bonne foi. À ce moment-là, il n’y a pas de parjure, il n’y a pas de faux témoignage et il n’y a pas de mensonge. Si je dis quelque chose de faux mais sans l’intention de tromper, je ne mens pas. On ne pourra donc jamais prouver de façon objectivable que quelqu’un a menti. Ce quelqu’un pourra toujours dire : j’étais de bonne foi. On ne pourra jamais *prouver* que quelqu’un est de mauvaise foi, *ce qui s’appelle prouver*. Ceci tient au fait que l’autre est secret. Je ne peux pas être à la place de l’autre, dans la tête de l’autre. Je ne pourrai jamais me mesurer au secret de l’altérité. L’essence même de l’altérité, c’est le secret.⁷⁷⁸

⁷⁷⁴ “Besetzbarkeit / Die Form – Leer<Hohl>form – des Gedichts, ist das auf das Gedicht wartende Herz des Dichters. –” (*TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 777=504; dated “ab 19.8.60”.)

⁷⁷⁵ “Aber es gibt vielleicht, und in einer und derselben Richtung, zweierlei Fremde – dicht beieinander.” *TCA/Meridian*, Endf. 28.

⁷⁷⁶ “L’essence même de l’altérité, c’est le secret.” Cf. below.

⁷⁷⁷ “Niemand / zeugt für den / Zeugen.” *DGKG*, p. 198.

⁷⁷⁸ Derrida, “La vérité blessante, ou le corps à corps des langues. Entretien avec Jacques Derrida [réalisé par Évelyne Grossman, 12 décembre 2003]”, in *Europe : revue littéraire mensuelle*, 82ème année, no. 901 (mai 2004), pp. 8-27, here pp. 22-23. Partial translation by Thomas Dutoit, “The Truth That Wounds. From an Interview”, in Derrida, *Sovereignities in Question. The Poetics of Paul Celan*, ed. Dutoit and Outi Pasanen (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), pp. 164-169, here pp. 164-165.

The secret in question is not a jealous cultivation of intimacy. Often these poems take on the form of a request rather than statement; they request a word, enquire after a word, but not like a riddle would; they thematize a missing word, an unspoken word or a word in response, sometimes an anticipated word, sometimes perhaps an unanticipated word, unforeseeable. Sometimes a very unlikely word in response, as in a prayer.⁷⁷⁹ The “language mesh [*Sprachgitter*]” of these poems is not a crossword puzzle. Their truth cannot be the truth of a proposition or statement, either, as Aristotle’s statement on the truth of statements and those ways of speaking that are neither true nor untrue, such as prayers, already suggests. Thus they are not derived from statements or propositions, either, second-grade propositions so to speak, such as metaphor would seem to be.

The secret these poems manifest can be that of an air-crown. Who says one cannot be crowned by air? By fingers, by words? A fool can be ‘crowned’ by mere words, words hovering in the air, of course, by mere fancy, by a speech act that is not performative since it lacks the power required of a performative. Such a mock throne, a figurative throne, can always be mocked by counter-figures, a throne of thorns for instance, and an inscription like this one: “*Iesvs Nazarenvs Rex Ivdæorum*”. But again, who says no one can be crowned by air? By fingers, by words? A crown, a crowning always already presupposes and involves words, speech and writing (in the colloquial as well as in the general sense). A performative speech act, and a performative speech act requires power, institutional power. It is questionable whether poetry has ever, *de jure* or *de facto*, possessed such an institutional power, a power to institute (namely to establish, found, ordain), political power.⁷⁸⁰ A crown of majesty, her majesty or anyone’s, is ‘always already’ an air-crown, and a crown of fingers. Such a quasi-metonymical configuration that

⁷⁷⁹ Cf. e.g. “In memoriam Paul Éluard” and “Argumentum e silentio, in *Von Schwelle zu Schwelle* (GW 1:130; 138); cf. “Engführung”: “Kam ein Wort, kam, / kam durch die Nacht, / wollt leuchten, wollt leuchten.” (GW 1:199); cf. “Selbstdritt, selbstviert”, in *Die Niemandrose*: “Diese Stunde, deine Stunde, / ihr Gespräch mit meinem Munde. // Mit dem Mund, mit seinem Schweigen, / mit den Worten, die sich weigern.” (GW 1:216); cf. “Ich kenne dich”, in *Atemwende*: “Wo flammt ein Wort, das für uns beide zeugte?” (GW 2:30); cf. “Todtnauberg”, in *Lichtzwang* (GW 2:255).

⁷⁸⁰ “L’événement ne peut pas être performatif. Le performatif implique la maîtrise dans l’observance d’une convention donnée et inflexible. Donc, un événement plus que performatif ou autre que performatif, comment peut-on dire qu’il constitue une vérité ? Eh bien, pourtant je le crois. Je crois que la vérité, celle qui m’intéresse au-delà du concept traditionnel de vérité, est toujours révolutionnaire, de type poétique si vous voulez, ou du type de l’événement, et non du type du théorème, de ce qu’on peut voir devant soi ou transmettre. C’est une mutation qu’on peut après coup essayer de réfléchir. On peut tenter de la transformer en vérité transmissible, avec tous les risques que cela comporte, mais au moment où cela arrive, ce n’est pas pensable, thématizable, objectivable.” Derrida, “La vérité blessante”, p. 20; cf. pp. 19-20. — Insofar as it is not an authorized ceremony and an authorized person, smashing a bottle of champagne in the steel prow of an ocean liner and declaring “I baptize thee Queen Elizabeth” would hardly make a performative speech act in the sense of an authentic baptism. A performance is not always performative.

associates fingers with speech, solitary hands with writing as a form of prayer, air with smoke and ash and coaled hands, all this that hangs in the air but remains terrestrial, even when forming a great, grey, sisterly figure in the air, such a configuration is always involved in these air-crowns and ashen glories, these time-haloes bringing together the mortalities of one as well as the other's.

Even as we might speak of catachreses, these poetic configurations have little or nothing to do with dead metaphors or their resurrection in a live metaphor. Even though the cliché “silence is golden” is apparently invoked and involved in the poetic configuration of the poem we have just been discussing, counter-figured by an irony of sorts or an irony beyond itself: it is, after all, *a silence cooked between coaled hands like gold*, cooked or rather *as if it were* cooked, *as if it were* the gold of an alchemist, *as if it were* a crown held by the silent, coaled hands. This poem's counter-figure objects to an outrage, the disgrace of speaking of such poetic commemorations — of that which is absolutely beyond memory and testimony in itself — as if they were just rhetorical figures or aestheticism. It is a crown, the poem's hands hold a crown *up in the air* and extend it toward someone to come, but it is an air-crown. It is no one's crown: no one can appropriate this crown as if it were gold, a matter of possession. It is no one's, because it is equivocally someone's who is no longer there to be crowned, and someone's who remains to come, remains to come beyond all citations and recitations of the poem.

Following Derrida, we might say that these air-crowns, in this case a space formed by coaled hands cupped into the form of a crown, an invisible form of the invisible, or visible and invisible both at once, written to be voiced again, this poetic revolution dethrones majesty and its speech acts, even its own, even the poetic sovereignty, in favour of a silence which appears, comes to be seen, as a visible-invisible majesty “in the air”, a fancied majesty, fool's gold: a crown or crowned head half-seen, *inter-viewable* insofar as a poem is conversation (*Gespräch*) with an invisible that does not *quite* respond or correspond (cf. *TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 57). A madness of sorts, to be sure, a kind of madness of which another poem, “Ich kenne dich”, speaks (*GW* 2:30):

(ICH KENNE DICH, du bist die tief Gebeugte,
ich, der Durchbohrte, bin dir untertan.
Wo flammt ein Wort, das für uns beide zeugte?
Du – ganz, ganz wirklich. Ich – ganz Wahn.)⁷⁸¹

⁷⁸¹ Trans. Felstiner: “(I KNOW YOU, you're the one bent over low, / and I, the one pierced through, am in your need. / Where flames a word to witness for us both? / You – wholly real. I – wholly mad.)”

In this case, it is a question of the madness in seeing oneself in the *pietà* motif, but a recognized and *confessed* madness.

The great, grey, track-less, majestic figure of which the poem speaks, this cinder-less figure is a figure in time. The words *Schlacken-/lose*, *Fährte-/lose* are divided on two lines, which is perhaps not at all insignificant. But this division must not be read so that it would somehow diminish the significance of the privative affix *-lose*; to the contrary, the tiny pause in the enjambment introduces something like a temporal shift within this privation. This figure is “like all the lost night” (“*wie alles verlorene nahe / Schwestergestalt*”). We remember the earlier, much earlier poem, with the verse: “*Du bist so nah, als weiltest du nicht hier.*”⁷⁸² The great, grey sister-figure, grey like ashes or like smoke but also gold-like, relates, no doubt, to an unnamed sister and, on the other hand, to all those whose names, even the names, were “co-incinerated” in the ovens of the camps; the names, whole families with even their names, sisters and brothers, mothers and fathers; the shape is obviously also that of the *Schechina*, the “soul of smoke (*Rauchseele*)” rising above the clouds in the desert, and the crown, golden-like, is also like the crown of a rose.⁷⁸³

The word that ends the poem, *König-/liche*, is also divided. The adjective is feminine, while *König* would be masculine. But another significant motivation for the enjambment may be the minimal suspension of the suffix *-liche*, whose common signification and etymology associate it with all the “*wie*” adverbs in this poem.⁷⁸⁴ The treacherous ‘like’ inhabits all language, all general names for instance: “everything is like everything, and in endless ways”, as for instance Donald Davidson says (“What Metaphors Mean”, p. 39), but each and every thing is also unlike anything else. The like *is* unlike.

⁷⁸² *Mohn und Gedächtnis*, GW 1:61. Trans. William D. Jewett in Hamacher, “The Second of Inversion”, p. 283: “You are as close as if you were not lingering here.”

⁷⁸³ Cf. Otto Pöggeler, *Spur des Worts. Zur Lyrik Paul Celans* (Freiburg: Alber, 1986), p. 360.

⁷⁸⁴ Cf. DWB: “GLEICH, adj. *h e r k u n f t u n d f o r m . // das gemeingerm. adj. ahd. galih, gilih, gelih, mhd. gelich, geliche, glich, gelich (zu letzterem s. ZWIERZINA in: zs. f. dtsch. altert. 45, 81 ff.), adv. geliche, gelich, gelich, gliche, mnd. gelike (neben lik, like), mnl. gelijc, nl. gelijk; got. galeiks, altnord. glíkr (neben líkr), schwed. lik, dän. lig, as. gilík, afries. líc, ags. gelíc, engl. like ist deutlich bahuvrihi-zusammensetzung aus ga- und līka- 'gestalt, körper', bedeutet also ursprünglich 'dieselbe gestalt habend', vgl. got. wisan þiudos gaarbians jah galeikans jah gadailans εἶναι τὰ εὐνη συγκληρονομα καὶ συσσωμα καὶ συμμετοχὰ (wörtlich 'dasz die völker seien dasselbe erbe habende und denselben körper habende und denselben teil habende') Eph. 3, 6 sowie die entsprechenden bildungen samaleiks 'gleich', aljaleiko, adv., 'anders', swaleiks 'so beschaffen', hwileiks 'wie beschaffen' und die zahlreichen deutschen adjektiva und adverbia auf -lich [...]” (Bd. 7, Sp. 7936).*

ON "SPRACHGITTER"

"Do you know what 'grille' could be?"⁷⁸⁵ Celan asked Hugo Huppert, speaking of his poem "Sprachgitter". One of the things by which he himself defined "speech-grille" is "distanced comprehension":

Und dieser durchs Gitter »freigegebene Blick«, dieses »entfernte Verstehen« ist schon versöhnlich, ist schon Gewinn, Trost, vielleicht Hoffnung. Keiner ist »wie« der andere; und darum soll er vielleicht den andern studieren, sei's auch durchs Gitter hindurch. ["Spirituell", p. 320.]

The word *Sprachgitter* is not a neologism, it is rather a citation and possibly refers to several sources. The term has an individual entry in the Grimm dictionary. *Sprachgitter* means first of all, primarily and originally, the lattice window in a parlatory, namely the reception room in a convent, the mesh through which the nuns speak to the worldly. Jean Paul, an important source for Celan, has on several occasions used the term in a figurative sense. One of these, a passage in *Kampaner Thal* and quoted by Grimm, a sentence speaking of nightingales singing louder before a thunderstorm, "behind blossoming speech-grilles", has been copied by Celan in his notebook: "*unter dem tiefer einsinkenden Gewitter schlugen die Nachtigallen lauter, gleichsam als lebendige Gewitterstürmer, hinter blühenden Sprachgittern.*"⁷⁸⁶

But isn't this *Gitter*, mesh or lattice, still a metaphor? In his words on the "treacherous like", doesn't Celan still use simile and metaphor? If we take the word *Gitter* here as a metaphor for something else, or even as a catachresis, we easily forget that the *parlatory* window, the "speech-grille" would not be what it is without the reference to speech. The certain distance between speakers belongs to the very constitution of this lattice. The parlatory window is already a metonymy of sorts, it already speaks of the distanced comprehension across language, through the "speech-grille" or "language mesh". It is not just an object made of wood or iron, but made with regard to its function as, well, "speech-grille". It is not just a regular window but a *parlatory* window. So speech primordially and inseparably coincides with the grille in the speech-grille also when it is a question of the lattice window as a material object.

While there have been dozens of interpretations of the poem "Sprachgitter", an indispensable encyclopaedic cycle of commentaries, it is Maurice Blanchot who very laconically states that the wish to decipher the "outside" through the lattice is due to an illusion: isn't there, outside, already and again, writing to be read: "*le dehors ne se lit-il pas encore comme une écriture*"?⁷⁸⁷ Let us read the poem and then try to figure out, not so much its content but what kind of a glimpse it might perhaps give of this outside itself — as a sort of writing, perhaps?

⁷⁸⁵ "Wissen Sie, was Gitter sein können?" (Hugo Huppert, "Spirituell", *loc. cit.*; my translation.)

⁷⁸⁶ Cf. Barbara Wiedemann's commentary in *DGKG*, pp. 652-653.

⁷⁸⁷ "Le dernier à parler", in Maurice Blanchot, *Une voix venue d'ailleurs* (Paris: Gallimard, 2002), p. 75.

SPRACHGITTER

Augenrund zwischen den Stäben.

Flimmertier Lid
rudert nach oben,
gibt einen Blick frei.

Iris, Schwimmerin, traumlos und trüb:
der Himmel, herzgrau, muß nah sein.

Schräg, in der eisernen Tülle,
der blakende Span.
Am Lichtsinn
errätst du die Seele.

(Wär ich wie du. Wärest du wie ich.
Standen wir nicht
unter *einem* Passat?
Wir sind Fremde.)

Die Fliesen. Darauf,
dicht beieinander, die beiden
herzgrauen Lachen:
zwei
Mundvoll Schweigen.⁷⁸⁸

The poem could invite us into an endless discussion, with all its possible allusions and associations, and with its dozens of previous detailed readings: in the bibliography of *Kommentar zu Paul Celans »Sprachgitter«* (2005, ed. Jürgen Lehmann), there is a list of no less than 103 items related to the poem, many of which are its individual interpretations.⁷⁸⁹

The whole enigma seems to be condensed into the word *Passat*. Jerry Glenn hears in this word the echo of *Passah*, the name derived through Greek from the Hebrew and used in German for the Jewish Passover feast. For Glenn, the change from *Passah* to *Passat* suggests, among a few other things, “the remoteness and esoteric nature of Benn’s South Sea Utopia of the poetic word”.⁷⁹⁰ Celan’s distantiation, in his own Büchner Prize speech, from Benn’s po-

⁷⁸⁸ TCA/*Sprachgitter*, p. 41; GW 1:167. Trans. Felstiner: “SPEECH-GRILLE // Eyes round between the bars. // Flittering lid / paddles upward, / breaks a glance free. // Iris, the swimmer, dreamless and drab: // heaven, heartgray, must be near. // Aslant, in the iron socket, / a smoldering chip. / By sense of light / you hit on the soul. // (Were I like you. Were you like me. / Did we not stand / under *one* trade wind? / We are strangers.) // The flagstones. On them, / close by each other, both / heartgray puddles: / two / mouthfuls of silence.” (*Selected Poems and Prose of Paul Celan*, p. 107.)

⁷⁸⁹ Cf. Hendrik Birus, “Sprachgitter”, in Jürgen Lehmann, ed., *Kommentar zu Paul Celans »Sprachgitter«* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2005), pp. 209-224; the bibliography of the interpretations of this poem is on pp. 513-519. The few interpretations and commentaries particularly concentrated on this poem that I have taken into account, besides the commentary by Birus, are, in a more or less chronological order: Alfred Kelleter, “Accessus” in Dietlind Meinecke, ed., *Über Paul Celan* [Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1970], pp. 116 ff. Jerry Glenn, *Paul Celan* [New York: Twaine, 1973], pp. 91-92; 99-105. Jean Bollack, “Paul Celan sur la langue. Le poème *Sprachgitter* et ses interprétations”, in Martine Broda, ed., *Contre-jour. Études sur Paul Celan* (Paris: Cerf, 1986), pp. 86-115, here p. 88.

⁷⁹⁰ Glenn, *Paul Celan* (New York: Twaine, 1973), p. 104.

etics and in favour of the “poem today” instead of “modern lyricism”, has often been recognized. We might think that *Passat* is indeed the very same Mediterranean wind that blows over the anemones, the narcissi, the olive trees in Benn’s “Probleme der Lyrik” (1951), or in the much earlier text of his that he quotes in the speech, “Das lyrische Ich” (1927). It would be the trade wind that blows also under the sky of Zanzibar and over the blooming Bougainville. Benn speaks for instance of creatures with cilia (*Flimmerhaare*) and of the lyrical ‘I’ as an “open-work-I”: “*Das lyrische Ich ist ein durchbrochenes Ich, ein Gitter-Ich, fluchterfahren, trauergeweiht.*” And:

Worte, Worte — Substantive! Sie brauchen nur die Schwingen zu öffnen und Jahrtausende entfallen ihrem Flug. Nehmen Sie Anemonenwald, also zwischen Stämmen feines, kleines Kraut, ja über sie hinaus Narzissenwiesen, aller Kelche Rauch und Qualm, im Ölbaum blüht der Wind und über Marmorstufen steigt, verschlungen, in eine Weite die Erfüllung — oder nehmen Sie Oliven oder Theogonien — Jahrtausende entfallen ihrem Flug. Botanisches und Geographisches, Völker und Länder, alle die historisch und systematisch so verlorenen Welten hier ihre Blüte, hier ihr Traum — aller Leichtsinn, alle Wehmut, alle Hoffnungslosigkeit des Geistes werden fühlbar aus den Schichten eines Querschnitts von Begriff.⁷⁹¹

Even as we seem to find some kind of a correspondent for almost all the ingredients of Celan’s poem in Benn’s discourse, there remains something unsatisfying about this observation of similarities and of the ironic distanciation through these very similarities or perhaps even through playful orthographic faults of sorts, not only the change between *Passah* and *Passat* but also between *Lichtsinn* and *Leichtsinn*, or the transformation of *Traum* into “*traumlos und trüb*”. Even this could be read as a sort of *reductio ad absurdum* of metaphors, in the sense that the fantastic, metaphorical attributes of poetry in Benn’s discourse are ‘misunderstood’, as it were, in a *quasi verbatim* manner (and thus *quasi absurd*, too), or disfigured so that *Lichtsinn* (photosensitivity) instead of *Leichtsinn* (light-heartedness) is attributed to the organism having cilia (*Flimmerhaare*). So this is a re-literalization of sorts, except that it concerns the eyelid; but what connects the ciliates with eyelids are not only the cilia but the sense of light, too, photosensitivity. And if we allow ourselves to step outside the poem’s strict textual contours, the “hope [*Hoffnung*]” mentioned by Celan in his private conversation with Huppert might even be seen as in opposition to Benn’s “hopelessness [*Hoffnungslosigkeit des Geistes*]”.

But let us see if we could argue for this “consolation and hope” even from within the textual contours of the poem. Let us now read it apart from these comparative associations and apart from the exclusively dark shades, the “extremely negative connotations” that some have found in it (cf. e.g. Glenn, *Paul Celan*, pp. 99-105). I also find darkly humorous aspects in the poem, not only darkness but light too.

⁷⁹¹ Benn, “Probleme der Lyrik” (1951), in *Gesammelte Werke IV: Reden und Vorträge*, ed. Dieter Wellershoff (Wiesbaden: Limes, 1968), pp. 1058-1096; here pp. 1076-7.

The word *Passat* has a quasi synonym in German: *Tropenwind*.⁷⁹² If we replace “trope” by “metaphor” and “wind” by “flurry”, we could associate this word with *Metapherngestöber*. Another tropospheric phenomenon. This is perhaps not as far-fetched as it seems, taken that the context calls into question the “particle”, the tiny word “like” (“*das Wörtchen »Wie«*”). Yet, of course this coincidence cannot furnish us with any other information concerning the word *Passat* but that which we already possess: in spite of the *one* trade wind under which “we” stand, in spite of the suggested “like” that *would* liken us with each other, “we” are strangers. Which does not have to be an altogether “negative” situation, as Celan himself points out.⁷⁹³ The situation in which the shared language, common word (*Passat*), fails to *communicate*, which is also to establish a community (a “cultivation of intimacy” as a horizon for communication and metaphor), is accompanied by a shared silence.⁷⁹⁴

Passat, Tropenwind — in the draft material for this poem the word *Seelenpassat* occurs — has been etymologically described as a wind that is favourable for crossing over the sea (“für die Überfahrt günstiger Wind”);⁷⁹⁵ therefore *Passat* is, etymologically speaking, something that facilitates passage or transfer. And when we speak of etymology here, we do not have to think (only) of some historical origin of the term, the Dutch seamen’s vocabulary for instance, but (also) the conditions favourable for ‘crossing over’, transference in a linguistic sense. *Langage à l’état naissant*. Thus it could be taken in a meta-metaphoric sense, or perhaps rather, or at the same time also, in a sense that evokes the *pre-metaphoric*, pre-conceptual formation of terminology. However, the word *Passat* also marks, as part of the singular address of which the strophe in parentheses gives a hint, the limit of construing the

⁷⁹² Cf. *Duden*, entry “Passat”: “gleichmäßig wehende Tropenwind” (cit. *TCA/Sprachgitter*, p. 40n); *Wahrig*: “Passat <m. 1>, Passatwind <m.> beständiger Wind in den Tropen innerhalb der Wendekreise, infolge der Erdumdrehung wechselnd aus NO u. SO wehend (Nordost~, Südost~) [über das Nddt. [=Niederdeutsch] (seemänn.) < ndrl. *passaat*-(wind)]”. Once again, cf. Jean Paul for a possible clue, mentioned by Grimm as one of the figurative uses of “Passatwind” (“Passatwind der Eitelkeit”): “Beim Himmel! mein spitzbübischer Maskopeibruder und Lehnsvetter in Flachsenfingen hatte die Liebesbriefe an gegenwärtige Kontrapunktistin adressiert. Aus jeder Zeile blies Liebes-Tauwind, Hof-Stickluft und der Passatwind der Eitelkeit: wie die Theologen sonst jedes Glied zum Beweise und Pfeiler einer Gottheit machten — z.B. Morus das Auge — Schmid das Ohr — Donatus die Hand — Hamberger das Herz — Sloane den Magen —, so regt ein junger Fant kein Glied, das ihm nicht den erfreulichen Beweis eines existierenden Gottes oder Halbgottes oder Venerabile (er selber ist nämlich der Gott oder das Venerabile) darreichte, und er schauet in sein göttliches Wesen.” (*Der Jubelseniör*, 1797; cited from *Projekt Gutenberg*, <http://gutenberg.spiegel.de/jeanpaul/jubelsen/jubelo43.htm>.)

⁷⁹³ Besides Huppert’s account, cf. Birus, “Sprachgitter” (in Lehmann, ed., *Kommentar zu Sprachgitter*), pp. 219–220, and Celan’s poem “Oben, geräuschlos”, connecting “the stranger, uninvited” and “guest”: “Der Fremde, ungebeten, woher, / der Gast.” (*GW* 1:188.)

⁷⁹⁴ Cf. Bollack, “Paul Celan sur la langue”, p. 95: “L’union tacite, sans paroles, la mémorisation qui fait le « cœur » condense si fortement une conformité du langage à la chose que les larmes se rapprochent (« *dicht beieinander* », vers 17), dans une proximité que ne saurait établir aucun dialogue, restant un échange de différences, même si les mots échangés étaient les mêmes.”

⁷⁹⁵ Cf. Birus, “Sprachgitter” (2005), p. 219. The Tübingen edition shows some significant differences between the first draft and the final version, and in the first draft, partly consisting rather of a list of words than verse, there is this line or pair of words: “*Hauche, Seelenpassat*” (*TCA/Sprachgitter* p. 40).

vocabulary in such general terms. And this limit is emphasized by the preceding word, printed in italics, “*einem*”.⁷⁹⁶

When we acknowledge that this *Passat* forbids rather than allows us to ‘pass over’, or rather that it does both at once, is both “strongbox [*coffre-fort*]” and “newsstand [*kiosque*]”, as Derrida has argued about Celan’s poetry and poetics,⁷⁹⁷ we may cautiously leave the single term without precise determination and concentrate rather on the ‘frame’ than the ‘focus’, although we are not dealing with metaphors here, but rather with the withdrawal of all rhetoric into a mutism. We might allow the word the whole ‘abstract’ emptiness of possibilities, its formal vacancy. This legitimate resignation of specificity is what for instance Guillaume Artous-Bouvet has done, with respect to the strophe between brackets:

Ici, une rhétorique de la question enracine l’énonciation dans une pure conditionnalité (conditionnalité qu’accentue encore l’encadrement parenthétique): or, c’est précisément l’identité – ou plus précisément, la commensurabilité, la communauté possibles – des « deux » qui fait l’objet de ce conditionnel. La *tenue* des deux êtres sous l’identité, sous la mêmeté d’un unique « alisé » (*Passat*) ne garantit aucunement leur réciproque familiarité. Dans l’élément d’un commun souffle, une étrangeté puissante continue de régir les rapports de l’un et de l’autre, de l’un à l’autre. Le poème se *tient* précisément sous le vent de cette identification déchirée, divisée, du poète et de son lecteur.⁷⁹⁸

Passat and *Sprachgitter*, a little like *Schibboleth* or *no pasarán*, are not only what keep us apart but what also bring us together. After citing the strophe in parentheses, Artous-Bouvet also cites the earlier poem “Fernen” (1954):

FERNEN

Aug in Aug, in der Kühle,
laß uns auch solches beginnen:
gemeinsam
laß uns atmen den Schleier,
der uns voreinander verbirgt,

⁷⁹⁶ To my knowledge, very little attention has been given to this little word, comparable to the likewise emphasized word “*ein*” in Trakl’s “Abendländisches Lied”, “*ein* Geschlecht”. The last stanza of “Abendländisches Lied” is as follows: “O, die bittere Stunde des Untergangs, / Da wir ein steinernes Antlitz in schwarzen Wassern beschaun. / Aber strahlend heben die silbernen Lider die Liebenden: / *Ein* Geschlecht. Weihrauch strömt von rosigen Kissen / Und der süße Gesang der Auferstandenen.” Heidegger and, following him with critical attention, Derrida have paid specific attention to this emphasis in Trakl’s poem. — In his essay on “Sprachgitter”, Jean Bollack happens to make the following observation (motivated by “[l’]alternance des ronds et des bâtons”): “Le langage est androgyne dans sa couche la plus intime.” (“Paul Celan sur la langue”, p. 88; cf. also the brief remark on p. 94: “« un seul » est emphatique”.) Bollack also reads the strophe in parentheses in much the same way as we do here: “établissant en marge une correspondance (personnalisée)*, il conduit pourtant l’analyse à une cloture jusqu’à laquelle elle n’aurait pas pu se développer dans sa logique propre sans intervention « personnelle ». | *[n20:] Qui n’a rien de biographique [...]”.

⁷⁹⁷ Cf. “Discussion”, in M. Bollack, ed., *L’acte critique*, pp. 239ff; En. trans. Hughes, “Discussion” [1983], p. 156, *passim*.

⁷⁹⁸ Guillaume Artous-Bouvet, “Une lecture de Celan : di-visions de la forme”, in *Revue des Littératures de l’Union Européenne (RiLUnE)* no. 2 (2005), p. 25 (http://www.rilune.org/mono2/ArtousBouvet_Celan.pdf.)

wenn der Abend sich anschickt zu messen,
 wie weit es noch ist
 von jeder Gestalt, die er annimmt,
 zu jeder Gestalt,
 die er uns beiden geliehen.⁷⁹⁹

To *breath* the veil that is *common* to us and that *covers us both*, conceals us both from each other, even when our eyes mirror each other, is it not speech, language itself? Is language not the word-veil (*Schleier*) between us, the veil that we *breath*? And is it not the word “veil [*Schleier*]” that we *breath* when we pronounce it in the cool, dark air of the evening, which is the atmosphere of the poem? The cool dark air, the evening preparing itself for measuring the distance between the figures that it takes upon itself and the figures that it gives us, the veil that is between us and that we *breath* together, keeping us apart even in the closest proximity, we who are the distant (“Fernen”): all this becomes one as the darkness becomes darker. The air, the veil, the figures, all melt into each other, into an invisibility that brings together and keeps apart, also us *both*, also us *breathing together*. The poem describes, as it were, or rather lets appear, light turning into twilight turning into darkness: it both bestows to us the forms and effaces the contours, turns the visible into invisible and vice versa. A most erotic poem. And it does not describe what happens; it gives form to that which happens.

The poem, language taking form, gives the contours to an existence,⁸⁰⁰ allows the encounter to take place, as the visible contours of the distant ones disappear in the night. Figuration and counter-figuration, figuration by counter-figuration.

Let us return to the poem “Sprachgitter” for another moment. It gives a glimpse, “releases a glance”.⁸⁰¹ Almost the only lines in the poem that seem to address *speaking* in the usual sense of this word, almost the only lines that directly address themselves to a Thou (a human interlocutor, as it seems?), are the lines in parentheses, the conditional, interrogatory sentences and the sentence affirming that “we are strangers”. The rest of the lines address, first, through the “speech-grille” as it seems, “Eyes round between the bars”,⁸⁰² eyes that are at the same time animals or something like animals, organisms having cilia, *Flimmertier Lid*. Organs of sight or organisms from whose reaction to light, in one word, photosensitivity, you may divine the soul, a manifestation of life. Also here we have this address to a Thou, but an address that concerns “divining” the presence of a soul from the sense of light, and not from verbal communication. And in the last strophe, the heart-grey colour that was earlier attrib-

⁷⁹⁹ Von Schwelle zu Schwelle, DGKG, pp. 67-68.

⁸⁰⁰ “Gedichte sind Daseinsentwürfe.” (TCA/Meridian, D.O.M., 21 [p. 221]; cf. Endf. 46, *loc. cit.*; also in Mikrolithen, No. 300, p. 206); cf. the Bremen speech: “In dieser Sprache habe ich, in jenen Jahren und in den Jahren nachher, Gedichte zu schreiben versucht: um zu sprechen, um mich zu orientieren, um zu erkunden, wo ich mich befand und wohin es mit mir wollte, um mir Wirklichkeit zu entwerfen.” (GW 3:186)

⁸⁰¹ Cf. the translation by Michael Hamburger (Poems of Paul Celan, p. 95).

⁸⁰² The bars of the parlatory lattice, perhaps, but they could also be the bars of a cage; a certain affinity with Rilke’s famous “Der Panther” has been observed (cf. Wiedemann, “Kommentar”, in DGKG, p. 653; Birus, “Sprachgitter”, pp. 212, 223).

uted to the sky, whose proximity was divined from the dreamlessness and bleakness of “Iris, the swimmer, dreamless and drab”, this heart-grey colour is now attributed to the two puddles upon the flagstones.⁸⁰³ Outside, no doubt, since they reflect the colour of the sky.

Are the puddles, side by side, a pair of eyes, then? No doubt. But are they not also mouths, as it seems? Or at least mouthfuls? Mouthfuls of silence; these could be eyes, indeed. But does this not mean that they are not only puddles (*Lachen*) and eyes and mouths and also tears and even associated with blood, or perhaps rather ash instead of blood (heart-grey), not only all these but also ‘laughter’, *Lachen*? *Lachen* (plural) is ‘laughter’, too.⁸⁰⁴ To laugh is a way of not speaking, to not say a word, and it is easier to say this in German: *Lachen ist auch ein Schweigen*.

“... *die beiden / herzgrauen Lachen*”: these are, of course, two heart-grey puddles, having the colour of ashes rather than of blood, reflecting the colour of the sky that is not *himmelblau*, nor *himmelgrau*, but *herzgrau*;⁸⁰⁵ but they can be *also, at the same time*, laughter. Laughing is not speaking, therefore two ‘heart-gray laughters’ can be “two / mouthfuls of silence”. *Schweigen* is *not speaking* rather than absence of sound. One may laugh and yet remain silent, one may even speak and speak a lot, too, one may babble and yet remain silent, remain silent upon something (“*über etwas schweigen*”, as this would be said in German), for instance evade some topic, while speaking continuously about something else. *Schweigen* does not have to be absence of sound or even absence of voice.

The “puddles” reflecting the heart-grey sky could be eyes as well. Eyes may speak while they are silent, they may be the “mirrors of the soul” and any photo-sensitive organ or sense (*Lichtsinn*) may be an indication of the soul (*anima*) as the principle of life in any of its zoological grades and even in the protozoan or metazoan grade; *Flimmertiere*, ciliates, may be photophilic but they may be scotophilic or even photophobic, too.⁸⁰⁶

⁸⁰³ On the flagstones (“Die Fliesen.”), cf. “Gespräch im Gebirg”, *GW* 3:220; cf. Birus, “Sprachgitter”, p. 220.

⁸⁰⁴ Cf. the entries of the homonymic word “Lache, f.” in *DWB*, for instance. Jerry Glenn is one of those who have taken this possibility of homonymy seriously: “The primary Biblical allusion in ‘Sprachgitter’ is to Psalm 126:1-4: [‘][...] Then was our mouth filled with laughter [*Lachen*], [...]’]” (*Paul Celan* [New York: Twayne, 1973], p. 101). Cf. also Birus, pp. 220-221.

⁸⁰⁵ Cf. *DWB*: “deine himmelblauen augen. J. PAUL *uns. loge* 3, 64”; “HIMMELS-, HIMMELGRAU, *n. das grau des himmels, z. b. bei anbrechendem morgen: die lerche fuhr als ouvertüre des tages hoch ins himmelgrau hinauf. J. PAUL Hesp. 3, 202.*” (*DWB*, Bd. 10, Sp. 1342ff, 1356.)

⁸⁰⁶ For instance: “*Stentor coeruleus* and the related *Blepharisma japonicum* possess photoreceptor systems that render the cells capable of avoiding light. On account of this unique feature, these ciliates exhibit photodispersal as they tend to swim away from a bright illumination and accumulate in shady or dark areas.” (Hanna Fabczak, “Protozoa as Model System for Studies of Sensory Light Transduction: Photophobic Response in the Ciliate *Stentor* and *Blepharisma* [Summary]” (*Acta Protozool.* [2000] 39: 171; <http://www.nencki.gov.pl/pdf/ap/ap3931.pdf>.) — Here is a way to read three strophes from the middle of the poem:

Flimmertier Lid
rudert nach oben,
gibt einen Blick frei.

Iris, Schwimmerin, traumlos und trüb:

So it seems that the poem addresses not only human language or languages and human silence and mirrors of the soul (one might even imagine that “Sprachgitter” could also be a love poem dedicated to the French Roman Catholic Gisèle LeStrange by the Romanian German-speaking Jew Paul Antschel; these lovers were certainly strangers [*étrangers*, *Fremde*], too, and Celan seems to have alluded to this personal, interpersonal situation quite often), but perhaps also our relation to animals, to “creatureliness [*Kreatürlichkeit*]”, and manifestations of life without verbal language; and perhaps it addresses *both* at one and the same time: so-called non-verbal communication *in general*. Both verbal and non-verbal: in the prose drafts, Celan links the line speaking of “divining the soul” with *rhythm* and with *tropism*, with “involution” and involuntary reactions to light, etc. (*Lichtzwang* is the title of the later book of poems).⁸⁰⁷

It is indeed the passage in Jean Paul’s *Kampaner Thal* that Celan refers to, reportedly also in a letter to Klaus Demus, the passage which speaks of nightingales as “living signs of a storm” singing through the “blossoming language mesh”. The language mesh brings together and keeps apart not only humans, speaking a common language to each other or different

der Himmel, herzograu, *muß* nah sein.

Schräg, in der eisernen Tülle,
der blakende Span.
Am Lichtsinn
errätst du die Seele.

I have *italicized* the words *muß* and *errätst* to indicate a mode of *conjecture* based on a manifestation, while the underlining indicates the allusion to sight and photo-sensitivity, and the line *gibt einen Blick frei* has both of these emphases to indicate both the manifestation upon which to divine something (the grounds for guessing that “der Himmel, herzograu, *muß* nah sein”) and the association with sight or photo-sensitivity.

⁸⁰⁷ “das Gedicht zeigt — nicht eine Neigung zur Sprachlosigkeit, aber zum Verstummen; *es behauptet sich* [...] am Rande seiner selbst. In seiner Selbstaufhebung erblickt es seine Chance; es ruft und holt sich zuweilen, um zu bestehen, aus seinem Schon-Nicht-Mehr [statu moriendi] in ein Immer-Noch zurück. — / An dieser Bewegung, an diesen keineswegs mit Apparaten meßbaren Vibrationen ist es zu erkennen — Flimmertierchen Flimmerbewegungen — [...] Bewegung: an dieser Flimmer Sinn-bewegung, die sie uns nicht mittels irgendwelcher Apparate, sondern unmittelbar unserem Denken und Dasein mitzuteilen vermögen, erkennen wir das Gedicht: wir sind das Medium, in dem es geschieht...” (*TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 27.) “Rhythmus — Sinnbewegung auf ein noch unbekanntes Ziel zu. → eine Art Tropismus »am Lichtsinn errätst du«” (*TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 212.) “Rhythmus im Gedicht: das sind unwiederholbare, schicksalhafte Sinnbewegungen auf ein Unbekanntes zu, das sich zuweilen als Du denken läßt: »am Lichtsinn errätst du die Seele«. — Sie sind, auch da, wo sie am stimmlosesten sind, sprachbedingt.” (*TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 344.) “die Sprache des Gedichts: involutiv → am Lichtsinn errätst <du> die Seele: das Kreatürliche als Horizont des Gedichts —” (*TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 379.) “Das Kunstfeindliche — also nicht der Entfaltung [Elargissez l’Art!], sondern der Involution Verschworene — bei Büchner: es gehört zweifellos zu dem uns Ansprechenden. / Kunst, das ist das Künstliche, Erkünstelte, Synthetische, Hergestellte: es ist das menschen- und kreaturferne Knarren der Automaten: es ist, schon hier, Kybernetik, [...] eingestellte Marionette, es ist der Mensch diesseits und jenseits seiner selbst: der aus dem Schoß der Technik geborene Weltraumschiffer, dem Sprache einen Rückfall in eine Vor-Existenz bedeutet. —” (*TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 376/530.) The inclusion of this last fragment may hint at the sense of the word “involution” used in many of the notes: for modernity or for ultra-modernity, ‘natural’ language means already a step back, regression; thus a poem seems to be closer to ‘animality’, to simple organisms, than to the “automat”; however, let us not forget that even a poem written *by* a computer would be an *anti*-computer (cf. above). On “tropism”, cf. *OED*: “The turning of an organism, or a part of one, in a particular direction (either in the way of growth, bending, or locomotion) in response to some special external stimulus, as that of light (*phototropism*, *heliotropism*), heat (*thermotropism*), gravity (*geotropism*), etc.” (*OED*, 50258722, 6 Dec., 2006.)

languages, but also humans and animals. We surmise the soul of the other, through our eyes and ears and touch (and who knows, perhaps even otherwise: there are of course theories of unconscious olfactory stimuli, for instance), by the feature that is common to all living beings and yet distinguishes us from each other too, namely manifestation in general, whether in response or in reaction only, whether conscious or not.⁸⁰⁸ Celan's thematization of sign-giving has been noted by Levinas,⁸⁰⁹ and Hendrik Birus suggests that the frequent image of the eyelids (or rather *Lid*, in the singular) might be inspired by a text by Buber, speaking of "a most silent speech [*ein allerstillstes Sprechen*]" that wants to communicate nothing, nothing but an existence ("*das nur Dasein mitteilen, nicht beschreiben will*"); instead of any description, it just says that something is: "*wie ein Heben der Lider im Schweigen. Es übet keine Untreue, denn es sagt nur aus, dass etwas ist.*"⁸¹⁰ In terms of the philosophical, post-Aristotelian distinction, it is a question of *existentia* and not of *essentia*,⁸¹¹ nor of any other categorial attribute of existence pure and simple, which can only be conjectured through the "distanced comprehension" across the *Sprachgitter*. This defiance of the propositional form, resembling the apophatic discourse of 'negative theology', this strange kind of 'naming' that gives us only a glimpse, means also a defiance of metaphoricity, inasmuch as metaphor is an instance of "deviant predication" (Ricœur).⁸¹²

There is the darkness indoors, the flickering light and the iris, surrounding the photo-sensitive pupil, and the eye reflecting the heart-grey colour of the sky, or of heaven, that *must be near*;⁸¹³ but outside there *is* the sky, judging by its reflection in the two puddles close to each other. Two mouthfuls of silence, two laughs, two heart-grey laughs which are perhaps, at the same time, not only puddles and not only mouths but also a pair of eyes reflecting the sky. Two creatures, two organs or organisms.

Perhaps something like two pigeons, outside on the flagstones. By metonymy, technically speaking: "*die beiden / herzgrauen Lachen*", laughter for laugher, cooing for cooer. Or,

⁸⁰⁸ I am here of course alluding to one of the insistent themes in Derrida's later work, not "the animal" or "animality" or "animals", but *animot* as he himself puts it; cf. "L'animal que donc je suis (à suivre)", in Marie-Louise Mallet, ed., *L'animal autobiographique : autour de Jacques Derrida* (Paris: Galilée, 1999), pp. 251-301, and "La bête et le souverain", in Mallet, ed., *La démocratie à venir : autour de Jacques Derrida* (Paris: Galilée, 2004), pp. 433-476.

⁸⁰⁹ Cf. Levinas, "Paul Celan: From Being to the Other", in *Proper names*, trans. Michael B. Smith (Stanford: Stanford U.P., 1996), p. 40.

⁸¹⁰ Martin Buber, *Ekstase und Bekenntnis*; cit. Birus, "Sprachgitter", pp. 214, 223.

⁸¹¹ Cf. Heidegger, "Die Metaphysik als Geschichte des Seins", in *Nietzsche II* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1961), p. 406 (also *GA* 6.2.).

⁸¹² On metaphor as a "deviant predication", cf. Ricœur, *La métaphore vive* (Paris: Seuil, cop. 1975). On the apophatic discourse as one that defies propositional form as well as the concept of metaphor or the opposition between literal and figural, concept and metaphor, cf. Derrida, *Sauf le nom* (Paris: Galilée, 1993), pp. 42, 43-45, 53-54, 61-63, 75ff; *Khôra* (Paris: Galilée, 1993), pp. 20-22; "Comment ne pas parler : Dénégations", in *Psyché — inventions de l'autre* (Paris: Galilée, 1987), pp. 567-8.

⁸¹³ Cf. Bernhard Böschstein, "Gespräche und Gänge mit Paul Celan"; cit. Birus, "Sprachgitter", p. 215: "An einem Vormittag [Ende Februar 1968] zeigte mir Celan anhand seines Gedichts 'Sprachgitter', wie er sich deutendes Lesen vorstellte. [Zitat V. 5f.] Über den Himmel gibt es hier keine Gewißheit. Aber aus dem Auge läßt er sich erschließen, freilich nur vorsichtig. Die erschließende, ahnende Befragung wird durch die Verbform nahegelegt." (Brackets by Birus.)

if we change the place of the capital letter, perhaps even this: *die beiden / Herzgrauen lachen*. Their cooing is not speaking, it resembles laughter, and therefore a species of pigeons has been named after this resemblance. This species is called, in English, wood pigeon or ring dove, but as its Latin and German names suggest, it is a *laughing* dove: *Columba risoria*, *Lachtaube*.⁸¹⁴ In English, the “laugher” is a “variety of the domestic pigeon”.⁸¹⁵

This chain of associations is of course nothing but wordplay. However, in the quasi-metonymical still-life constellation of this poem, ideas or images slide one upon the other in a way that we do not know whether we are dealing with puddles, eyes or mouths, or yet something else, and perhaps all these at once. For the word *Sprachgitter* alone, we have several allusions or connotations besides the parlatory window, several possibilities offered by the Grimm dictionary, and many of these come from Jean Paul: *Sprachgitter* is not only associated with birds, namely with nightingales, but also with the “jib-door” (*Tapetenthür*) of a blindfold over the eyes, and with an old man who “speaks with the dead behind the speech-grille of sleep”.⁸¹⁶ We do not need wild conjectures in order to observe the strange “overlapping of relations”, linking human speech and silence with the manifestations of life even in

⁸¹⁴ The *OED* states that the name “ring-dove” applies usually to “The wood-pigeon, cushat, or queest (*Columba palumbus*); also called ring-pigeon”, or *Palumbus Torquato*, but according to one of the citations, “The term Ring Dove is also applied to the Collared Turtle, *Columba risoria*” which is, in German, *Lachtaube* (DWB). — Pigeons may be white, may be dove-coloured like snow, like yesterday’s snowflakes, or like a flag cloth (*Fahnentuch*), as in the poem “Heimkehr” (“Schneefall, dichter und dichter, / taubenfarben, wie gestern”), or they may be grey (*taubengrau*, or *taubenblau*, a greyish blue), of a cinereous shade of colour. Grey as the sky, grey as the puddles, grey as the heart. Like cinders, pigeons can be of various shades, their particular shade of colour may be difficult to fix. The ring-dove, *Lachtaube*, may have a rosey hue in its feathers, for instance. — Cf. “Heimkehr” (1956; *GW* 1:156; *TCA/Sprachgitter*, pp. 20-21), whose last stanza reads: “Dort: ein Gefühl, / vom Eiswind herübergeweht, / das sein tauben-, sein schnee- / arbenes Fahnentuch festmacht.” An earlier sketch reads: “[...] ein Pflock, / an den ein erborgtes Gefühl / sein graues Fahnentuch / nagelt.” Cf. also “Schneebett”, combining the formation of a bed of snow and the verb form *gegittert*: “Augen weltblind, / Augen im Sterbegeklüft, / Augen Augen: // Das Schneebett unter uns beiden, das Schneebett. / Kristall um Kristall, / zeittief gegittert, wir fallen, [...]” (*TCA/Sprachgitter*, p. 43.) There is a strange constellation — columbarium — of doves, candles, snow, ice, eyes and ears (*taub* is ‘deaf’, as in the poem “Stilleben”; this is almost a pseudo-homonymy), cinders and cinereous colour, a configuration that seems to relate several poems together. Indeed: *Kristall um Kristall, / zeittief gegittert*. Cf. e.g. “Vor einer Kerze” (“da, wo es turmhoch ins Meer tritt, / da, wo die graue, die Taube / aufpicks die Namen / diesseits und jenseits des Sterbens”, *Von Schwelle zu Schwelle*, in *DGKG*, p. 73); and even “Stilleben” (*DGKG*, p. 75; here are lines speaking of a “mouth disappeared in the Deaf”: “Und dies noch, verschollen im Tauben: / der Mund”). — On the colour of pigeons and doves, see DWB: “TAUBENHALS, m.: / so dasz ihr (*der rose*) roht und weisz, als wie das blau und grün / an einem taubenhals, sich oft zu ändern schien. / BROCKES 1, 82” (Bd. 21, Sp. 172).

⁸¹⁵ “laugher / [...] 1. One who laughs; one addicted to laughing; also, a scoffer. [...] / 2. A variety of the domestic pigeon, so called from its peculiar note.” (*OED*, 50130440. 4 Dec., 2006.) — It does not have to be anything more than a mere coincidence that even some strange affinities might be suggested with Hölderlin’s uncanny verse from 1808, “In lieblicher Bläue”: “Ein heiteres / Leben seh’ ich in den Gestalten mich umblühen der Schöpfung, / weil ich es nicht unbillig vergleiche den einsamen Tauben auf / dem Kirchhof. Das Lachen aber scheint mich zu grämen der / Menschen, nemlich ich hab’ ein Herz.” (*Sämtliche Werke, Briefe und Dokumente*, ed. D.E. Sattler [Bremer Ausgabe] [München: Luchterhand, 2004], vol. 12, p. 23.)

⁸¹⁶ DWB: “J PAUL: da ihres auges tapetenthür und sprachgitter schwarz verhangen war. *Hesp.* 3, 34; [...] der alte mann (*den Albano im garten eingeschlummert fand*) sprach hinter dem sprachgitter des schlafs mit toden, die mit ihm über die morgenaugen der jugend gezogen waren. *Titan* 2, 190” (Bd. 16, Sp. 2758; *loc. cit.*)

the most simple organisms, such as the ciliates of which Gottfried Benn also speaks (but in a different manner).

When you are done with collecting information and dealing with the poem as if *Sprachgitter* were some sort of a crossword puzzle, you may let this expanding horizon recede and take a look outside, so to speak. Even when the association of the two heart-grey puddles or laughs with two pigeons cooing may be far-fetched and cannot really be confirmed as valid information *about* the poem, it is clear that the poem invites us to see a certain playfulness in juxtaposing or overlapping the images of the eyelid and the ciliate, the organ and the organism, poetic creation and creatureliness; it invites us also to discover laughter behind the bars, or rather beyond the bars of the language mesh, 'outside'. A mad laughter, if you will, but perhaps still not exclusively negative. A glimpse of freedom? A song to be sung beyond humanity?

If we are ready to abandon the binary logic of either-positive-or-negative, not necessarily either-black-or-white but the *clichés* concerning the colour grey, we might discover something: "*es gibt das Gedicht als einmalige, atemgetragene, herz- und himmelgraue Sprache in der Zeit.*"⁸¹⁷

"ABSTRACT" AND "SPIRITUAL"

Concerning *Sprachgitter*, the word that gives the title to the poem as well as to the book of poems, Celan had a very remarkable conversation with Martin Heidegger, mediated by their mutual friend, Otto Pöggeler (here paraphrased by James K. Lyon):

Soon after the volume *Speech-Grille* appeared in March 1959, Heidegger asked Pöggeler what Celan meant by the title. Pöggeler relayed the question directly to Celan and, drawing on his discussion with the thinker, wanted to know specifically if the second word in the title, which also can be translated as "lattice," referred to the bars in a prison, which are known as "Gitter"; the grille, or lattice, on the door of a cloister, which both enables and limits communication; or the latticelike structures of crystals found in snow and in minerals, which in German are also called "Gitter." [...] In other contexts [Celan] suggested that he drew the word from the grille or lattice on a cloister door [*sic*: rather: 'parlatory window' in a cloister], but for Heidegger he stated emphatically that it referred to none of the above specifically but to lattices generally.⁸¹⁸

This general 'abstraction' with regard to any specific determination opens the possibility for a multitude of aspects; the lattice in the parlatory window of a monastery is an 'instantiation' of this generality, but the word used in the poem, referring *also* to this object among others, is

⁸¹⁷ *TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 55; cf. Dsl./Ts. (Ms.) 17; Ms. 282-285, 305. Cf. *GW* 3:167; Birus, "Sprachgitter", p. 216.

⁸¹⁸ James K. Lyon, *Paul Celan and Martin Heidegger: An Unresolved Conversation, 1951-1970* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins U.P., 2006), p. 96; Lyon's source is Pöggeler, "Erinnerungen an große Lehrer", in Christoph Jamme, ed., *Kunst und Geschichte im Zeitalter Hegels* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1996), pp. 258-274, here p. 266.

not a metaphorical signpost pointing toward an abstract concept through this specific ‘concrete’ instantiation, but rather *this abstract concept itself*. If this overlapping is allowed, we might translate a word from Celan’s own poetry and call such an abstraction a *breath-crystal*, refracting the ‘rays’ from several directions and dimensions, with its multiple facets that are not visible all at once, except as this very invisibility pertaining to the word *as* word. So this is the correlation between the terms “abstract” (irreducible to the determined content that is necessary for metaphor) and “spiritual” (breath and invisibility) with crystal-like multifacetedness; and we can also have a glimpse into the mediation involved in the “distanced comprehension”.

No doubt, Heidegger was the interlocutor who would be able to understand this kind of generality or abstraction, not as a sterilized neutrality (say, a worn-out metaphor, in which both the concrete sensibility and its metaphorization have been erased in the meta-physical grind of concept formation) but as an originary equivocality (*Mehrdeutigkeit*) or disseminality of *Worte, wie Blumen*.⁸¹⁹

And no doubt, Celan found support for his own draft for an anti-metaphoric phenomenology of poetry in Heidegger’s vehement objections to the concept of metaphor in *Der Satz vom Grund* and in *Unterwegs zur Sprache*,⁸²⁰ as well as the many other views on language and poetry in the works of the thinker that he read in the fifties and sixties, views that obviously made a profound impression on the poet. There is a passage in the essay on Rilke, “... dichterisch wohnet der Mensch ...” (1951), concerning image, *Bild*, marked by Celan in his personal copy of *Holzwege* in 1959 (“30.8.59”) by underlinings and vertical strokes and the word *Bild* written twice in the margin, where Heidegger seems, for once, to come quite close to the traditional characterizations of metaphor, as a portrayal of the unfamiliar in terms of the familiar:

Das Wesen des Bildes ist: etwas sehen zu lassen. [...] Weil das Dichten jenes geheimnisvolle Maß nimmt, nämlich am Angesicht des Himmels, deshalb spricht es in »Bildern«. Darum sind die dichterischen Bilder Ein-Bildungen in einem ausgezeichneten Sinne: nicht bloße Phantasien und Illusionen, sondern Ein-Bildungen

⁸¹⁹ Cf., besides “Das Wesen der Sprache”, in *Unterwegs zur Sprache*, also “Zur Seinsfrage”, in *Wegmarken* (both have been already cited above). The image of “erasing the exergue” is of course borrowed from Derrida’s “White Mythology”, but it must be noted that Derrida actually borrows the image and the title from Anatole France, as an exergue and in order to erase it — i.e. only with great reservations.

⁸²⁰ *La bibliothèque philosophique* indicates that Celan has made no annotations whatsoever to his personal copy of *Unterwegs zur Sprache* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1959), which was sent to him by Heidegger in November 1959, fresh from print, dedicated “with heartfelt greetings and gratitude” (“mit herzlichem Gruß und Dank”), and that only the last seventeen pages (pp. 194-211) of *Der Satz vom Grund* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1957) contain fourteen instances of “reading traces”. However, as we already observed, James K. Lyon contradicts this information by claiming that Celan read *Der Satz vom Grund* as a whole: “although there are markings on only thirty-one of 211 pages, they begin early and extend to the end, revealing that Celan read the entire work with customary thoroughness” (p. 68; cf. above). Lyon also claims that Celan must have been reading *Unterwegs zur Sprache* “during late 1959 or the first part of 1960” (p. 121; cf. pp. 122ff, *passim*); it is in any case surprising that there are neither dates nor any other annotations in the margins of that book, because usually Celan very scrupulously marked at least the dates of his reading a text.

als erblickbare Einschlüsse des Fremden in den Anblick des Vertrauten.⁸²¹

The first phrase of this quoted passage was underlined by Celan, as well as the adjective *heimnisvoll* in the second. But is this not precisely what a metaphor does? Is it not so that *metaphor* brings the strange, the unfamiliar, the enigmatic, or whatever defies immediate comprehension, closer to us by portraying it in the image of that which is already familiar to us? Does Heidegger not concede here, in spite of his vehement objections to the concept of metaphor elsewhere, that poetry is metaphorical after all? Let us not rush into any conclusions yet.

These emphasized sentences in Celan's personal copy of the book were actually preceded by a passage that bears a double vertical line in the margin:

Der Dichter ruft in den vertrauten Erscheinungen das Fremde als jenes, worein das Unsichtbare sich schicket, um das zu bleiben, was es ist: unbekannt.⁸²²

The unfamiliar, the invisible (we recall Celan's designation of poetry as a conversation with the invisible), the unknown is called to appear in the phenomenal image, not in order to become more familiar, visible or comprehensible, but in order to appear *as what it is*, as unknown in its very phenomenality, invisible in its very visibility, in order to *be* and to *remain* what it is: unknown.

This passage is preceded, in Heidegger's text, by a quote from Hölderlin's poem draft:

Was ist Gott? unbekannt, dennoch
Voll Eigenschaften ist das Angesicht
Des Himmels von ihm. Die Blize nemlich
Der Zorn sind eines Gottes. Jemehr ist eins
Unsichtbar, schicket es sich in Fremdes. [...]

It is the last sentence of this excerpt, in Celan's personal copy of the book, which bears the trace of his pencil in the margin, a vertical double stroke: "*Jemehr ist eins / Unsichtbar, schicket es sich in Fremdes.*"⁸²³

Another fragment from May 1807, probably written as a sequel to the previous one, begins: "*Was ist der Menschen Leben? ein Bild der Gottheit.*"⁸²⁴ What is a god? Unknown.

⁸²¹ Cit. *La bi. phi.*, p. 390, nos. 782, 783-784; the source is Heidegger, *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1954), pp. 200-201. Cf. Lyon, *Paul Celan and Martin Heidegger*, p. 102.

⁸²² Cit. *La bi. phi.*, p. 390, No. 781; *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, p. 200.

⁸²³ Cit. *La bi. phi.*, p. 390, No. 780; *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, p. 200; there is a facsimile of the pages 200-201 in Hadrien France-Lanord, *Paul Celan et Martin Heidegger : le sens d'un dialogue* (Paris: Fayard, 2004), p. 304. Hölderlin's poem, from 1807, is here cited as in Heidegger's text; cf. also Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke* (Bremer Ausgabe), 12 vols., ed. D.E. Sattler (München: Luchterhand, 2004), vol. 12 [*In lieblicher Bläue, Hyperion III, Turmgedichte*], p. 19; the fragment continues: "Aber der Donner / Der Ruhm ist Gottes. Die Liebe zur Unsterblichkeit / Das Eigentum auch, wie das Unsere, / Ist eines Gottes."

⁸²⁴ *Sämtliche Werke* (ed. Sattler, 2004), vol. 12, p. 20.

What is man? An image of divinity... An image of the unknown. In the *Meridian*, Celan writes:

Vielleicht, so muß ich mir jetzt sagen, – vielleicht ist sogar ein Zusammentreffen dieses »ganz Anderen« – ich gebrauche hier ein bekanntes Hilfswort – mit einem nicht allzu fernen, einem ganz nahen »anderen« denkbar – immer und wieder denkbar. [*TCA/Meridian*, Endf. 31d.]

And in another passage already cited: “*Jedes Ding, jeder Mensch ist dem Gedicht, das auf das Andere zuhält, eine Gestalt dieses Anderen.*” (35b.) *Gestalt* — form, figure, image of the other, yet irreducibly, wholly other. “*Tout autre est tout autre.*”

METAPHORA AD ABSURDUM

Before concluding, before the end (the last words, quoted from Celan, will concern the end or “border [*Grenze*]” to which metaphor, *also* metaphor, *even* metaphor is taken), let us view this trope, or metaphor and antimetaphor, from a slightly different angle. This other perspective is offered in a very remarkable article by Beda Allemann, from which we have already cited one of the epigraphs for one of the prolegomena above.

Actually I do not quite know what to call Allemann’s remarkable article; by what title, that is. Actually it is a question of *two* articles, or an article and its translation, namely a translation which appeared as a first version of the text whose German version appeared only a couple of years later. What puzzles me in this otherwise not so extraordinary incident, what I found most puzzling upon first sight of these two texts taken together, is the evident disparity between its two titles, namely the English title and its apparently slightly later German counterpart. The title of the English version, translated by Günther Rebing, is “Metaphor and Antimetaphor” (1967).⁸²⁵ This English version was indeed the first I could lay my hands on, before I even knew whether any German original was available. The second version, which was in Beda Allemann’s native language, and was published only a year later, in 1968, bears the title “Die Metapher und das metaphorische Wesen der Sprache”.⁸²⁶ A strange substitution: “antimetaphor” is replaced by “the metaphorical essence of language”! How did this happen?

The English version was presented in the interdisciplinary Third Consultation on Hermeneutics at Drew University in Madison, New Jersey, in April 1966, and the overall title of the event was “Metaphor, Symbol, Image, and Meaning”. The German version, with the less provocative title(?!), was published in the collective volume by *Arbeitsgemeinschaft Weltgespräch* and consists of essays by Allemann and two other renowned scholars, Karl Otto Apel and Thomas Bonhoeffer. The most notable difference between the versions — of which the earlier has only been published in the English translation, to my knowledge — is between the titles, and the fact that the revised version in German lacks the endnotes that still featured in the English translation; otherwise they are almost as identical as an original and its translation can ever be, with few rather insignificant exceptions to this quasi-identity, mostly just stylistic refinements.

I will try to paraphrase the very well-composed and interesting argument of Allemann’s article, or articles, adding a few direct quotes and my own comments. Allemann first risks apparent redundancy by discussing at some length the traditional definitions of meta-

⁸²⁵ Beda Allemann, “Metaphor and Antimetaphor”, in Stanley Romaine Hopper and David L. Miller, eds., *Interpretation: The Poetry of Meaning* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World), 1967, pp. 103-123.

⁸²⁶ Beda Allemann, “Metapher und das metaphorische Wesen der Sprache”, in Karl Otto Apel et al., *Weltgespräch 4: Welterfahrung in der Sprache* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1968), pp. 29-43.

phor, those by Aristotle and Quintilian which have never been superseded and are still usable, and then concludes this introduction as follows: “The presence of an analogy that can be traced by logical thinking is essential for understanding a given metaphor as well as the phenomenon of metaphor as such.” (“Metaphor and Antimetaphor”, p. 104.) The notion of metaphor “as being based on a logical comparison”, or as an abbreviated simile, reducible to the rational relations of analogy, this whole mathematico-logical model of metaphor is one of the main contraindications that have lead so many modern poets to distrust or reject metaphor; this is actually how Allemann also understands Paul Celan’s “characteriz[ation of] modern poetry with these words”:

“In the poem all tropes and metaphors tend to be reduced *ad absurdum*” (“*Und das Gedicht wäre somit der Ort, wo alle Tropen und Metaphern ad absurdum geführt werden wollen.*”) This is more than just another of the battle cries against metaphor we have heard from the poets for the last fifty years. Celan does not proclaim the death of metaphor; he rather postulates that metaphor should no longer be regarded as being based on a logical comparison. [“Metaphor and Antimetaphor”, pp. 115-116.]

When Aristotle reduces the metaphors of his opponents *ad absurdum*, he shows their logical deficiency, the lack or insufficiency of the similarity or of the analogy they pretend to rely upon. The will of the tropes and metaphors in “the poem today” — as a well-known gesture of differentiation with regard to Gottfried Benn, Celan explicitly denies that he is speaking of the “modern lyricism” — is also the reduction of similarity and analogy, but with an altogether different aim: not to show the lack of validity, or the lack of general acceptability of an argument that turns out to be a pseudo-argument by virtue of its metaphorical nature, but the irreducibility of the uniqueness, singularity, the “once”, “only once” (I’m afraid *Einmaligkeit* does not have a good equivalent in English) to which the poem lays its claim — even as an *always-again-only-for-once* — we shall eventually return to this claim (*Anspruch*), after our discussion of Beda Allemann’s important article.

The battle cries mentioned by Allemann are for instance those of the Expressionist dramatists Carl Sternheim and Ferdinand Bruckner (alias Theodor Tagger; in 1917 he published a *Programmschrift gegen die Metapher* which is actually mentioned in Kafka’s diaries),⁸²⁷ Marinetti’s manifest of Futurism (1912), and the chapter “Nature, Humanisme, Tragédie” in Alain Robbe-Grillet’s *Pour un Nouveau Roman* (1963); Allemann also mentions Benn’s disqualification of the “like” of simile which happens in favour of more potent “transformations” pertaining to the “word” as a *Phallos des Geistes* (cf. “Probl. d. Lyrik”, p. 1074). On the other hand, Allemann also discusses the tradition which sees metaphor in connection with the very origin of language, Vico and Herder as the most well-known proponents of this

⁸²⁷ See the remarks of Sept. 25th, 1917, on Tagger’s *Das neue Geschlecht*, in which the *Programmschrift* was contained; Kafka characterizes the book as “elend, großmäulig, beweglich, erfahren, stellenweise gut geschrieben, mit leisen Schauern von Dilettantismus. [Etc.]” (*Gesammelte Werke. Taschenbuchausgabe in acht Bänden. Tagebücher 1910-1923*, ed. Max Brod [Frankfurt a.M: Fischer, 1998], p. 389.)

view are mentioned, as is the “crisis” generated by Nietzsche, who “discovers the metaphorical *translatio* taking place even before language itself comes into being”, and for whom poetry is “deliberate deception” and thus, paradoxically, more true to the deceptive nature of language itself. Allemann dismisses this “radical skepticism” of the young Nietzsche as “outdated” as well as by recourse to the “phenomenological school” which has “convinced us that such skepticism is in its way no less naïve than that naïve realism against which Nietzsche fought”, while on the other hand, Nietzsche’s influence on the modern poets is of course undeniable. But the modern anti-metaphorists of the different schools, which seem to have otherwise little in common (Expressionism and *nouveau roman*, for instance), seem to challenge Nietzsche and all the theorists of the originary metaphor by supposing that “within the medium of language there is a possibility of a more immediate access to reality than by way of metaphor”, while “metaphor is a downright lie”. But Nietzsche himself affirmed metaphor as an illusion and a “lie in an extra-moral sense”, as Allemann reminds. And the attempt to free poetry from metaphor by way of “all manifestos and proclamations against metaphor” seems to be doomed to fail, if we are forced to admit (and this is what Allemann himself seems to affirm, after all) that “language is originally metaphorical, that even scientific terms can only be the product of a metaphorical act [we have seen that some theorists would rather call this ‘metaphoric’ than ‘metaphorical’, as if this would be enough to ward off confusion!], of a *translatio*”, and that “then it must be impossible to avoid metaphor in poetry” (cf. “Metaphor and Antimetaphor”, pp. 105-110). This leads Allemann to ask:

[How can] modern poets [...] come to grips with the metaphorical nature of language in spite of their openly declared dislike of metaphor and in spite of their being aware of the fact that metaphors and images in the manner of Nietzsche’s *Zarathustra* are impossible today? [“Metaphor and Antimetaphor”, p. 110.]

How could a poet decline the gift of metaphor? Allemann could not make a better choice in addressing this complex question: Franz Kafka. And the obvious place to begin is the relatively famous sentence in Kafka’s diary: “Metaphor is one thing among many that make me despair of writing.”⁸²⁸ The second citation could be his so-called parable on parables, the counter-parable “Von den Gleichnissen”, but Allemann chooses otherwise.

⁸²⁸ “6. Dezember [1921]. Aus einem Brief: »Ich wärme mich daran in diesem traurigen Winter.« Die Metaphern sind eines in dem vielen, was mich am Schreiben verzweifeln läßt. Die Unselbständigkeit des Schreibens, die Abhängigkeit von dem Dienstmädchen, das einheizt, von der Katze, die sich am Ofen wärmt, selbst vom armen alten Menschen, der sich wärmt. Alles dies sind selbständige, eigengesetzliche Verrichtungen, nur das Schreiben ist hilflos, wohnt nicht in sich selbst, ist Spaß und Verzweiflung.” (Ed. Brod, p. 403.) This has been cited also, for instance, in Derrida’s *De la grammatologie* (Paris: Minuit, cop. 1967), p. 383.

We shall not dig deeper here into the instances of Kafka's struggle with metaphor and Allemann's acute analysis concerning it ("this insight that metaphors cannot be avoided causes despair"; "[a] critical attitude towards his own manner of expression and the habit of first using a simile and then partially retracting it are both highly characteristic traits of Kafka's style", etc.), nor cite Alleman's well-chosen examples, but let us move on to a general conclusion, which is illustrated by the example of a short prose piece entitled "Prometheus" (1918), concerning a *reduction* to a state where there is eventually "no comparison whatever possible" (cf. pp. 110-113):

The basic structure in all of Kafka's stories seems to be precisely this: the circumstances and possible explanations of what happens are reduced step by step to a core that can no longer be explained. In view of what I have said before, a way of writing like this might very well be called *antimetaphorical*. ["Metaphor and Antimetaphor", p. 113.]

But very soon after this characterization of the antimetaphorical reduction and a couple of remarks on the common practice of calling Kafka's short tales "parables", while these are nevertheless no "exemplary stories" (*keine Exempla*) to be deciphered, or moralizing fables, Allemann introduces the next moment of his argument, a paradoxical move which leads us from the "antimetaphor" suddenly toward the term "absolute metaphor":

Kafka's prose texts avoid metaphor and thus become a kind of metaphor themselves; this new metaphor, however, is without a definite level of meaning outside of it, a level on which its "real", nonfigurative, *eigentliche* meaning may be found. [*Es zeigt sich, daß diese Prosastücke, indem sie sich der Metapher entledigen, ihrerseits zu einer Art Metapher werden, die aber keinen festen Bezugspunkt mehr hat, auf den sie als auf ihre eigentliche Bedeutung zurückbezogen werden könnte.*] ["Metaphor and Antimetaphor", pp. 113-114; "Metapher und das metaphorische Wesen der Sprache", p. 37.]

The translator's (?) choice of using the verb "avoid" here is not the best equivalent for the verb *sich entledigen* which features at least in the later, German version, while Kafka's procedure of reduction is a 'liberation' from metaphor rather than avoidance of what Allemann himself considers unavoidable.

Allemann concedes that the paradox may seem "confusing at first glance". Namely the paradox that the text, in which the reduction of metaphor takes place and "everything that is said is severed step by step from any conventional associations", the text

becomes itself a metaphor, and indeed a “metaphor of itself”. But another surprise is to follow. Surprisingly enough, Allemann seems to be right in saying that “if you look more closely you will see [the] inner logic” of this paradox. But meanwhile, until this insight can be gained by reading the article carefully enough and all the way through, perhaps in spite of our first fit of indignation at its half-way turning point, we shall have to cope with its “somewhat precarious terminology” (p. 114). The term of *absolute metaphor*, first and foremost, introduced here as a designation of Kafka’s parables:

A text like Kafka’s prose parables, however, which has torn down the bridges of metaphor, necessarily becomes a metaphor whose only frame of reference is itself. By avoiding metaphors [*Der Verzicht auf die Metaphern*, says the German version; the *renunciation* of metaphors, which is again not quite the same thing as avoiding] that may be isolated as single stylistic figures here and there in the text [this *isolation* of metaphors in a text is indeed a problematic trait of the traditional notion of metaphor upon which the present treatise has been insisting], the parable as a whole is a kind of absolute metaphor.

I hasten to admit that I am using here a somewhat precarious terminology. In the first place, I call the whole of a text metaphor [just a moment ago it was the traditional trait of isolation of single metaphors here and there in the text that might have forbidden this extension], which means that the term “metaphor” loses its technical, rhetorical meaning with reference to a clearly defined single element of style. But we have no other choice when a text obviously does away with the single metaphors contained in it, as Kafka’s texts do. [This ‘having no other choice’ is not immediately clear at all. The German text chooses a different way of speaking: *Wenn ein Text selbst aber – wie es bei Kafka der Fall ist – die in ihm vorhandenen Einzelmetaphern auflöst und abbaut, so bleibt uns am Schluß nichts anderes übrig*. I must say I am still not convinced of the necessity of using the term ‘metaphor’. Why not the ‘antimetaphor’ that features in the title of the English version? (Let us remark that the verb *abbauen* used here is almost a translation for ‘to deconstruct’.) But let us not yet pass judgment on Allemann’s terminology.] Secondly, and this is more important [*und das wiegt schwerer*], it is a downright *contradictio in adjecto* to talk of an “absolute metaphor.” A metaphor always has its origin in a simile, and therefore it can never be absolute. Nevertheless modern literature abounds with absolute metaphors, and there are even plenty of single stylistic elements which very well might be called absolute metaphors. This is particularly true for poetry. [“Metaphor and Antimetaphor”, p. 114; “Metapher und ...”, p. 37.]

Obviously enough, Allemann recognizes that he is having some trouble convincing his audience or readers, who expected him to deal with “metaphor and antimetaphor” rather than “absolute metaphor”. This latter term is not his invention; to my knowledge, the terminological monster *die absolute Metapher* was introduced by Hugo Friedrich in 1956 and famously adopted (and adapted) by Hans Blumenberg, and after him by many German theorists,⁸²⁹ for

⁸²⁹ Hugo Friedrich, *Die Struktur der modernen Lyrik. Von der Mitte des neunzehnten bis zur Mitte des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts*, erweiterte Neuausgabe (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1974), p. 209; cit. Astrid Poppenhusen, chapter “III. »Absolute Metaphorik«?”, in *Durchkreuzung der Tropen* (2001), pp. 165-193. Poppenhusen’s chapter and the pages following it (pp. 195ff) contain an acute critique of Blumenberg’s, Allemann’s and Gerhard Neumann’s use of the notion. For Friedrich, an “absolute metaphor” is one in which the “basic meaning [*Basisbedeutung*]” is not given; his example is Apollinaire’s “Soleil cou coupé”, a case where the unnamed “basic meaning” is the sunset (cf. p. 209). Another example for him is Rimbaud’s “Le bateau

instance Gerhard Neumann, who in 1970 published an article with the title of “Die ‘absolute’ Metapher: Ein Abgrenzungsversuch am Beispiel Stéphane Mallarmés und Paul Celans” (*Poetika* 3 [1970], pp. 188-225). Celan was reportedly very annoyed at this well-meaning “attempt at delimitation” which considered his poetry side by side with Mallarmé’s and in terms of an “absolute metaphor”, and we can imagine some of the reasons for his indignation: in the *Meridian* he had distanced himself from both Mallarmé and metaphor and had also denied the possibility of an “absolute poem”.⁸³⁰

Blumenberg’s notion of absolute metaphor is actually an adaptation of Kant’s sym-bolical hypotyposis, and he actually more or less defines the term by citing Kant:

Unsere ›absolute Metapher‹ findet sich hier [in Kant, *KdU*, § 59] als *Übertragung der Reflexion über einen Gegenstand der Anschauung auf einen ganz andern Begriff, dem vielleicht nie eine Anschauung direkt korrespondieren kann*.⁸³¹

ivre”, in which it is spoken “only of the ship, never of the symbolized I [*die dichterische Technik* [...], *die den Text durchweg als absolute Metapher anlegt, nur vom Schiff, nie vom symbolisierten Ich redet*]” (pp. 73-74). Cf. also a few lines later (p. 74): “[...] die Metapher hier nicht mehr bloß eine Vergleichsfigur ist, sondern eine Identität schafft. Die absolute Metapher wird ein beherrschendes Stilmittel der späteren Lyrik bleiben. Bei Rimbaud selbst entspricht sie einem Grundzug seines Dichtens, der nachher unter dem Stichwort ›sinnliche Irrealität‹ zu berühren sein wird.” Celan would hardly be satisfied with the application of the notion of absolute metaphor characterized as “sensible unreality” into his poetry. — The “carrying *ad absurdum*” (of tropes and metaphors) is not very strictly defined by Celan, and therefore this terminology can be used in many ways. As an example of Poppenhusen’s use we may cite her remarkable discussion of the first four lines of “Psalm” (*GW* 1:225: “Niemand knetet uns wieder aus Erde und Lehm, / niemand bespricht unsern Staub. / Niemand. // Gelobt seist du, Niemand.”), in which the word *niemand* / *Niemand* can be seen as a syllepsis of sorts (a single word used in the same context in both a ‘proper’ and a ‘figurative sense’; cf. e.g. Fontanier, pp. 105-108; Poppenhusen, pp. 195ff) and, as Poppenhusen sees it, line four “seems to carry *ad absurdum*, in a retrograde fashion, the interpretation [of the word *niemand*] in the first three lines [*Vers vier scheint rückwirkend die Interpretation der ersten drei Verse ad absurdum zu führen*]”. But as Poppenhusen herself points out, there are actually no tropes to be found in these lines: “Tropen sind hier in keinem Fall zu finden.” (*Durchkreuzung der Tropen*, p. 207.) As she also points out, the word *niemand* or *Niemand* allows for many different, contrasting and even contradictory interpretations in the poem (blasphemy, for instance, but also, and perhaps at the same time, mysticism, the prohibition of names and the Cabbalistic tradition), but that does not mean that it is a question of tropes, namely shifts with respect to some original signification of a word, such as the word *niemand*, no one (cf. *ibid.*). However, someone might argue that the certain ‘allegorization’ in the second strophe, the nominalization and prosopopoeia or apostrophe, establishes a tropological shift of sorts with respect to the pronoun *niemand* in its ordinary usage. In any case, for Poppenhusen, it is the shift from the first strophe to the second in which the “carrying *ad absurdum*” takes place, although, according to her, there are no tropes in either one of the strophes.

⁸³⁰ Cf. *TCA/Meridian*, Endf. 38c-d (i.e. the section that directly precedes the one that begins with the question: “Und was wären dann die Bilder?”): “Das absolute Gedicht – nein, das gibt es gewiß nicht, das kann es nicht geben! / Aber es gibt wohl, mit jedem wirklichen Gedicht, es gibt, mit dem anspruchlosesten Gedicht, diese unabweisbare Frage, diesen unerhörten Anspruch.” Interestingly enough, Peter Szondi writes in his famous essay of 1962, “Zur Erkenntnisproblematik in der Literaturwissenschaft” (whose later version is known as “Über philologische Erkenntnis”) sentences that echo these two sections of the *Meridian* (Endf. 38-39) in a reversed order and with a slightly different emphasis: “Kein Kunstwerk behauptet, daß es unvergleichbar ist (das behauptet allenfalls der Künstler oder der Kritiker), wohl aber verlangt es, daß es nicht verglichen werde. Dieses Verlangen gehört als Absolutheitsanspruch zum Charakter jedes Kunstwerks, das ein Ganzes, ein Mikrokosmos sein will, [...]” (*Die Neue Rundschau*, vol. 73, p. 156). Celan’s word is *Gegenkosmos*, of course (*TCA/Meridian*, Ms. 286).

⁸³¹ Blumenberg, “Einleitung”, in *Paradigmen zu einer Metaphorologie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1998 [1st ed. 1960]), p. 12; the text emphasized by Blumenberg is a citation from Kant. Cf. p. 11: “Der mit Kant vertraute Leser wird sich in diesem Zusammenhang an § 59 der »Kritik der Urteilskraft« erinnern finden, wo zwar der Ausdruck ›Metapher‹ nicht vorkommt, wohl aber das Verfahren der *Übertragung der Reflexion*

Here the italicized sentence is a direct quote from Kant. Blumenberg also defines “absolute metaphors” (“*solche Übertragungen [...] die man »absolute Metaphern« nennen müßte*”) as a “base stock of philosophical language [Grundbestände philosophischen Sprache]”, a sort of untranslatable stock of *verba translata* (›Übertragungen‹), one that cannot be translated back into the realm of “proper” terminology or “logicality” (“*die sich nicht ins Eigentliche, in die Logizität zurückholen lassen*”) (*Paradigmen zu einer Metaphorologie*, p. 10). The *absolute* metaphors are *irreducible* metaphors, but are they still metaphors?

The notion of symbolical hypotyposis has often been assimilated with metaphor, but as Blumenberg observes, Kant himself does not actually use the term ‘metaphor’ when he defines hypotyposis in *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (§ 59). There are two types of hypotyposis, according to Kant, schematic and symbolical; besides these two types, Kant also speaks of examples (*Beispiele*) by which empirical concepts can be portrayed. Concepts of understanding (*Verstandesbegriffe*) are portrayed by schemata, by schematical hypotyposes. The symbolical type or hypotyposis consists of portraying purely rational concepts (*Vernunftbegriffe*), namely ideas for which there are no adequate equivalents or instantiations among sensible things, through sensible *analogues* — or perhaps we should rather say *quasi-sensible* analogues, since we are of course dealing here with representations, imagined sensible objects, and not with objects of sense perception. In any case, it is not sensible or quasi-sensible intuition (*Anschauung*) but the rule of the procedure (*der Regel dieses Verfahrens*), not the con-

unter dem Titel des »Symbols« beschrieben wird. Kant geht hier von seiner grundlegenden Einsicht aus, daß die Realität der Begriffe nur durch Anschauungen ausgewiesen werden kann.” Cf. Kant, *KdU*, § 59, B255ff: “Alle Hypotypose (Darstellung, *subiectio sub adspectum*) als Versinnlichung ist zwiefach: entweder schematisch, da einem Begriffe, den der Verstand faßt, die korrespondierende Anschauung a priori gegeben wird; oder symbolisch, da einem Begriffe, den nur die Vernunft denken, und dem keine sinnliche Anschauung angemessen sein kann, eine solche untergelegt wird, mit welcher das Verfahren der Urteilskraft demjenigen, was sie im Schematisieren beobachtet, bloß analogisch ist, d. i. mit ihm bloß der Regel dieses Verfahrens, nicht der Anschauung selbst, mithin bloß der Form der Reflexion, nicht dem Inhalte nach übereinkommt. [...] Alle Anschauungen, die man Begriffen a priori unterlegt, sind also entweder Schemate oder Symbole, wovon die erstern direkte, die zweiten indirekte Darstellungen des Begriffs enthalten. Die ersteren tun dieses demonstrativ, die zweiten vermittelt einer Analogie (zu welcher man sich auch empirischer Anschauungen bedient), in welcher die Urteilskraft ein doppeltes Geschäft verrichtet, erstlich den Begriff auf den Gegenstand einer sinnlichen Anschauung, und dann zweitens die bloße Regel der Reflexion über jene Anschauung auf einen ganz anderen Gegenstand, von dem der erstere nur das Symbol ist, anzuwenden. So wird ein monarchischer Staat durch einen beseelten Körper, wenn er nach inneren Volksgesetzen, durch eine bloße Maschine aber (wie etwa eine Handmühle), wenn er durch einen einzelnen absoluten Willen beherrscht wird, in beiden Fällen aber nur symbolisch vorgestellt. Denn, zwischen einem despotischen Staate und einer Handmühle ist zwar keine Ähnlichkeit, wohl aber zwischen den Regeln, über beide und ihre Kausalität zu reflektieren. [...] Unsere Sprache ist voll von dergleichen indirekten Darstellungen, nach einer Analogie, wodurch der Ausdruck nicht das eigentliche Schema für den Begriff, sondern bloß ein Symbol für die Reflexion enthält. So sind die Wörter Grund (Stütze, Basis), abhängen (von oben gehalten werden), woraus fließen (statt folgen), Substanz (wie Locke sich ausdrückt: der Träger der Akzidenzen), und unzählige andere nicht schematische, sondern symbolische Hypotyposen, und Ausdrücke für Begriffe nicht vermittelt einer direkten Anschauung, sondern nur nach einer Analogie mit derselben, d. i. der Übertragung der Reflexion über einen Gegenstand der Anschauung auf einen ganz anderen Begriff, dem vielleicht nie eine Anschauung direkt korrespondieren kann.” (*KdU*, § 59, B255-257.)

tent but the form of reflexion that is transferred from one ‘object’ onto another in this basic form of analogy. In the case of symbolical hypotyposis, it is a question of neither a direct intuition nor “stereoscopic vision”. Therefore I would doubt whether it would be altogether justified to associate symbolical hypotyposis with the traditionally rhetorical concept of metaphor. Why keep using the term ‘metaphor’ where it no longer seems to apply? Even when Kant discusses “beauty as a symbol of morality”, he does not discuss beauty as a *metaphor* of morality. The so-called sensible representation (*Darstellung*) of suprasensible concepts is not always, strictly speaking, metaphorical, and this becomes especially clear when we quote Kant’s examples, such as “ground”, “depend” and “substance”, which have nothing to do with the so-called live metaphor and the tension or stereoscopy involved therein. Kant’s example of “hand-mill” as a symbolical image of a despotic state seems of course closer to a “live metaphor”. But Kant actually revises one of the most determinant traditional features of metaphor, actually *the* most determinant feature, when he maintains that there is *no resemblance* between a hand-mill and a despotic state, but their similarity resides in the rules of reflexion that we apply to these things with respect to the relations of causality that characterize each of them: “*Denn, zwischen einem despotischen Staate und einer Handmühle ist zwar keine Ähnlichkeit, wohl aber zwischen den Regeln, über beide und ihre Kausalität zu reflektieren.*”⁸³² The resemblance resides not in the content but in the form.

We remember how Celan said that he sees *no difference of principle* between a poem and a handshake; we remember how he affirmed that writing can indeed be seen as a *form* of prayer, albeit this form cannot be practiced with folded hands; and that to call the mills of death a metaphor would mean an attempt to make them harmless, an euphemism of sorts. The connexion between those death-mills that “grind the white meal of the Promise” for the consecrated wafer and those that fabricated corpses in “Auschwitz, Treblinka, etc.”⁸³³ is something other than a metaphorical connexion: it is a connection of incommensurability, incomparability, and perhaps also contiguity. Contiguity, inasmuch as it is the metonymical connexion between “the Promise” (Luther’s *Verheißung* baked into the wafer) and the white meal (another ingredient of the wafer) that motivates the quasi-metaphorical “*Mühlen des Todes*”, and, inasmuch as this connexion is linked with the other death-mills through the impossibility of understanding the Holocaust in terms of sacrifice — words like ‘grotesque’ are not enough with regard to the ‘absurdity’ of comparing the human flesh, skin and bones and hair and blood, of millions turned into ashes, with the wafer, the white meal of the Promise, “set before our brothers and sisters [*ihr setzt es vor unsern Brüdern und Schwestern*]” —

⁸³² Kant, *KdU*, loc.cit. Blumenberg designates “absolute metaphor” also as follows: “Absolute Metaphern beantworten jene vermeintlich naiven, prinzipiell unbeantwortbaren Fragen, deren Relevanz einfach darin liegt, dass sie nicht eliminierbar sind, weil wir sie nicht stellen, sondern als im Daseinsgrund gestellt vorfinden.” (*Paradigmen...*, p. 19.)

⁸³³ Cf. above; these lines in the poem “Spät und Tief” are in question here: “Ihr mahlt in den Mühlen des Todes das weiße Mehl der Verheißung, / ihr setzt es vor unsern Brüdern und Schwestern” (*GW* 1:35).

while, as we already observed, the verb *vorsetzen* means ‘setting before’ not only in the obvious sense of placing the bread before someone to eat, but also in the sense of ‘preferring’.

Perhaps the Christian discourse, the mill of death that not only mixes the white meal with the Promise but also “wed[s] dust to dust” (“*den Staub zu vermählen dem Staube*”), also weds, paradoxically, *Partikelgestöber* with *Metapherngestöber*? The carnal reality (or the reality of “the letter”) would be secondary with respect to the spiritual (as in Augustine); and the Democritean materialism, according to which the world results from a flurry of atoms (*Partikelgestöber*) while “all else is only opinion [*doxa*]” (*Metapherngestöber*, indeed), shows itself only as the reverse side of the “vulgar Platonism” (the Nietzschean view of Christianity),⁸³⁴ both belonging to the same metaphysical binary configuration.

Let us return to Allemann’s text. The restraints of space and time seem to press him to move on with the delicate dialectic between “the basic antimetaphorical tendency in modern literature” and the absolute metaphor: “A detailed analysis of an absolute metaphor in this comprehensive sense [the contraction of a whole text into an absolute metaphor] could only be done at great length and would take too much space here.” Therefore the examples must be chosen from among the “smaller units” that can be found in lyric poetry. The example comes from Nelly Sachs:

Klagemauer Nacht!
Eingegraben in dir sind die Psalmen des Schweigens.⁸³⁵

Allemann conscientiously points out all the difficulties that an interpretation relying on the traditional definition of metaphor would face in trying to analyse lines like these, while the limits of rhetorical flexibility could also always be stretched out in order to produce an interpretation in traditional terms. But it would indeed require some effort and “quite a few words” to discover the logical basis of such “metaphors”, to explain the carrying over of something abstract (“night”) to a sensuous and concrete perception (“wailing wall”), or the *tertium comparationis*, the point of resemblance involved, i.e. all these traditional prerequi-

⁸³⁴ Cf. e.g. Szondi’s “Reading ‘Engführung’”, p. 53, concerning this strophe:

Orkane.
Orkane, von je,
Partikelgestöber, das andre,
du
weißt ja, wir
lasens im Buche, war
Meinung.

Democritus’ doctrine of atoms vs. *doxa* has been preserved though a fragment in Diogenes Laertius (IX, 44).

⁸³⁵ Nelly Sachs, “Chor der unsichtbaren Dinge, in *In den Wohnungen des Todes (Fahrt ins Staublose* [1961], p. 62); cit. Allemann, “Metapher und das metaphorische Wesen der Sprache”, p. 38; the English translation. (p. 115) seems to be by the translator of Allemann’s article, G. Rebing: “Wailing wall night! / Carved in you are the psalms of silence.”

sites of metaphor. On the other hand, when such modern verse, whose “particularly intense poetic effect” is doubtless (even before we understand anything of the logic that brings these terms together, as I would add), cannot be comfortably interpreted in terms of these traditional presuppositions and reduced to the most simple model of rational analogy, it does not quite fit into the forms of, for instance, the Mannerist metaphor, the paralogical metaphor, or the oppositional metaphor either (these are the types mentioned and designated by Allemann), while these all still retain the characteristics of the traditional Aristotelian metaphor, namely the reducibility to a “firm basis of a rational and conventional analogy pattern”; and thus these have “nothing in common with an absolute metaphor that cannot be reduced to anything” (cf. pp. 115-118). Let us proceed, with Allemann, on the way toward the genuinely positive discoveries concerning such modern poetry that is exemplified by the two lines from Nelly Sachs’s poem, across the aporias of his “precarious terminology”:

I believe that the examples I have quoted from Nelly Sachs may indicate what such metaphorical language free from metaphors is like. [*Ich denke, daß die Beispiele, die ich aus Nelly Sachs angeführt habe, bereits eine Vorstellung von einer solchen metaphernfreien, aber metaphorischen Sprache geben können.*] [P. 119 (41).]

Metaphorical language free from metaphors: Allemann is by no means the only one who seems to believe in such miracles. Many other modern theorists stubbornly cling to the term ‘metaphor’ even when metaphor, in terms of the “traditional theory”, is conspicuously absent from the object they are addressing, such as a poem.

The plural in “the examples [...] quoted from Nelly Sachs” — while the pair of sentences, pair of lines from the beginning of a poem, could have been called, in the singular, ‘an example’ — indicates the fact that Allemann actually considers the two lines with regard to certain of their elements, two pairs of words or nouns, *Klagemauer Nacht — die Psalmen des Schweigens*. Is this not already to consider them as *isolated figures*, on the one hand (a pair of words is the minimal unit of signification that can also compose a metaphor, outside of a context; but the quest for isolated figures here and there in a text was just one of the traits of the quest for metaphor that Allemann objected to, as we remember), and on the other, to consider this piece of poetry with regard to relations and tensions between a word and another, within a pair of words? This concern with the minimal units of signification, *pairs of words* in their syntagmatic juxtapositions, however disparate they are, does it not suspiciously look like an attempt to justify the terminological conventionalism in the guise of overturning the concept of metaphor by adding the odd attribute, “absolute”? But this retention of some aspects of the traditional metaphor is deliberate: the terminological tension and precariousness which is not relieved just by recognizing it, and this focus on “smaller units” rather than whole texts, are moves motivated by a goal which makes it worthwhile to keep reading to the end of the concise and extremely interesting essay, in all its interior tensions, retentions and protentions. So let us proceed:

We have seen that expressions like “wailing wall night” or “psalms of silence” cannot be explained fully as metaphors in the strict sense of the traditional system of rhetoric. Nor would we get any further by interpreting a combination like “wailing wall night” as an identification instead of a simile. A purely linguistic analysis shows that “wailing wall” and “night” do not coincide at all, but are two disparate words standing in juxtaposition. [...] But simply by noting the juxtaposition of the two words, their relation to each other is described only in the most superficial way. The essential question is one that aims at the tension that is always inherent in the juxtaposition of two words in a poem, provided that it is a real poem and not an empty play with words. [...] / A logic of language in the sense I indicated [...] would have to concentrate first on what stands between the lines and between the words, or, to be more precise, what is not patently there, but what appears between them as a kind of magnetic field, as tensions created by the interplay of relations. I think it is justified to speak of a *translatio* or μεταφορά taking place in this “magnetic field” between words. (P. 119.)

I cut the citation short here and skip some material, not because it is less important, but because this ellipsis is already suggestive enough; we shall move on to the concluding paragraph of Beda Allemann’s essay and cite this last paragraph *in extenso*:

Perhaps I should add that I certainly do not believe that the basic metaphorical quality of language is manifest in modern poetry only and did not exist in earlier periods. One might go as far as to say that for a long time the theory of metaphor contained in the traditional systems of rhetoric has prevented us from perceiving that quality. The traditional theory separated meaning and sound and saw the process of *translatio* under the aspect of a logical and mathematical analogy between meanings. On this basis, metaphor could be regarded as a mere ornament that has only a loose relation to the real (*eigentlich*) meaning of what is said. But by rejecting metaphor or, to be more precise, by reducing metaphor *ad absurdum*, modern literature has made impossible the conventional explanation of the metaphorical nature of language.⁸³⁶

The goal which I anticipated, the final motivation for retaining the term ‘metaphor’ all the way to the end, was in my eyes at least, that this whole tension retained so patiently by Allemann, through all the paradoxical sentences speaking of “absolute metaphor” and of a “metaphorical language free from metaphors”, and so on, was to indicate a possibility to re-interpret the whole history of the poetic metaphor as well as the “metaphorical nature of language” anew — an effacement, a project delineated for a *Destruktion* of the concept of metaphor in order to reveal *what it actually always meant*, beyond and before the obstacles erected by the tradi-

⁸³⁶ “Metaphor and Antimetaphor”, pp. 120-121. The German version differs here slightly (pp. 42-43): “Vielleicht muß ich noch hinzufügen, daß ich natürlich nicht der Ansicht bin, diese metaphorische Grundqualität der Sprache sei erst in der modernen Dichtung zum Vorschein gekommen. Höchstens könnte man sagen, daß der Blick auf sie lange Zeit durch das rhetorische Metapherntheorie verstellt war. Durch eine Theorie also, welche die Bedeutung vom Wortkörper trennte und den Vorgang der Übertragung aus dem Horizont einer logisch-mathematischen Analogie zwischen den Bedeutungen verstand. Auf dieser Grundlage konnte die Metapher als ein Ornatus begriffen werden, der die eigentliche Bedeutung des Gesagten lediglich umspielte. Es ist ein Ergebnis der modernen Literatur, daß uns durch ihren Kampf gegen die Metapher oder, genauer gesprochen: dadurch, daß sie die Metapher *ad absurdum* geführt hat, der Weg zu dieser konventionellen Erklärung des metaphorischen Wesens der Sprache verlegt worden ist, und wir auf diese Weise gezwungen sind, das metaphorische Wesen der Sprache, und der Dichtung im besonderen, von Grund auf neu zu überdenken.”

tion of rhetoric and metaphysics that hindered our view. A project for discovering what μεταφορά must have meant, or could have meant, already before Aristotle; what it *almost* came to mean already for him, before he took to defining it and forgot what preceded this act of definition.

But still: Why cling on to the word ‘metaphor’, as if we could, by an act of re-definition, clear the obstacles once and for all, all these hindrances? And why “absolute metaphor”? Why not try to decline the temptation of defining a *term* instead of retaining the tension with what is juxtaposed with it? Why give up the *anti-* of the first title’s *antimetaphor* in favour of the “essence”, “*das metaphorische Wesen der Sprache*”? Why not keep speaking of *metaphora ad absurdum* instead of just “metaphor”? How long could we keep up the tension, anyway?

Actually I think that Kafka’s despair over metaphor should be juxtaposed with something — perhaps — happier (and by saying *happier, perhaps* happier, I would like to evoke Celan’s adverbial *heitererweise* near the end of the *Meridian* speech [TCA, Endf. 50]). Kafka was also a great humorist, after all, albeit in a non-obvious sense (and who could tolerate a person whose sense of humour is constantly *obvious*?) — and so was Celan, perhaps in an even less obvious sense. The erasure of the figures of speech may sometimes leave nothing but silence — but who’s afraid of silence? “*Wieviele sind es wohl, die mit dem Wort zu schweigen wissen*”, Celan asks. For me, Kafka’s counter-parabolic “parable on parables”, “Von den Gleichnissen”, whose oblique sense of humour resembles the warmth of many Hassidic tales, is a text to which it is very hard to respond in the manner of commentary or interpretation; like all genuine humour, it requires no paraphrase, but rather excludes it. Like grief, like “calamity”, and perhaps never far from grief and despair, such joy may leave us speechless — and, as Gilles Deleuze has remarked, humour is never metaphorical, which amounts to saying that we are not to expect a ‘hidden meaning’ apart from the very letter (“*le comique est toujours littéral*”)⁸³⁷ —

»Warum wehrt ihr euch? Würdet ihr den Gleichnissen folgen, dann wäret ihr selbst Gleichnisse geworden und damit schon der täglichen Mühe frei.«
 Ein anderer sagte: »Ich wette, daß auch das ein Gleichnis ist.«
 Der erste sagte: »Du hast gewonnen.«
 Der zweite sagte: »Aber leider nur im Gleichnis.«
 Der erste sagte: »Nein, in Wirklichkeit; im Gleichnis hast du verloren.«⁸³⁸

⁸³⁷ Gilles Deleuze, “Bartleby, ou la formule”, in *Critique et Clinique* (Paris: Minuit, cop. 1993), p. 89.

⁸³⁸ “Why such reluctance? If you only followed the parables you yourselves would become parables and with that rid of all your daily cares. / Another said: I bet that is also a parable. / The first said: you have won. / The second said: But unfortunately only in parable. / The first said: No, in reality: in parable you have lost.” (Franz Kafka, *Parables and Paradoxes* [bilingual, various translators] [Schocken: New York, 1971]; cit. J. Hillis Miller, *Tropes, Parables, Performatives: Essays on Twentieth Century Literature* [New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990], pp. 145-146.)

At its best, perhaps, the experience of reading can be an experience of “losing in parables”: coming across something incomparable, encountering that which defies all translation or paraphrase but also demands transformation, my own transformation, not into a parable but in reality. It is not different, in principle, from a handshake: and this “hand-clasping” *also* means grasping with hands and even something like “grasping a concept” and “being grasped and understood”; it is both an encounter “with the otherness of the you, which is at the same time its alteration”,⁸³⁹ and a self-encounter as a homecoming and an alteration, both at once. It is an experience that cannot be literalized, put in other words, and this is why it also defies metaphor (including Paul de Man’s notion of “criticism [as] a metaphor for the act of reading, and this act is itself inexhaustible”); perhaps an experience of *instantaneous complicity* with the poem (we shall return to this reader’s chance in a moment). But also this complicity is one that must be abandoned — otherwise this wink of an eye could not be called instantaneous (*augenblicklich*). Abandon, exposure, *self-deconstruction* are prerequisites of the poetic encounter.

All the detailed analyses of poetry, all the indispensable commentaries and “interlinear versions” can only offer guidance toward such moments, and the greatest effort at “studying the other” cannot guarantee that such an encounter really takes place. The encyclopaedic detours offer only a horizon which must, as if by definition, recede into the background and, most knowingly, open itself onto an abyss of non-knowledge.

THE OPEN END OF “METAPHOR – ALSO THAT”

A poem is, as Celan writes in one of the *Meridian* fragments, written down as a figure of all language. The note cites Paul Valéry:

Das Gedicht ist als Figur der Ganzen Sprache eingeschrieben; aber die Sprache bleibt unsichtbar; das sich Aktualisierende — die Sprache — tritt, kaum ist das geschehen, in den Bereich des Möglichen zurück. “Le poème”, schreibt Valéry, [“]est du langage à l’état naissant[”]; Sprache in statu nascendi also, freiwerdende Sprache. [*Meridian*, TCA, Ms. 239.]

The following passage in the occasional text “De l’enseignement de la poétique au Collège de France” (1937) seems to be the source of the quote:

⁸³⁹ Cf. Werner Hamacher, “The Second of Inversion”, trans. Jewett, pp. 299, 302. Hamacher writes (on p. 299): “Speaking is grasping with the hands. In his letter to Hans Bender, Celan wrote of poetry as a hand-clasping, thereby awakening to new life the dead metaphor of grasping a concept, of making oneself capable of being grasped and understood.” (Cf. *Premises*, p. 371; Fenves’s translation is not substantially different.) Obviously enough, I would object to the suggestion that it is a question of reviving a dead metaphor in a live one: as we have seen, Celan emphasizes that “only true hands write true poetry”, and that “even a poem written by a computer is anti-computer” — the hands involved are not metaphorical, neither live nor dead metaphors.

La formation de figures est indivisible de celle du langage lui-même, dont tous les mots « abstraits » sont obtenus par quelque abus ou quelque transport de signification, suivi d'un oubli du sens primitif. Le poète qui multiplie les figures ne fait donc que retrouver en lui-même le langage à l'état naissant.⁸⁴⁰

A very traditional scheme indeed, as it seems: there is an original signification,⁸⁴¹ which is then abused or transported, and then there is the oblivion, the double erasure of both the primordial signification and this metaphorical *usure* by which the abstract concept has been produced. This usury-by-wear-and-tear would be not only the movement of the metaphysical grind but the very process of ordinary language. Abuse and oblivion.

But let us relate these words by Valéry to how Celan cites them, among several other places, in the letter of November 18th, 1954 to Hans Bender:

Dichtung, sagt Paul Valéry irgendwo, sei Sprache in statu nascendi, freiwerdende Sprache... Gewiß, an diesem Freiwerden wirkt auch unser Bewußtsein mit, ist auch unsere Erinnerung und Erfahrung beteiligt – aber in welchem Maße? Könnte eine schärfere, methodisch vorgenommene Introspektion hier mehr Klarheit schaffen? Ich fürchte, es gehört zum Wesen des Gedichts, daß es die Mitwisserschaft dessen, der es »hervorbringt«, nur so lange duldet, als es braucht, um zu entstehen... Denn gelänge es dem Dichter, das freiwerdende Wort zu belauschen, es gleichsam auf frischer Tat zu ertappen, so wäre es damit wahrscheinlich um sein weiteres Dichtertum geschehn: ein solches Erlebnis duldet keinerlei Wiederholung und Nachbarschaft. So ephemere das einzelne Gedicht auch sein mag – und Gedichte sind, trotz allem, vergänglich: das »freigewordene« Wort kehrt zuletzt wieder in die »alte« Sprache zurück, wird Sprichwort, Wendung, Klischee –, es erhebt dennoch Anspruch auf Einmaligkeit, lebt und speist sich mitunter auch aus diesem Anspruch, ja aus dieser Arroganz, glaubt immer, die ganze Sprache zu repräsentieren, der ganzen Wirklichkeit Schach zu bieten... Welch ein Spiel! So ephemere, so königlich auch.⁸⁴²

A certain paradox, among other things to be sure, merits specific attention here. I will try to translate this strange move that in a very specific sense *circumscribes* the sentence between dashes, isolates the sentence that speaks of the becoming of the *cliché*: “As ephemeral as the individual poem might be [...] it still lays its claim to uniqueness [one-timeliness, the ‘only once’, *Einmaligkeit*]”. The ephemeral is no synonym for the unique “only-once” here. To the contrary, these seem rather to be opposed to each other first in this syntax; but the claim or demand (*Anspruch*), the sheer *arrogance* of this claim laid to the only-one-time, this move of

⁸⁴⁰ *Œuvres I*, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard, 1957), pp. 1440f (Celan possessed this edition); cf. Wiedemann, “Kommentar”, in *Mikrolithen*, p. 510. In addition to this passage, another from “L’invention esthétique” (1938) could be cited: “La poésie est d’ailleurs essentiellement « in actu ». Un poème n’existe qu’au moment de sa diction, et sa vraie valeur est inséparable de cette condition d’exécution. [...] / [L]a création poétique est une catégorie très particulière d’entre les créations artistiques ; à cause de la nature du langage. / Cette nature complexe fait que l’état naissant des poèmes peut être très divers : tantôt un certain sujet, tantôt un groupe de mots, tantôt un simple rythme, tantôt (même) un schéma de forme prosodique, peuvent servir de germes et se développer en pièce organisée.” (*Ibid.*, pp. 1412-1415.)

⁸⁴¹ But we should read Derrida’s remarks, in his essay on Valéry, on the necessary link between *source* and *origin*, the abstraction without which the proper meaning of “the source” would be unthinkable, and the difference between the proper and the primordial meaning, *sens propre et sens primitif* (cf. “Qual Quelle : Les sources de Valéry”, in *Marges*, pp. 333ff).

⁸⁴² In Volker Neuhaus, ed., *Briefe an Hans Bender* (München: Hanser, 1984), p. 35.

giving check to the whole of reality, makes the ephemeral also at once *majestic*. Perhaps this happens “by virtue of the absurd” as Kierkegaard would say. The Majesty of which the *Meridian* speaks and to which Lucile pays her tribute, the Majesty of the Absurd, is not far. And this arrogant move checks the sentence between the dashes, the sentence claiming that “the ‘liberated’ word eventually returns to the ‘old’ language and becomes a proverb, a turn of phrase, a cliché”. The arrogance of the poetic word ventures to place in check this inevitable fate, to counter-circumscribe the wear-and-tear of every gratuitous coinage. Is this arrogant move, then, anything but the demand of the tropes and metaphors to be carried *ad absurdum*, always again only for once?

Celan repeated the citation from Valéry several times, as we have already seen; once more in another letter, six years later (March 26th, 1960), this time to Werner Weber:

Aber wieviele sind es denn heute, die solche Aspekte des Dichterischen überhaupt wahrnehmen? Die das Gedicht wahrnehmen als menschliche – und mithin von einmalige und vom Geheimnis der Einmaligkeit begleitete – Präsenz? Wieviele sind es wohl, die mit dem Wort zu schweigen wissen, bei ihm bleiben, wenn es im Intervall steht, in seinen »Höfen«, in seiner – schlüsselfernen – Offenheit, das Stimmhafte aus dem Stimmlosen fällend, in der Systole die Diastole verdeutlichend, welt- und unendlichkeitssüchtig zugleich – Sprache, wie Valéry einmal sagt, in *statu nascendi*, freiwerdende Sprache, Sprache der Seelenmonade Mensch – und, wenn ich auch noch das hinzufügen darf, Sprache in *statu moriendi*, Sprache dessen, der Welt zu gewinnen sucht, weil er – ich glaube, das ist ein uralter Traum der Poesie – weltfrei zu werden hofft, frei von Kontingenz.⁸⁴³

Laying claim to freedom, the old claim of freedom from the world and from contingency — “*diese Unendlichsprechung von lauter Sterblichkeit und Umsonst!*”⁸⁴⁴ — this *placing the whole of reality in check*, however, is not a pretension to otherworldliness; it is not a pretension to transcend time but to traverse it. *In statu nascendi*, *in statu moriendi*: this is not the cycle of metaphor, the living and the dead, but the words of someone who speaks as a mortal, as a finite ‘creature’, from the perspective of his being-there (*Dasein*), from the perspective of his being-a-creature (*Kreatürlichkeit*).⁸⁴⁵

“There is a line”, as Derrida writes, marked by the poem *as* a poem.⁸⁴⁶ A borderline between the intrinsic and extrinsic, but one that traverses the interiority of the poem itself, the poem as a poem. It is a limit of interpretation, the limit between hermeneutical interpretation

⁸⁴³ Letter to Werner Weber, March 26th, 1960, cit. in Axel Gellhaus, ed., »Fremde Nähe«. Celan als Übersetzer (=Marbacher Kataloge 50) (Marbach: Deutsche Schillergesellschaft, 1997), p. 398.

⁸⁴⁴ *TCA/Meridian* Endf. 44: “Die Dichtung, meine Damen und Herren –: diese Unendlichsprechung von lauter Sterblichkeit und Umsonst!”

⁸⁴⁵ “Dieses Immer-noch des Gedichts kann ja wohl nur in dem Gedicht dessen zu finden sein, der nicht vergißt, daß er unter dem Neigungswinkel seines Daseins, dem Neigungswinkel seiner Kreatürlichkeit spricht.” (“Der Meridian”, *TCA/Meridian* Endf. 33c.) Cf. *TCA/Meridian* Ms. 27: “das Gedicht zeigt — nicht eine Neigung zur Sprachlosigkeit, aber zum Verstummen; es behauptet sich [...] am Rande seiner selbst. In seiner Selbstaufhebung erblickt es seine Chance; es ruft und holt sich zuweilen, um zu bestehen, aus seinem Schon-Nicht-Mehr {*statu moriendi*} in ein Immer-Noch zurück.”

⁸⁴⁶ Derrida, *Poétique et politique du témoignage*, p. 76-77, loc. cit.; cf. above.

and a disseminal reading, as Derrida has also written in his memorial speech for Gadamer, one that traverses the hermeneutical process itself from within *and* from without the text, one that launches the interpretative process in the first place, invites one to the “study of the other”.⁸⁴⁷ This study of the other is double: not only the hermeneutical effort but *also* the other phenomenology or post-phenomenology of otherness *as* otherness, attention to the meteoric phenomenon as an ephemeral exposure to reiteration, across an irreducible “time-crevasse [*Zeitenschrunde*]”. This limit crosses through and defies the opposition of ‘intrinsic’ and ‘extrinsic’. Each time I expose myself to the words of the other, each time I read or listen, but also each time I speak or write, I am dealing with radical alterity and with an exposure to time, my time as finitude and the other’s. And the precarious borderline runs also, no doubt, between “metaphor and antimetaphor”, trope and counter-trope, image and other-than-image. *Like* the Meridian — immaterial but terrestrial — it connects and keeps apart.

Once, once again, in a note whose date is uncertain but which is probably, according to the editors of the posthumous fragments among which this one belongs, written several years after the *Meridian*, the question of complicity (*Mitwisserschaft*), the author’s complicity with the poem but also the reader’s, is linked to those of punctuality and iterability — a possibility of repetition which gives the reader his *chance*, the chance of the wink of an eye and *his* punctual complicity with the poem — and to the question of metaphor, the *always again only for once* as the borderline where also metaphor is carried, the border region where the “distanced comprehension [*entferntes Verstehen*]” may take place; now, instead of concluding the already too long discourse “against metaphor”, let us leave the last word to the poet — and the *chance* to whom it belongs:

Die Dichtung macht den Leser zu ihrem augenblicklichen Mitwisser.
Diese Mitwisserschaft ist punktuell, aber, das ist die Chance für alle Beteiligten, also
Autor und Leser, wiederholbar: das gerade ist die Grenze, an welche die Metapher –
auch sie – geführt wird.⁸⁴⁸

⁸⁴⁷ Cf. *Béliers* (2003), pp. 35ff, e.g. on p. 36: “une bordure vient *interrompre*, qui cette fois ne traverse plus le dedans du texte. Elle l’entoure. Une frontière *externe* dessine une interruption suspensive”; pp. 47ff: “Je ne déplierai pas ici, je n’en aurai pas le temps et j’ai tenté de le faire ailleurs, des protocoles d’allure théorique ou méthodologique. Je ne dirai rien, directement, de la frontière infranchissable mais toujours abusivement franchie entre, *d’une part*, d’indispensables approches formelles mais aussi bien thématiques, polythématiques, attentives, comme doit l’être toute herméneutique, aux plis explicites et implicites du sens, aux équivoques, aux surdéterminations, à la rhétorique, au vouloir-dire intentionnel de l’auteur, à toutes les ressources idiomatiques du poète et de la langue, etc., et, *d’autre part*, une lecture-écriture disséminale qui, s’efforçant de prendre tout cela en compte, et d’en rendre compte, d’en respecter la nécessité, se porte aussi vers un reste ou un excédent irréductible. L’excès de ce reste se soustrait à tout rassemblement dans une herméneutique. Cette herméneutique, il la rend nécessaire, il la rend aussi possible, comme il rend ici possible, entre autres choses, la trace de l’œuvre poétique, son abandon ou sa survie, au-delà de tel signataire et de tout lecteur déterminé. Sans ce reste, il n’y aurait même pas *l’Anspruch*, l’injonction, l’appel, ni la provocation qui chante ou fait chanter dans tout poème, dans ce qu’on pourrait surnommer, avec Celan, selon le titre ou l’incipit d’un autre poème de *Atemwende*, *Singbarer Rest*.” — On “studying the other”, cf. Celan’s words reported by Huppert, “Spirituell” (1988), cited above.

⁸⁴⁸ *Mikrolithen*, p. 126, No. 226.

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