

FRENZIED PHILOLOGY

Paul Celan, Peter Szondi and Hermeneutic Practice during the Goll Plagiarism Affair

A Dissertation

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ABSTRACT

Frenzied Philology: Paul Celan, Peter Szondi, and Hermeneutic Practice during the Goll Plagiarism Affair

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This dissertation investigates the philological efforts that Paul Celan, with prominent literary scholars especially Peter Szondi, mounted in response to plagiarism allegations against Celan between 1959 and 1972. Based on readings of published and archival documents, this project maps the debate that ensued in major language feuilletons after Claire Goll had published a letter in 1959 accusing Celan of having plagiarized from her late husband, the French-German surrealist poet Yvan Goll. The analysis reveals that the plagiarism debate became the platform for a literary criticism that contested Paul Celan's place within German language poetry tradition. Against this tendency, Celan formed alliances with a number of German and French philologists and scholars, most prominently with the Jewish literary scholar Peter Szondi, whose combined effort markedly intervened into the reception of his poetry, even beyond the plagiarism debate. The need to validate the authenticity of Celan's poetry through the use of philological, empirically cogent tools posed a particular challenge to his critic-allies who also wanted to remain faithful to Celan's own poetics, which developed a form of speaking of history without recourse to representational models. I argue that these critical interventions develop a non-historicist critical form of reading that becomes aligned with the poem's temporality. In an exemplary reading of Celan's poetry, Peter Szondi's *Celan-Studien*, this alignment compels Szondi the author to reevaluate and experiment with the rhetorical registers of interpretative writing and begin to harness its own textuality.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Christine Schott holds a Bachelors of Arts degree in literature from the State University of New York at Purchase College, and a Master of Arts degree in German Studies from Cornell University. She was a DAAD research fellow at University of Hamburg, and a doctoral fellow at the University of Cologne, and at Humboldt University, Berlin as a member of the doctoral exchange network “PhD Net: Das Wissen der Literatur”.

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Christine has helped organize the graduate conference *Poetics of the Thing* at Cornell University in 2013. She has presented her work at international conferences, including at the Annual Meeting of the German Studies Association, at the University of Boulder Graduate Colloquium, at the Graduate Student Conference “The Pains of Language” at New York University, at the American Comparative Literature Association’s Annual Meeting in Utrecht, Netherlands, and at the PhD Net Summer School Transformationen: Literatur, Wissen Medien, and at the Conference “Germanistik: eine Internationale Wissenschaft” in Aix-en-Provence.

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INTRODUCTION

In Düsseldorf machte das Flugzeug eine Zwischenlandung mit einer Stunde Aufenthalt. Auf dem Weg über das Flugfeld fing Li an zu rennen. Sie war außer sich vor Schreck. Wir waren in Deutschland! Li sagte nichts. Lief nur immer weiter.¹

When Nelly Sachs, here “Li,” in 1960, after 20 years in exile, first sets foot again in Germany, the overwhelming fear of and reluctance to return she had felt in the lead-up to her visit now cumulates in the frenzied race across the landing field of Düsseldorf airport. Sachs’ friend Eva-Lisa Lennartsson chronicles the Jewish poet’s visit to Germany in 1960 to accept the Droste Prize in Meersburg as a trip that is psychologically taxing for her friend. Contrary to the intention of the award ceremony to reintegrate a German-Jewish poet into the German literary world, Sachs remains fearful and suspicious of the welcoming and eager German audience. Sachs’ visit to Germany is short-lived, and she travels from Meersburg to Paris after the award ceremony, where she stays with her friend and fellow Jewish poet, Paul Celan. Celan casts doubt over the public displays of welcome and applause she had just experienced in Meersburg:

Paul, wie auch andere während unserer Reise – sprach über den wachsenden Nazismus. Er sagte, dass die Menschen, die ihr Aufmerksamkeit erwiesen,

¹ Eva-Lisa Lennartsson, “Nelly Sachs und ihre Freunde. Erinnerungen,” *Text+Kritik*, no. 23, 2017, p. 71.

falsch seien. Sie hätten eine Nazi-Vergangenheit und verschafften sich jetzt ein Alibi, indem sie einen jüdischen Schriftsteller lobten.²

Sachs was weary to return to Germany because of its Nazi past, the pain of having been exiled from her childhood home and her memories of persecution. But Celan warns of Nazism equally as a then-present threat, and also as a future threat looming on the horizon. Against Germany's self-image that its Nazi past is becoming ever-more distant, Celan presents Nazism as something Germany is moving towards, and not away from, inverting the temporality of the postwar history of a "denazified" Germany.

Celan is suspicious of the scholars and critics who now gather to celebrate the work of a Jewish writer and points out what is now common knowledge: that the ranks of academic Germanistik (German studies) and literary criticism were filled with scholars with a Nazi past. Some had been members of the Nazi Party or had in other ways actively promulgated Nazi ideology in their literary scholarship. After the official "denazification" campaign overseen by the Allied Control Council (the transitional postwar government), most members of the academy had been able to retain their positions at the university in spite of these previous associations.³

² Ibid.

³ Many faculty members with former Nazi Party affiliations did not have their contracts terminated, as discussed in e.g. Silke Seemann, *Die politischen Säuberungen des Lehrkörpers der Freiburger Universität nach dem Ende des 2. Weltkriegs (1945–1957)* (Freiburg: Rombach, 2002); Wilfried Barner, "Literaturgeschichtsschreibung vor und nach 1945: Alt, Neu, Alt/Neu," *Zeitenwechsel: Germanistische Literaturwissenschaft vor und nach 1945*, edited by Christoph König and Wilfried Barner (Frankfurt a. Main: Fischer, 1996).

Nelly Sachs is not able to brush Celan's warnings aside; she is deeply disturbed and frightened by them, which in turn causes feelings of distress and guilt in Celan.

Lennartsson recounts:

Paul verstand. Er war verzweifelt. Er sagte, dass seine eigene Angst und seien schwachen Nerven ihn verblendet hatten. Er hatte Li helfen wollen, sich gegen alle Falschheiten zu schützen, indem er sie ihr bewusst machte. Er sagte, dass er versuchen wollte, alles richtigzustellen. Er wollte ihr sagen, dass sein eigenes Misstrauen ihn alle Proportionen hat verlieren lassen. Dass er katastrophal übertrieben habe . . . Schon auf dem Weg zum Flughafen Orly, versuchte Paul, Li zu überzeugen, dass seine Reden über die Falschheit und den versteckten Nazismus in den Anerkennungen nur Hirngespinnste gewesen sein, hervorgerufen von seinem eigenen krankhaftem Misstrauen.⁴

Celan's guilt over having reminded Sachs of the reality of Nazism and having thereby rekindled her fears compels him to take a step back from his interpretation. Yet he is not only covering up the facts to appease his friend, he is also doubting his own judgement. He cannot state with certainty anymore whether his perception is correct that Nazism is a real threat, or whether his own "weak nerves" and fears distort reality and make it appear darker than it is. That he should backtrack on his arguments signals a sense of fundamental disorientation over his perception of German literary critics, of his sanity and of reality itself.

Celan's guilt over the dramatic flare-up of Sachs' anxiety further escalates when he receives news of Sachs' psychiatric emergency upon her return to Sweden. She remained in a psychiatric clinic from 1960–63. Celan's plan to visit Sachs was

⁴ Lennartsson, "Nelly Sachs und ihre Freunde," p. 76

thwarted when he arrived in Stockholm in September 1960. She declined to see him.⁵

Tentatively so in Lennartsson's narration, and in Celan's professions of guilt which she chronicles, he in that moment becomes the one who seems responsible for Sachs' illness. No German, no Nazi, no literary critic is present or available for interrogation, as the one who bears true responsibility. The German critics have reserved their seats in an audience that publicly displays a new German benevolence towards Jewish writers. Celan's and Sachs' fears and traumas are being negotiated without these critics, rather they are negotiated amongst themselves. In the absence of the actual perpetrators, it is Celan's purported paranoia that is held accountable for his and Sachs' suffering.

Celan's warnings to Sachs, and his ultimate self-consciousness regarding the clarity of his judgement, is not without context in Celan's biography. Celan is now considered as one of the leading voices of the German-language poetry tradition. Yet his relationship to German literary criticism and the German literary world was a difficult and painful one over the course of his career. It is an aspect of Celan's biography, and ultimately also of his poetry and poetics, that is often overlooked.

⁵ Chronicled in Celan's letters to Nelly Sachs: Paul Celan and Nelly Sachs, *Briefwechsel*, edited by Barbara Wiedemann (Frankfurt a. Main: Suhrkamp, 1996). Sachs resumed her epistolary exchange with Celan that same year and upheld their friendship to her death.

The adversity that Celan encountered in the world of German literary criticism also has its precedent in the general critical and literary climate in Germany after the end of the Third Reich.

Jewish Voices in Germany after 1945

Nelly Sachs receives the Droste Prize in 1960; later that same year Paul Celan is honored with the Georg Büchner Prize. In the cases of Celan and Sachs, who live and write in their places of exile, this recognition comes after more than a decade of isolation from the German literary world. In the 1950s, Jewish literary voices, including those that wrote about the war and the Shoah, had not been given a platform in Germany, even though there was no shortage of interest in the history of World War II. However, representations of World War II focused on German suffering and loss, and the German people's status as victims of Hitler's regime:

In der frühen Nachkriegszeit überwog unter dem Eindruck der militärischen Niederlage und des Zusammenbruchs des Dritten Reichs, der alliierten Besatzung, den Nürnberger Prozessen, der Entnazifizierung, materieller Not, der Selbsteinschätzung bzw. -wahrnehmung vieler Deutscher als Opfer der 'verabscheuungswürdigen Verbrechen eines Wahnsinnigen.'⁶

A vocabulary of defeat and military surrender, and its impacts on Germans, dominated mainstream media discourse. The Jewish trauma from the war, in which persecution and deportation to the death camps was the central shared experience, was not a central part of memory-writing even in literature, owing in part to the fact

⁶ Thorsten Eitz and Georg Stötzel, *Wörterbuch der Vergangenheitsbewältigung: Die NS-Vergangenheit im Öffentlichen Sprachgebrauch* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 2007).

that a more comprehensive disclosure of Holocaust crimes only came with the Frankfurt Auschwitz trials of 1963–65.⁷ Stephan Braese notes a disparity between the prolific output of German writers on the topic of the Nazi era, and the absence of Jewish voices in a literary market in which memory of recent German history was generally in high demand:

Die Fülle, oder auch der Rang, jener gleichzeitig entstehenden oder rezipierten literarischen Werke, die vom Nationalsozialismus handeln, geraten in dieser Perspektive notwendig zum Indiz dafür, dass es nach einer im westdeutschen Literaturbetrieb offenkundig weitverbreiteten Auffassung für eine hinreichende Auseinandersetzung mit der NS-Epoche und der Vernichtung der europäischen Juden . . . jüdischer Stimmen nicht wirklich bedurfte.⁸

Jewish experience of the war was not a central subject in literature. At the same time the necessary effort on the part of German critics, publishers and other writers to reach out and locate Jewish writers, many of whom lived in exile, was not made.

⁷ The crimes of the Nazi forced labor and death camps were exposed by the Nuremberg Trials taking place following the end of World War II from 1945–46. Even though they received widespread media attention, in the immediate aftermath of the war they were understood more narrowly as war crimes committed as part of military operations and occupation, and not in the larger context of persecution by German institutions and citizens, and as genocide. A more comprehensive public media disclosure of the realities of the death camps and the means of mass murder did not take place until the early 1960s, with the Auschwitz Trials and the Eichmann Trial in Jerusalem, where the intricate logistics of the business of *Schreibtischmörder* performed by those such as Eichmann, and the unspeakable cruelty of the selection process, murder through gas and other sadistic means, and terrible suffering of Jewish men, women and children was made visible in detail. Bernd Naumann covered the Auschwitz Trials in the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung from 1963–65. See: Bernd Naumann, *Auschwitz: Bericht über die Strafsache Mulka u.a. vor dem Schwurgericht Frankfurt* (Berlin: Philo, 2004); Hannah Arendt wrote a critical report of the Eichmann Trial, see: Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Viking Press, 1964).

⁸ Stephan Braese, *Die andere Erinnerung: Jüdische Autoren in der Westdeutschen Nachkriegsliteratur* (Munich: Edition Text + Kritik, 2010), p. 10.

Paul Celan and the Gruppe 47

Paul Celan's defining and first significant encounter with the German literary world was his reading for Gruppe 47 in Niendorf in 1952. Yet his attendance accomplished nothing less than to alienate him from the infamous literary circle, and permanently strain Celan's relationship to the contemporary German literary world and its representatives. On 24 October 1962 Celan writes to Gisèle Lestrange: "Die Gruppe 47 vollendet meine Verdrängung," commenting on the literary association's inappropriate way of relating to Celan, a situation which had been ongoing for a decade.⁹

In spite of Celan's close ties to Ingeborg Bachmann and Milo Dor, both influential members of Gruppe 47, who recommended him to the group's informal chair Hans Werner Richter, the audience saw him as a stranger coming from an uncharted exterior. Walter Jens remembers Celan's first reading: "Plötzlich geschah es: Ein Mann namens Paul Celan (niemand hatte den Namen vorher gehört) begann, singend und weltentrückt, seine Gedichte zu sprechen."¹⁰ Celan is portrayed as interrupting the scene, as he suddenly appears as an alien poet writing an alien poetry. His style does not correspond to the neorealism and

⁹ Paul Celan and Gisèle Celan-Lestrange, *Briefwechsel*, (Frankfurt a. Main: Suhrkamp, 2001), p. 141. Theo Buck describes the dynamic in a similar way: "Die unbegreifliche, diffamierende Ablehnung, der sich Paul Celan im selben Personenkreis ausgesetzt sah." Theo Buck, "Paul Celan und die Gruppe 47," *Celan-Jahrbuch 7*, edited by Hans-Michael Speier (Heidelberg: Winter Verlag, 1998), p. 75.

When Celan became a well-known and highly acclaimed poet in Germany and internationally, the group tried to win him back as one of its members again, but were met with much reservation on the part of Celan, who then was disappointed by them again when they did not respond to the false plagiarism charges in a comprehensive, helpful manner (see chapter 1 on Celan's dealings with Walter Jens, a prominent member of Gruppe 47).

¹⁰ Walter Jens, *Deutsche Literatur der Gegenwart* (München: dtv, 1964), p. 150. A similar impression is formulated by Böttiger: "Die Gedichte passten nicht in eine Gegend, die vom Kahlschlag gezeichnet war, sie kamen aus einer anderen Landschaft." Helmut Böttiger, *Orte Paul Celans* (Wien: Zolnay, 1996), p. 65.

Kahlschlagliteratur propagated by Gruppe 47 with its preference for a direct, non-metaphorical and reduced language: “Die Reduzierung der Sprache auf das Wesentliche” as Hans Werner Richter formulated it.¹¹ The other memory, “andere Erinnerung,” of Hitler’s dictatorship, i.e., the Jewish experience of the Holocaust, was not a topic of interest or serious inquiry for the group.¹² Wolfgang Emmerich, echoing Klaus Briegleb’s indictment of the group’s ignorance over the Jewish experience, discloses that the Holocaust was not openly talked about by the group’s members or in meetings: “Der Mord an den Juden war als literarisches Thema und erst recht in den Diskussionen nach den Lesungen in der Gruppe (fast) ein Tabu, und genausowenig gab es Anstrengungen, mit schreibenden jüdischen Kollegen *als Juden, die die Shoah überlebt hatten*, ins Gespräch zu kommen.”¹³ In his pivotal study *Missachtung und Tabu*, Briegleb delineates the antisemitism of the group’s failure to actively engage with the memory of Jews and history of the Holocaust by

¹¹ The literary tastes of the group and its neorealist program was formulated from a specific shared memory of World War II, as many of its members shared the formative experience of military deployment under the SS and the experience of Germany in the late 1940s as a landscape of bombed buildings and economic scarcity. The male-dominated, exclusive nature of the Gruppe 47 coterie, which lacked any formal articles of its organization or hierarchy yet nevertheless operated with strong hierarchies of power, influence and modes of exclusion, has been under scrutiny since its inception, and especially in recent decades. The soldier biographies of many of the central figures of the group, such as Richter, Martin Walser, Günter Grass, Walter Jens, and the active shrouding of some members’ Nazi pasts, as for example with Grass’ SS membership, is often used to explain the traditionally masculine and *Stammtisch* working-class demeanors, in descriptors such as “ungehobelte Kamaraderie, Hemdsärmeligkeit und geschlossene Duzbrüderschaft.” Reinhard Lettau (ed.), *Die Gruppe 47: Bericht, Kritik, Polemik; Ein Handbuch* (München: Luchterhand, 1967), pp. 374–75.

¹² “Niemand hat sich im deutschen Nachkrieg um ein Wissen gekümmert, das er auch aus dem Krieg heimgebracht hat und das er bald, nämlich im Nachkrieg, hätte vertiefen können: ein Wissen, das den anderen Krieg betraf, . . . den deutschen Vernichtungskrieg gegen die Juden Europas betraf.” Klaus Briegleb, *Missachtung und Tabu: Eine Streitschrift über die Frage: Wie antisemitisch war die Gruppe 47?* (Berlin: Philo, 2002), p. 13.

¹³ Wolfgang Emmerich, *Nahe Fremde: Paul Celan und die Deutschen* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2020), p. 86.

the group, which are consistent with the active disregard, disinterest and suppression of the “other war” (“der andere Krieg: der deutsche Vernichtungskrieg gegen die Juden Europas”) by the German public.¹⁴

For Celan’s visit to Niendorf this disinterest and disregard played out in the absence of questions regarding his biography, place of residence or origin, or supportive statements regarding his openness to read to a German audience in public, to travel to Germany or to write in the German language. His identity as a Romanian Jew writing in the German language and living in exile since fleeing his place of birth did not become a topic of concern, interest or mention. What was perceived as alien in his poetry was not further questioned or traced to his Jewish cultural heritage. The stark imagery of the poem “Todesfuge” which he read was not brought into relation with Auschwitz. Instead, the discussion of his poetry after his reading revolved around *poesie pure* and *poesie engagée*, which became a predominantly aesthetic set of questions.¹⁵

¹⁴ Briegleb condemns the falsely self-ascribed innocence that the group members eschew, presented from an authoritative and self-confident speaker position that does not think it necessary to reflect on its own treatment of Jewish memory or Jewish writers. His ultimate diagnosis is that this pretense of innocence and therefore perpetuation of ignorance played one crucial part in the overarching failure in Germany to address this history in the postwar years: “Die These des Buches ist, daß die Gruppe 47 an Gedeihen des besonderen deutschen Antisemitismus nach der Shoah aus der Position einer angemäßen moralischen Unbescholtenheit und Sprecherkompetenz heraus mitgewirkt hat, mitgewirkt auf dem Untergrund von Mißachtung, Desinteresse und Verdrängung – und daß dies nur zu begreifen und zu veranschaulichen ist im Blick auf den deutschen Kontext der Vergesslichkeit und der Ignoranz gegenüber Juden und Judentum nach 1945.” See: Briegleb, *Missachtung und Tabu*, p. 13. I agree with Briegleb’s diagnosis and find it a very necessary criticism that dismantles the false self-confidence in the German public over its methods of public memory regarding the Holocaust. I do also think, however, that for my discussion of Celan and the critical reception of his work, “Mißachtung, Desinteresse und Verdrängung” are not the appropriate descriptors, because the literary critics that discussed Celan as a “plagiarist” insulted Celan in a much more active and direct manner.

¹⁵ Böttiger, *Orte Paul Celans*, p. 65.

The group members voiced their criticism of Celan's poetry in a way that reveals the group's readiness to alienate and attack a Jewish writer visiting Germany in the postwar years. Walter Jens recounts:

Als Celan zum Ersten Mal auftrat, da sagte man: "Das kann doch kaum jemand hören!", er las sehr pathetisch. Wir haben darüber gelacht. 'Der liest ja wie Goebbels', sagte einer. Er wurde ausgelacht, so daß dann später ein Sprecher der Gruppe 47, Walter Hilsbecher aus Frankfurt, die Gedichte noch einmal vorlesen musste. Die "Todesfuge" war ja ein Reifall in der Gruppe! Das war eine völlig andere Welt.¹⁶

Jens twice refers to the group's laughter about Celan, and records how the group decided to have the poems read again by a German speaker whose use of German did not exhibit the same unfamiliar and strange pitch. The speaker had to ("musste") read Celan's poems, overruling the likely requirement for Celan's consent in the decision. Such a swift and nonchalant denial of Celan's right to speak in his "alien" voice, and to claim authorship and ownership over his poems, here further cements Celan's marginalized position on the very outside ("völlig andere Welt") for which the group does not express interest but rather scorn and mockery. The tone of Jens' anecdotal remarks even years later, and now as a convert to Celan's poetry, speaks volumes to the fact that such mockery and blatant xenophobia remain available for a tongue-in-cheek reminiscence of times past.

The Goll Affair

Recognition for Celan's poetry grew significantly towards the end of the 1950s. 1960 then marks the year when the German literary elites recognize him as being

¹⁶ Hans Werner Richter, *Briefe*, edited by Sabine Cofalla (München: Hanser, 1997), p. 128.

one of the leading literary voices of his generation. Yet the year also marks the high point of his deep conflicts with the German literary world and press. With his reputation and fame growing following the publication of *Sprachgitter* (1959), negative and positive reviews appeared in the major German *feuilletons*, displaying the range of aesthetic taste in postwar Germany. Much criticism was still tainted by the anti-modernist, including anti-surrealist, aesthetic of Third Reich style preferences. At the same time, the media criticism reverberated with the Gruppe 47 aesthetic, and its rejection of metaphorical and symbolic language.

Celan became wary of German critics and the aesthetic prerogatives of their reviews. Yet a true crisis transpired when charges of plagiarism were levied against him: Claire Goll, the widow of the poet Yvan Goll, both of whom were close friends and private patrons of Celan when he was young poet in Paris, published the letter-to-the-editor (“Unbekanntes über Paul Celan”) in the Munich literary journal *Baubudenpoet* in 1960, in which she constructed a false case against Celan, accusing him of being a plagiarist of Goll’s later poems.¹⁷ As a young and still unknown poet in Paris, Celan had been taken under the wing of the French-German Jewish poet Yvan Goll, who appointed him to translate his poems and, as set out in his will, oversee all posthumous publication of his works. In her letter, his widow Claire Goll presented select examples where she found striking similarities in metaphors or word couplets. The original claims made by Claire Goll were quickly disproven by literary scholar Peter Szondi, who, through a simple reconstruction and comparison of the draft and publication dates of the poems in question,

¹⁷ Claire Goll, “Unbekanntes über Paul Celan,” *Baubudenpoet*, vol. 5, 1960.

established that the poems by Celan that Claire Goll understood to be influenced by her husband were written and published not only before Yvan Goll's were, but also before Celan could have made Yvan's acquaintance or had access to unpublished material.¹⁸ Yet what made this one crisis into a large, even lifelong crisis for Celan were the ripples it created through the German literary and press worlds. Barbara Wiedemann summarizes that a "defamatory campaign" was triggered, when many German newspapers and literary magazines spun scathing reviews of Celan's writing from the initial question of plagiarism.¹⁹ The plagiarism debate became a platform for questioning the creative originality of Celan's poetry beyond a literal concept of plagiarism, and instead was seen more as a principal lack in artistic merit.

Celan saw a relationship between the muddied argumentation of many critics and their attempts to discredit his poetry from the ground up, and the lingering and/or newly-emerging Nazi sentiments. In a letter to his Bucharest-based Jewish friend Alfred Margul-Sperber he writes: "Sie kennen die Umtriebe des Neonazismus in der Bundesrepublik. Im deutlichen Zusammenhang mit diesen Umtrieben erfolgt nun auch seit längerem der Versuch, mich und meine Gedichte zu zerstören. Zu diesem Zwecke bezichtigt man mich des Betrugs, der

¹⁸ Peter Szondi, "Anleihe oder Verleumdung? Zu einer Auseinandersetzung über Paul Celan," *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 19 November 1960.

¹⁹ Celan himself used the term "Diffamierungskampagne": Paul Celan, "Letter dated February 8, 1962," *Briefe an Alfred Margul-Sperber*, edited by M. Rosenkranz (Munich: Rimbaud, 2015). Barbara Wiedemann's mammoth editorial accomplishment: *Paul Celan, die Goll Affäre: Dokumente zu einer 'Infamie'* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2000) makes a strong argument for the severity and significance of the Goll Affair for Celan's life and work. Her book selects and reprints the plethora of press articles, providing ample editorial sources and historical background information, and private and professional correspondence spanning not only the acute phase of the affair, but also the long tail-end of its repercussions.

Erbschleicherei, des Plagiats.”²⁰ Celan understands the allegations as an effort to destroy his reputation and himself, a threat coming from Neo-Nazism in Germany. These threats did not only transpire from the German press, but also in the much more personal sphere as hate mail and personal threats. Celan writes to Nelly Sachs: “Täglich kommt mir die Gemeinheit ins Haus, täglich, glauben Sie’s mir. Was steht uns Juden noch bevor?”²¹ Celan’s publishing house reports that anonymous threat letters are also delivered to their address. “Seine Gesprächspartner im S. Fischer Verlag Wissen von anonymen Drohungen auch gegenüber dem Verlag zu berichten.”²²

Celan’s diagnosis of the situation became that the plagiarism debate was not merely an interrogation of two poets’ literary works and their interchanges, but that he was specifically targeted as a Jew in a Germany where Nazism remained a tangible actuality. He writes to Siegfried Lenz:

*es gibt mich nicht . . . Was ich geschrieben habe, wird, sofern es noch zur Veröffentlichung gelangen kann, totgeschwiegen . . . den Autor Paul Celan gibt es ja nicht. Es ist wahr, lieber Sigfried Lenz. Und hinter dem steckt mehr als nur das, was man gemeinhein eine literarische Intrige nennt . . . Mein Judentum spielt wohl die entscheidende Rolle dabei . . . Außerdem werde ich . . . ‘wahnsinniggesprochen.’ Herr Schroers hat im Vorwärts bereits meinen ‘Zusammenbruch’ verlautbart.”*²³

²⁰ Celan, “Letter dated July 30, 1960,” *Briefe an Alfred Margul-Sperber*.

²¹ Paul Celan and Nelly Sachs, *Briefwechsel*, p. 29.

²² Barbara Wiedemann, “Das Jahr 1960,” *Paul Celan: Biographie und Interpretation*, edited by A. Corbea-Hoisie (Konstanz: Hartung-Gorre; Paris: Edition Suger; Iasi: Polirom, 2000), p. 45.

²³ Celan, “Letter to Siegfried Lenz,” 30 January 1962, *Paul Celan, die Goll Affäre: Dokumente zu einer ‘Infamie’*, p. 557.

Celan sees the affair as an attack with the aim of negating his identity as poet, as author, and his claim to personhood; he sees its roots in antisemitism, which he thinks helps the critics speculate about his mental health. Barbara Wiedemann in her remarkably thorough review of the documents of the affair insists that Celan's own diagnosis of the antisemitic tendency of the Goll Affair and the role of reemerging national-socialist ideologies in Germany have to be taken seriously: "Man sollte sich hüten, Paul Celans Einordnung der Affäre in einen antisemitischen Zusammenhang vorschnell als eine seiner Überempfindlichkeiten abzutun," and "wenn man die von Paul Celan wahrgenommene Einbettung der Presseaffäre von 1960/61 in ein Wiederaufleben nationalsozialistischen Gedanken-‘Gutes‘ ernst nimmt, wird in manchen Fällen seine Zuordnung von Personen und Ereignissen erst verständlich."²⁴

Frenzied Philology

Yet Celan did not remain a silent victim of these attacks. A rigorous and persistent effort to disprove the allegations yet also dismantle their underlying motivations became a lifelong enterprise for the poet. Effectively this meant that Celan sharpened his own philological tools and became invested in the philological aspects of his works. He devised a meticulous system of dating drafts of his poems, and even his marginal notes both in his own writings as well as in the books he

²⁴ Barbara Wiedemann, *Paul Celan, die Goll Affäre: Dokumente zu einer 'Infamie,'* pp. 828, 834.

read.²⁵ He also collaborated with supportive critics, read, provided commentary on and even edited their reviews of his poems.²⁶ Celan became deeply engaged in editorial decision-making, not only of his own books of poetry but also in literary journals that reprinted selections of his poems or translations.²⁷ He carefully vetted reprinting requests, especially with regards to one of his most famous poems, “Todesfuge,” which he prevented from being published in a number of German and other European anthologies where, in Celan’s eyes, the editors or translators had not made unequivocal statements of support for him.²⁸

Celan’s philological efforts to safeguard the reception of his works were a taxing and deeply stressful task for the poet.²⁹ As an example, Celan worked together with the literary scholar Walter Jens on the latter’s review “Leichtfertige Vorwürfe gegen einen Dichter: Ein abschließend klärendes Wort zu der von Claire Goll

²⁵ The 1999 critical edition of Celan’s Meridian speech is a tour de force of Celan’s editorial practice and proves how carefully Celan edited his works and traced and dated changes in his drafts. Paul Celan, *Der Meridian: Endfassung, Vorstufen, Materialien* (Frankfurt a. Main: Tübinger Ausgabe/Suhrkamp, 1999). See also: Axel Gellhaus, “Marginalien: Paul Celan als Leser,” *“Der Glühende Leertext”: Annäherungen an Paul Celans Dichtung* (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1993). Gellhaus examines the traces and annotations of Celan’s reading in his personal library, which Celan also dates.

²⁶ It is important to note that Celan refrained from discussing or interpreting his own poems, and rather commented on interpretations by third parties.

²⁷ One example is Celan’s correspondence with the editor of the 1963 spring edition of *Neue Rundschau*, Gottfried Bermann. See Chapter 1, p. 31.

²⁸ Wiedemann, *Paul Celan, die Goll Affäre*, p. 844.

²⁹ “Die Affäre hat Paul Celans Leben und Werk der Pariser Jahre geprägt wie kaum ein anderes Ereignis, ihr Einfluss darauf kann gar nicht überbewertet werden. Zwanzig Jahre begleitete sie ihn.“ It especially affected his social circles: Celan discontinued many of his close friendships in its aftermath, including with Ingeborg Bachmann, Klaus Demus, Milo Dor, Max Frisch and Hans Magnus Enzensberger: “Die Affäre machte Paul Celan einsam. Viele langjährige und intensive Freundschaften zerbrechen . . . weil die von ihm erwartete Solidarität ausbleibt.“ Wiedemann, *Paul Celan, die Goll Affäre*, p. 839.

behaupteten Abhängigkeit Paul Celans von Ivan Goll.”³⁰ Their correspondence is a testament to Celan’s persistent and substantial involvement. Karl-Josef Kuschel, in his recollection of the epistolary exchange with Walter Jens, perceives a “nervous pressing and insisting” (“nervöses Drängen”), and anxiety.³¹

Indeed, Celan’s very frequent and numerous letters to Jens, his tone of writing, the copious amount of reference material he presents to Jens, and ultimately his hurried and short visit to Tübingen, evoke states of stress and tension. I describe this mood in my project as ‘frenzy.’³² The way in which the word ‘frenzy’ becomes productive for me is less through the pathological or psychological content it signifies, nor as terminology, but because of the temporal dynamic it helps capture. Frenzy describes a mode of hurry and unrest, spurred by a nervous or anxious constitution. Celan’s frenzy in his philologically-invested writing to me marks a position in time in writings about literature. It suggests an untimely lapsing into the future, pressed forward, in Celan’s case, by the tremors and hauntings of the past. These marks of frenzy in the temporal positionings of philological writing go against the dominant ways of writing about Celan and the history his poems speak of, which locate critical writing about Celan in the safety of ‘after,’ a place and time when the past has already been overcome, when the Shoah, and when Nazi

³⁰ Walter Jens, “Leichtfertige Vorwürfe gegen einen Dichter: Ein abschließend klärendes Wort zu der von Claire Goll behaupteten Abhängigkeit Paul Celans von Ivan Goll,” *Die Zeit*, 6 June 1961.

³¹ Karl-Josef Kuschel, “‘Tübingen, Jänner’: Paul Celan, Walter Jens, und die Schwierigkeiten einer deutsch-jüdischen Begegnung,” *Festschrift Prof. Wilfried Selzer*, Tübingen, 2008.

³² This echoes Celan’s lifelong, persistent engagement with the affair. He scans newspapers for its traces years after the high point of the press campaign: “so verfolgt . . . er über den eigentlichen Höhepunkt der Affäre hinaus jede ihrer Spuren in der deutschen und französischen Presse.“ Wiedemann, *Paul Celan, die Goll Affäre*, p. 839.

rule, are purportedly over. The temporality of frenzy, where past and future are always encroaching on and destabilizing the experience of the present moment, where a past is haunting the present and the future looms over it and threatens it, in all the colors of actuality, writes a history of continuation yet without the comforts of linearity or progress, where the past can safely be left behind or overcome. The past remains part of the present, and reaches for the present from a new vantage point in the future.

Peter Szondi and the *Celan-Studien*

Among Celan's efforts to reach out to literary critics who were able to support and defend him, his collaborations with the literary scholar Peter Szondi stand out. Peter Szondi came to Celan's aid in the press, but he also wrote interpretations of Celan's poems that became the book *Celan-Studien*. The *Celan-Studien* stand on their own as important readings of Celan's poems. And they at the same time are marked by the critical reception of Celan, by the Goll Affair, and by Celan himself.³³ In my project I uncover how Celan influenced but also instructed Szondi in order to have his writing about Celan, and the *Celan-Studien*, not be an isolated project but spur a much more consequential shift in practices of literary

³³ Peter Szondi was a German-Jewish literary scholar, who was born in 1929 in Budapest, Hungary. Along with his family, he was deported to Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in 1944. He and his family were freed from the camp in the same year on the Kastner train, and were taken to live in Switzerland, where Szondi later studied and obtained his doctorate in Germanistik. He completed his *Habilitation* at the Freie Universität Berlin in 1960–61 and later founded the Institut für Allgemeine und Vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft (AVL Institute) there. He died on 18 October 1971.

scholarship and literary interpretation, including in academic institutions, among which Peter Szondi's own institute at the Freie Universität serves as a precedent.

Before Szondi began writing literary critical interpretations of Celan's poetry, he published reviews of Celan's poetry to disprove Claire Goll's plagiarism allegations. In a letter to the editor of *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* he provides a meticulous and purely philological comparison of the poems by Celan and Goll that Claire Goll had listed as examples of Celan's plagiarism. In his review, Szondi reconstructs the publication and draft dates of the poems in question, which to him preempt any further examination of semantic or phonemic similarities. Celan read a first published version of the review that Szondi submitted as a letter to the editor to *Die Welt*, and suggested corrections. On November 11, 1960, upon having read and commented on Szondi's letter draft, Celan sent a telegram to Szondi: "BITTE RICHTIGSTELLUNG SOFORT AN REDAKTION."³⁴ Szondi then incorporated these edits in the final version that he submitted to the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* as a letter-to-the-editor.³⁵ The review is not representative of Szondi's own literary scholarship, yet his exchange with Celan when the text was still in its draft stage still indicates that Celan directly influenced how Szondi presented his poetry to a reading public. Szondi's published response to a review of Celan's poetry by Hans Egon Holthausen showcases Celan's intervention, yet also collaboration with Szondi on questions of interpretation, even more distinctly. Holthausen, a former member

³⁴ Paul Celan and Peter Szondi, *Briefwechsel* (Frankfurt a. Main: Suhrkamp, 2005), p. 21. Celan traced Szondi's review also in other articles, to see who and to what ends the review was quoted.

³⁵ Peter Szondi, "Anleihe oder Verleumdung? Zu einer Auseinandersetzung über Paul Celan," *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 19 November 1960.

of the NSDAP and SS, and decorated literary scholar in post war Germany had published a review of Celan's book of poetry *Niemandrose* (1963), in which he provides an unforgiving and deeply cynical critique of Celan's poetry.³⁶ Earlier reviews reflect his taste as well. In 1954 he for example writes:

In Paul Celan, der am östlichen Rande des deutschen Sprachgebiets, in Czernowitz, geboren wurde und seit vielen Jahren in Paris lebt, begegnet uns ein Fremdling und Außenseiter der dichterischen Rede. In dem der Autor eine absolute Freiheit des Phantasierens für sich in Anspruch nimmt, räumt er dem Leser eine nicht weniger absolute Freiheit des Verstehens ein. Er kann die "Mühlen des Todes" trivial finden und das "weiße Mehl der Verheißung", das in ihnen gemahlen werden soll, für eine künstlichen und daher gänzlich tote Metapher erklären³⁷

Holthusen projects Celan as a negatively connotated foreigner whose metaphors are arbitrary and lend themselves to arbitrary assignments of meaning. He picks up on the same metaphor in his review "Das verzweifelte Gedicht" and criticizes "Mühlen des Todes" as "in X-beliebkeiten schwelgende Genitivmetapher" that he views as typical for Celan's early work.³⁸ Szondi was quick to berate Holthusen's

³⁶ Hans Egon Holthusen voluntarily joined the SS as a young adult (he narrates this experience, rather remorselessly and defensively, in the essay: Hans Egon Holthusen, "Freiwillig zur SS," *Merkur*, vol. 224, 1967. He took an active part in NSDAP programs to censor and defame art and literature deemed 'entartet' bei the Nazis. He nevertheless enjoyed an illustrious career after the war, as the director of the Goethe Institut in New York City (1961-1964), director of the literature section at the Akademie der Künste (1960-1963), as a jury member for the Fontane-Preis, and as president of the Bayerische Akademie der Schönen Künste (1968 – 1974).

³⁷ Hans Egon Holthusen, "Fünf junge Lyriker: Paul Celan," H.E. Holthusen *Ja und Nein: neue kritische Versuche*, (München: Pieper, 1954).

³⁸ Hans Egon Holthusen, "Das verzweifelte Gedicht. Die „Niemandrose“ – nach vier Jahren ein neuer Lyrikband von Paul Celan," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 2 May 1964.

reading, and submitted a letter-to-the-editor to *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, in which he rebuts Holthusen's misreading of the metaphor in question. Szondi explains that it is by no means arbitrary but has a clear line of reference: "nach einem Bericht der FAZ vom 13. Mai 1964 wurde in dem Frankfurter Prozeß gegen Eichmanns Stellvertreter in Budapest, Hermann Krumej, von der Anklage als Eichmanns Auspruch der Satz zitiert: wenn ich in drei Tagen nichts aus Istanbul erfahren habe, lasse ich die Mühle in Auschwitz arbeiten", and in an additional letter:

Der Satz ist ein Beleg dafür, daß Hitlers Konzentrationslager, die Gaskammern und die Krematorien „Mühlen“ oder „Todesmühlen“ genannt wurden; „Todesmühlen“ hieß, wie ich inzwischen erfahren habe, auch der Dokumentarfilm, mit dem die Alliierten nach dem Krieg die deutsche Bevölkerung über die Lager aufgeklärt haben ³⁹

Jean Bollack relates that Szondi's letter was the center of the conversations between himself, his wife Mayotte Bollack, Peter Szondi and Paul Celan, in the summer of 1964, when Bollack invited Szondi and Celan with his wife and son on a vacation to Bollack's summer residence in the South of France. In his book *Herzstein* he remembers: "Die Gespräche kreisten um ein immer wiederkehrendes Thema: die gegen ihn gerichteten Angriffe in der Presse. Die Bitterkeit, die er deswegen empfand, ließ ihn immer wieder darauf zurückkommen. Szondi hatte

³⁹ Peter Szondi, letter to Rolf Michaelis, 13 May 1964, *Briefe*, edited by Christoph König (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1994), p. 162.

dazu öffentlich Stellung genommen.”⁴⁰ Bollack refers to Szondi’s public critique of Holthusen’s review, and relates how Celan, during their time spent together in Moisasterville, worked on a statement in support of Szondi, validating the reference of “Mühlen des Todes” publically.⁴¹ The statement threatened Szondi’s reputation as a literary scholar because he suddenly found himself being publically ostracized by supporters of Holthusen, predominantly by the then editor-in-chief of the literature section of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Rolf Michaelis, who insinuates in his printed defense of Holthusen that Szondi’s letter contains significant philological errors. Celan in consequence wanted to step in and turn defend Szondi. Bollack writes: “Celan hat dazu eine Reihe von Texten redigiert, die er uns vorlegte mit uns besprach und schließlich alle wieder verwarf. Dies hatte während des ganzen Aufenthalts angedauert.”⁴² Celan ultimately never submitted a written defense of Szondi’s letter. Yet Bollack’s depiction of Celan and Szondi’s interactions in Moisville reveal how Celan considered to write a statement in the language of a critic or philologist that affirms the line reference of a metaphor in his poem. What Bollack also reveals is that Celan oversaw Szondi’s own public statements about his work and the discussions that erupted from them in the press and discussed them with Szondi, therefore also indirectly instructing him how to represent and even interpret his poetry publically. Szondi’s letter to Michaelis, which he sent to him privately in response to Michaelis’ critique of his letter-to-the

⁴⁰ Jean Bollack, *Herzstein: über ein unveröffentlichtes Gedicht von Paul Celan* (München: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1993), p. 13.

⁴¹ Bollack, Celan and Szondi first met in Celan’s summer home in Moisville, Normandy before traveling to the Dordogne.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 13.

editor, includes a list of points that look like an instruction in how to understand Celan's poems. The list begins with: "1. Ein Celansches Gedicht muß nicht ausdrücklich mit der massenhaften Ermordung der Juden beschäftigen, um in einem Bild wie dem von den „Mühlen des Todes“ die Erinnerung daran haraufzubeschwören."⁴³ He also asserts that Auschwitz is never a topic („Thema") in Celan's poems but: "auch dort noch gegenwärtig ist, wo Holthusen ‚das Thema‘ nicht ‚ausdrücklich‘ behandelt sieht."⁴⁴ When Szondi in his first response to Holthusen's review reconstructs the references for the image "Mühlen des Todes", he now offers a more general description of how to understand all metaphors in Celan. Celan's metaphors, and indeed language, always carry the memory of Auschwitz with it, even in instances when this history is not explicitly mentioned. Szondi therefore, in close contact with Celan and the reception of Celan's poetry, articulates how to understand history in Celan's poems, how to therefore understand poetic language and representation. This insight into Celan's poetry were shared in Moisville, as Bollack recounts. Together they discussed that: "Alle Gedichte mussten sich deshalb auf die Judenvernichtung beziehen, und zwar durch die Materie selbst, aus der sie gemacht waren."⁴⁵ Szondi learns from and with Celan how to understand his poems. In addition, Celan oversees and intervenes into Szondi's writings about his poems.

⁴³ Peter Szondi, letter to Rolf Michaelis, 30 May 1964, *Briefe*, p. 167.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Jean Bollack, *Herzstein*, p. 15.

Szondi's *Celan-Studien*, which become his last writing project before his premature passing in 1971, is written after Celan's death, and therefore composed without Celan's editorial intervention. The project of *Celan-Studien*, however, remains from the planning stages highly responsive to Celan's wishes for his critical reception and the emotional registers of Celan's struggles with the world of literary criticism hitherto. Szondi remembers the conversation he had with Celan when he finally made the decision to write the first essay of the *Celan-Studien*, "Durch die Enge geführt": "Er war an diesem Tag so traurig, daß ich den Mut nicht aufbrachte zu zögern, und sofort zusagte."⁴⁶ Szondi's writing project from its inception is meant to respond to Celan's distress. Szondi had been one of Celan's most trusted advisors and advocates during the Goll Affair, and all that Szondi had written about Celan's poetry served as philological statements of evidence against Claire Goll's allegations. Celan had then asked Szondi to write an essay for the journal *Critique* that Derrida had planned to put together in March 1970, a few months before Celan's passing. Szondi writes to Gisèle Lestrangé: "Er selbst hatte mich bei unserem letzten Treffen im März 1970 darum gebeten."⁴⁷ Szondi wrote and published "Durch die Enge geführt" in *Critique* in 1971, and wrote the other two essays about Celan in 1971, as part of the *Celan-Studien*. The *Celan-Studien* were finally edited and published in 1972 after Szondi's own death in 1971.

⁴⁶ Peter Szondi, letter to Claude David, 6 June 1970, *Briefe*, p. 242.

⁴⁷ Peter Szondi, letter to Gisèle Celan-Lestrangé, *Briefe*, p. 241.

Further Developments in the Critical Reception of Celan

Paul Celan's very negative experience of the reception of his poetry is often overlooked in the much more positive narrative we have today of how Celan's work has been received. Celan has emerged to be one of the leading figures of German-language literature. His poetry, poetics, and works of translation to this day receive the sustained and prolific attention of critics, eminent literary scholars and philosophers. Engagement with Celan's works thereby has come from pronouncedly different critical angles. Critics respond to the range and heterogeneity of Celan's own interests and fields of knowledge that are the sediment and archive of his poems. These include history, foreign languages and literatures, translation, and the natural sciences—especially geology and botany, religion and mysticism, and philosophy. Celan is also canonized as one of the principal literary authors to have survived the Holocaust and whose poetry manifests this biography and this history. These poems emerge from and are charged with history, prompting the reader of Celan's poetry to perceive and research this history. At the same time Celan's poems challenge the reader in that they are so powerfully and authentically invested in their own force as poems, in their very own singular language, which requires the form of poetry to speak and thrive. The intricate intertextuality, novelty, insistently autonomous idiom and imagery of Celan's poems, which counter to Celan's intentions were labeled "hermetic" and "dark" by critics of his time, had from the moment of their publication roused the interest of philosophers such as Martin Heidegger, Theodor Adorno, Jacques Derrida, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Hans-Georg Gadamer,

who deeply engaged with and/or wrote interpretations of Celan's poems. Within two decades of Celan's passing, Celan scholarship had cemented its close relationship with philosophy and literary theory. The first International Paul Celan Symposium in 1984,⁴⁸ as well as the Suhrkamp book *Paul Celan*, published in 1988 and edited by Werner Hamacher and Winfried Menninghaus,⁴⁹ are unmatched displays of the rigorous philosophical and literary-theoretical interest in Celan's poems, which to this day persists and continues to complicate a clean separation between philosophy that writes about Celan, and Celan's poetry and poetics as important contributors—in their own right and in their own language—to 20th-century philosophy.⁵⁰

Yet from the beginning, the perennial question that Szondi asked in 1971 in his *Celan-Studien*: “was muss der Leser wissen,” i.e., what must the reader know

⁴⁸ Amy D. Colin (ed.), *Argumentum e Silencio: International Paul Celan Symposium: Internationales Paul Celan Symposium* (New York: de Gruyter, 1987). The symposium was organized by Amy D. Colin at the University of Washington in 1984, and had an impressive list of guest speakers, including Hans-Georg Gadamer, Jacques Derrida, Jean Bollack, Beda Allemann, Stephane Moses, David Wellberry, Bernhard Böschenstein, James K. Lyon and Rainer Nägele.

⁴⁹ Werner Hamacher and Winfried Menninghaus (eds.), *Paul Celan* (Frankfurt a. Main: Suhrkamp, 1988). The perennial essay collection includes, for example, reprints of a selection of Jacques Derrida's “*Shibboleth*,” a selection from Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe's *Poetry as Experience* and Werner Hamacher's “The Second of Inversion.”

⁵⁰ More recent scholarship has been seen crediting Celan's writings as not just the object of philosophy but as important contributions to philosophy, exhibiting an appreciation of the epistemological mode of literature against a traditional separation of philosophy and literature. Werner Hamacher's later writings about Celan follow this course; see the forthcoming book *Frontier, Encounter: Celan and Philosophy*, edited by Kristina Mendicino and Dominik Zechner (Albany: SUNY Press, 2022) with essays on Paul Celan's relationship to philosophy. See also the conference (and subsequent book) *Celans Theorie der Dichtung heute*, held June 10–12, 2021 at the University of Zurich, organized by Evelyn Dueck and Sandro Zanetti, which revisits Celan's poetry and poetics and questions whether it can be understood as theory, and as an evenly matched conversation partner for literary theory and philosophy. They conclude that Celan's many different forms of writing, his notes, marginal notes, drafts, and completed speeches that delineate his poetics become theory not in a systematic or conclusive format but “‘Theorie’ in einem explorativen, poetischen Sinne.” Susanne Zepp (ed.), *Textual Understanding and Historical Experience: On Peter Szondi* (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2015), p. 7.

about Celan's life and the history he had lived through, has loomed over Celan scholarship and complicates formal readings of individual poems and a view of poetry from an exclusively aesthetic or literary-theoretical angle. The year 1990 marks a watershed moment for Celan scholarship, when Celan's estate, which possesses drafts of poems and other materials connected to poems, translations and publications, Celan's correspondence, his notebooks, as well as his entire library—comprising an estimated 5000 books and which Celan had often marked, underlined, dated, or left marginal notes in—was moved from the Celan family's private residences in Paris and Moisville, France as well as from Celan's office in the ENS in Paris, to the Deutsche Literaturarchiv in Marbach.⁵¹ Andrei Corbea-Hoisie identifies a “biographical turn” (“biographische Wende”) in the year 1990, stimulating new readings of Celan's poetry informed by Celan's biography.⁵² James K. Lyon, in a contribution to the *Celan Yearbook* in 1993, diagnoses that Celan scholarship henceforward has even more noticeably solidified into two “Interpretengruppen”: one with a focus on biography and history; and the other with a poetological and literary-theoretical orientation.

⁵¹ Not all parts of the archive are available for public viewing: They can only be accessed via special request. This includes Celan's correspondence and personal notes. A significant amount of this private correspondence—such as that with his wife Gisèle Celan-Lestrange, with Nelly Sachs, Peter Szondi, Klaus Demus or Ingeborg Bachmann—has been published.

⁵² A. Corbea-Hoisie (ed.), *Paul Celan: Biographie und Interpretation*, p. 45. Important publications of the 1990s that exhibit this focus on biography are: John Felstiner, *Paul Celan: Poet, Survivor, Jew* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995); Christoph Jamme (ed.), “*Der Glühende Leertext*”: *Annäherungen an Paul Celans Dichtung* (München: Fink, 1993); Monika Schmitz-Emans, *Poesie als Dialog: Vergleichende Studien zu Paul Celan und seinem literarischen Umfeld (Beiträge zur neueren Literaturgeschichte)*, (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1993); James K. Lyon, “Der Holocaust und Nicht-Referentielle Sprache in der Lyrik Paul Celans,” *Celan-Jahrbuch*, vol. 5, 1993, p. 248.

Yet it is debatable whether Celan scholarship can be so neatly categorized, especially because Celan's works and the materials in the archive themselves invite such diverse points of entry and exploration that, even if they take up one of the many fields of Celan's personal interest, cannot properly be described as biographical or historical in their content.⁵³ This could entail literary studies that investigate the material but also conceptual aspects of Celan's writing, meticulous drafting, dating and editing practice, for example.⁵⁴ It could also be Celan's performative subversion of genre and style conventions in his speeches,⁵⁵ or his engagement with philosophy, which can be reconstructed through examining his editions of important philosophical works, his marginal notes therein, as well as his workbooks, which equally spurred innovative approaches for reading Celan's works intertextually.⁵⁶ In the end, the task every single reader of Celan faces—that

⁵³ Eskin and Gold in their introduction pose the idea that he develops a poetry that borrows from and transforms emerging technical and scientific vocabularies, journalistic phrases, both popular and even arcane writings, and a range of languages, that unsettles the notion of a national or native literature. To them, this intertextuality means that in criticism “flourishes a resilient, productive, and occasionally idiosyncratic engagement with Celan's works that values its resistance to any particular theoretical or philosophical regime” and ultimately helps the editors of this particular edition in “soliciting essays that go beyond the traditional and institutional frames of Germanistik and German Studies” to eventually contribute to “situat[ing] Celan as a poet whose work is of global import.” The many points of entry into Celan's oeuvre and archive serve to open Celan scholarship to other fields of study, and therefore make Celan relevant for a study of literature in a global context, a point which is already relevant for Peter Szondi and his critical comparative literature.

⁵⁴ Sandro Zanetti, “*zeitoffen*”: *Zur Chronographie Paul Celans* (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2006); Gellhaus, “Marginalien: Paul Celan Als Leser.”

⁵⁵ See: Kristina Mendicino, “An Other Rhetoric: Paul Celan's ‘Meridian,’” *MLN - Modern Language Notes*, vol. 126, no. 3, 2011, pp. 630–50. In my view this presents an exemplary approach that posits that the performance of rhetorical commonplaces such as “Meine Damen und Herren” through repetition function to both subvert and instate the often overlooked rhetorical and performative identity of the *Meridian* speech.

⁵⁶ Bernard Fassbind, *Poetik des Dialogs: Voraussetzungen dialogischer Poesie bei Paul Celan und Konzepte von Intersubjektivität bei Martin Buber, Martin Heidegger und Emmanuel Levinas* (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1995); Anja Lemke, *Konstellation ohne Sterne: Zur Poetischen und Geschichtlichen Zäsur bei Paul Celan und Martin Heidegger* (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2002); Martin-Jörg Schäfer, *Schmerz zum Mitsein: Zur Relektüre Celans und Heideggers durch Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe und*

of drawing connections to the actual poems, so radical in their claim to freedom and entirely themselves—remains the central challenge.

Celan and the Modes of Literary Scholarship

My dissertation does not aspire to be an additional or new interpretation of Celan's works. My project's central focus is rather on the reception of Celan's poetry. I examine select scenes where an encounter takes place between Celan the author, Celan's poems, and representatives and incidences of literary criticism. Analyses of these select scenes do not serve to reconstruct a comprehensive history of Celan's critical reception in the terms and modes of literary history. These scenes all revolve around a text, within and around which constellations of reception manifest. In the first chapter this is Celan's poem "Tübingen, Jänner," in the second it is Szondi's planned *Celan-Studien* project that he wrote at the institute he founded, and in the third it is Szondi's essay "Eden" and Celan's poem "Du liegst im großen Gelausche." These encounters and scenes reveal complex and also conflictual relationships between Celan and his critics; they show the very immediate interface between the poet, his poems and the world. We can see how Celan himself experienced and oversaw his poems in context, how they were being negotiated and responded to and how Celan reacted in turn: in his correspondence, editorial processes, and in his poetics and his poetry. The reception of Celan's work is here not presented as a sphere that is neatly separate from Celan's works themselves.

Jean-Luc Nancy (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2003); James K. Lyon, *Paul Celan and Martin Heidegger: An Unresolved Conversation, 1951–70* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006).

Celan's writings are being marked by their reception, while critics, centrally Szondi when he writes his *Celan-Studien*, align their critical habitus and mode of writing not only to Celan's poems, but also to these same markings of reception in these poems. Looking at reception in this way, as processes of reciprocity, offers a different view of literary criticism and how involved in fact it is with its object of study, and how literature can equally be in close relationship with its readers and critics. For literary criticism this means that this degree of involvement affects its own writing registers, its rhetorical and epistemological modes. As I argue in the case of Celan, this is especially true in regards to knowing and writing history.

I think that Celan's poetry challenges us in unique ways to rethink how to write history, especially in those critical realms that turn to literature in order to learn about history. If we perceive literature to be a very good, even privileged site where we can know and learn about history, and therefore turn to literature to ask about history, we find ourselves being prompted by literature to know history in the modes that literature itself knows. Readers to this day often turn to Celan's poems to learn about the Shoah, yet the poems pull out from under us the rug that is any currency or economy of information and instead draw us entirely into their being and knowing and thereby make us relearn *how* to know history.

A Roadmap through this Dissertation Project

My research journey began with a text that I felt drawn towards: Peter Szondi's essay fragment "Eden," which is an interpretation of Paul Celan's poem "Du liegst

im großen Gelausche.”⁵⁷ What I found intriguing about the essay were the circumstances of Szondi writing the essay and Celan writing the poem. Celan, when he first transcribed the poem, dated it 22/23 December 1967, days that he visited Berlin and spent time with, amongst others, Peter Szondi, who was then a professor at the Freie Universität. Szondi drove Celan from his accommodation to the university, and strolled through the Christmas market by the Funkturm. Celan’s poem references these experiences and alludes to conversations he had with Szondi. Szondi therefore became a firsthand witness to the poem’s genesis and knew some of its references intimately. Four years later, around one year after Celan’s passing in 1970, Szondi attempted an interpretation of this same poem “Du liegst im großen Gelausche,” of which he knew so many intimate biographical details. “Eden” was the resulting essay, and was to be included in his book project *Celan-Studien* but remained a fragment and was published in its fragment form in the posthumous publication of *Celan-Studien*, after Szondi’s own death by suicide. The essay became a kind of writing experiment, in which Szondi tried to solve the problem of using detailed biographical knowledge when interpreting a poem.

I devote the last chapter of my dissertation to analyzing the setting of the essay “Eden” and the circumstances of its conception. The preceding two chapters similarly are scenes where Celan or Celan’s poetry and poetics shape and are shaped by the context of how they are received.

⁵⁷ The essay was written between April and September 1971, and published posthumously first in *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*. See: Peter Szondi, “Zu einem Gedicht Paul Celans,” *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 15 October 1972; later it was published under the title “Eden” in Peter Szondi, *Celan-Studien* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972).

The first of these scenes is Celan's visit to Tübingen in 1967, where he meets with Walter Jens to work on and fine-edit an article that Jens drafted as a counterstatement to the plagiarism accusations. Celan here is the reader of reviews of his own works, and thereby the reader of his own poetry. The mood of this scene of reading is frenzy, an anxious and hurried philological operation. During his visit, Celan also wrote his well-known Hölderlin poem "Tübingen Jänner." In his anxious constitution, which saturates his philological and editorial activities with Jens, he reaches out to Hölderlin, the poet from Tübingen who also suffered from mental distress. Celan, who with Jens is at pains to prove the authenticity, indeed creative originality of his poems, finds in Hölderlin a kindred spirit, who like him faced the erasure from literary canons, from literary history. This happened to Hölderlin because he succumbed to mental illness, which to this day is taken to discount the creative genius and originality of his last works written as a recluse. In Celan's poem "Tübingen, Jänner" and in his work with Jens on his own poetry, the question of originality converges with the biographies of insanity: that of Hölderlin as much as for Celan himself. In the critical reception of Hölderlin, this convergence has meant that his last works became excluded from his oeuvre, and from literary history as such. I argue that Celan's efforts therefore become a questioning of the structures of temporality and history that facilitate such marginalization and exclusion—efforts which are essential for Celan and his poetry as well, which is under threat of being discounted as unoriginal. In Celan's experiences of the Goll Affair, such questioning of originality converges with his own anxious and haunted mental state as well. I argue that Celan's poetry will require a literary criticism that

engages a non-linear temporality, one in fact where Celan and Hölderlin coinhabit the same temporal plane, as they do in the poem “Tübingen, Jänner” by means of quotation and appropriation. In this poem they form their own legacy, lineage, and tradition and link up with one another not along a temporal hierarchy of succession, but as ‘others’ to each other. Hölderlin brings his other language to the poem, and the poem makes space for it as a language that is entirely that of Hölderlin and can remain Hölderlin’s other and othered language. And, brought into the poem, this language is now placed next to Celan’s language, building a relationship with it. The poem becomes the framework within which Celan’s and Hölderlin’s otherness to each other becomes the building blocks of connection and lineage. In the absence of hierarchical temporalities of lineage, it is their otherness to each other, and the otherness to a normative center from the language of each, that becomes the fundament for creating lineage in the first place. The purpose of this chapter therefore is to reconstruct how Celan himself experienced, responded to and attempted to intervene into the reception of his works. His own relationship to his reception and to literary history and literary criticism, I argue, informs how perhaps his most important critical ally, Peter Szondi, then attempts to write about Celan—whereby the task of writing about Celan’s poetry becomes a call to fundamentally rethink the principles of writing about literature, and the assumed temporality of literary history.

Celan’s call to dismantle and realign the temporality of reading literature and history guides Szondi’s *Celan-Studien*. Before I discuss the *Celan-Studien*, I, however, first reconstruct Szondi’s own positions and efforts as a literary scholar.

After all, it was his own life's work to find a new way to study and write about literature and history, for which he went so far as to change the academic discipline of literary studies. Szondi sought to create a new format for engaging the literature of voices such as that of Celan, voices that could not be easily integrated into the literary canon and underlying schemes of history that Germanistik then represented. Such voices from the margins of a canon and from the margins and exterior of its history maybe required a new discipline, a new separate space in the university, both to be safe and to be adequately understood.

The second chapter therefore takes the early years of the Institut für Allgemeine und Vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft (AVL Institute) and Szondi's work there as its setting. I write a (limited) history of the AVL Institute, founded by Szondi in 1967, at the Freie Universität in Berlin and reconstruct how the initially very small institute was Szondi's effort to uncouple the study of literature from Germanistik. The new framework became general and comparative literature, for which Rene Wellek and Austin Warren's book *Theory of Literature* as well as the Institute of Comparative Literature at Yale University (which Wellek chaired) became a central prototype. Released from national literary history, literary texts became available for being the sites of connecting to history themselves rather than examples within an existing national history. A literary text's way of relating history, however, also manifests literature's own specific mode of knowledge and of conveying knowledge.

I try to trace how one of Szondi's projects that developed out of the AVL Institute became the *Celan-Studien*. He wanted to write about Celan in a way that

can respond, in all its own critical and rhetorical registers, to how Celan's poems remember history and write history. The AVL Institute facilitated this, because of its purpose to rethink how to study literature and history according to the epistemic modes of literature itself.

However, I also show how the AVL Institute did not only make possible but indeed was the prerequisite for a project such as the *Celan-Studien* in postwar Germany. I argue that Szondi needed the Institute to write about minority voices, but equally also because of his status as a member of the Jewish minority in Germany. The chapter investigates how the university remained a threat for Szondi, also as a Jewish scholar, and was not a completely safe space. The AVL institute amounted to creating a safe space for his work. I show that when Szondi writes about literature from the protected institutional setting he himself created, his "I" makes an appearance in his writings, and he begins to interrogate himself as the writing subject, as someone who is vulnerable and who has lived through a specific history. This "I," however, is not his psychological or only his subjective experience of the literary work. It is rather the subjectivity of Szondi: How it has been shaped by and emerged from his experience of history as a Jew during and after the Shoah. I trace how he begins to get in touch with the identity of this "I" through reading and engaging Celan, but also because Celan directly prompted him to do so in their correspondence. In the end, the AVL becomes the safe space where Szondi can write as "I," as a Holocaust survivor, and can therefore write about Celan in a way that is befitting, that writes from this history and remembers. Ultimately, this also means that the way in which history is being written changes,

and aligns with the demands of Celan's poetics. To respond to these demands, I take inspiration from Werner Hamacher's text about the AVL institute, and his realization that writing a history of the institute, in relation to Szondi's death, and Celan, is written as "stocken." In contrast to the restlessness and impatience implied in "frenzy," "stocken" suggests a temporality of delays, interruptions and caesuras which, however, also unhinges the structures of linearity for writing history and proposes instead a writing position that does not emancipate us from the past in taking us further away from it, but finds it hard to detach from the event and move along at a steady pace.

In the *Celan-Studien*, Szondi aspires to find a different way to write about history in Celan's poems without recourse to representational models and the tools of the historical sciences and Germanistik. In the third and final chapter, I examine the *Celan-Studien* on this premise in more detail and narrow down the analysis to the last essay of collection, "Eden." As mentioned before, the essay attempts to interpret a poem by Celan for which Szondi had personal biographical knowledge about the writing context. The fact that Szondi ultimately recorded detailed biographical information in his essay of course seems to contradict precisely the motivation to write about the historical without representational models and empirical data. After all, such biographical information seems the crudest and most obvious empirical source. Yet it is precisely the fact that Szondi had been exposed to these details, that this knowledge affected him and could not be shaken off, that becomes the productive crisis of "Eden." It urges Szondi to question his writing and posture of interpretation from the ground up, in order not to have the

biographical details count as that crude and simplistic shortcut to an interpretation of a work of art.

I argue that what this means is that the essay “Eden” subverts Szondi’s critical hermeneutics when it dismantles especially one of the tenets of hermeneutics: its traditional posture of temporal distance. To that end, I look at Szondi’s own relationship to hermeneutics, which becomes tangible in his historical narrative of hermeneutics constructed in his book of lectures *Einführung in die literarische Hermeneutik*. He therein seeks to reanimate the potential of hermeneutics to be a critical practice, for which he sees especially Schleiermacher’s 19th-century hermeneutics to be the precursor. Szondi’s investment in criticism and hermeneutics makes him an enthusiastic supporter of new rhetorical and pedagogical formats for engaging with literature in the university classroom. Discussion and participation-based formats of studying literature, however, as Russell A. Berman shows in his readings of Szondi, realign the reader’s and interpreter’s position to the literary text and make the activities of reading, thinking and writing much more interdependent and immediate. Writing about literature that proceeds from the discussion-based seminar reverberates with the seminar’s rhetorical energy and acts of speaking; it begins to pivot towards rhetoric yet thereby also towards rhetoric’s relationship to temporality, one of temporal immediacy rather than temporal distance.

When Szondi then writes about Celan’s poems in the *Celan-Studien*, such an immediacy between reading and writing becomes more dramatic and personal. Celan is Szondi’s contemporary; little time passes between Celan writing the poem,

urging Szondi to write, and Szondi sitting down to write about them. At the same time, it was Celan himself as well as his poetics that entreat Szondi to give up his position of the distanced, removed and objective literary historian and instead participate in the process of the poem remembering and writing history as the present. Szondi as reader is asked to surrender to the poem, indeed surrender his writing.

Yet when this writing about Celan's poems collapses this temporality of distance, and moves into the here and now, Szondi's writing itself begins to make a claim to the present moment, which in "Eden" is making a claim to his own experience of history: Szondi's encounter with Celan in December 1967. "Eden" thereby gains the status of text with its own rhetorical identity when it narrates this encounter with Celan on its own terms and writes the individual scenes of the encounter as Szondi's own story. In fact, the poem itself has removed the boundary between Szondi on the outside and the poem's inside. Indeed, Szondi discovers himself to be in the poem: he is named as "Du," and the reference for the "Du" as a specific person. This "Du" in the poem is the witness of the poem's events and is placed in the central stanza and line of the poem. Szondi discovers himself as the witness in the poem: the witness who will recount the events, who thereby is destined to be writer as well. The poem calls upon Szondi to be a writer, and Celan's poetics make Szondi into a writer, rather than only a reader.

Yet the essay "Eden" does not want to give up its status as literary interpretation, and therefore also its posterior position, its position of coming after the poem, of having the poem be the primary text. This becomes the crisis and productive energy

of the essay. It has to retreat from its claim to the present moment, and to its identity as a text, when it signals that it is an interpretation. Szondi wrestles with his stance of writing in “Eden” because he knows that interpretation must be of service to a history and writing of history in a way that is appropriate at a moment when representation is fraud, as Celan understands. Celan’s disavowal of representation must extend to other forms of writing as well, especially those that engage with his poems and engage with the history that the poems come from.

To Conclude

I propose that it is Celan’s own philological effort, spurred by the Goll plagiarism affair which made him see the need to become invested in the reception of his poems, that instructs literary theorists and critics on how they should receive Celan’s work. It is Celan’s own material interjection into the writing projects of his interpreters that challenges his critics to reevaluate their modes of criticisms, interpretation, and writing.

Yet it is also Celan’s poetry and poetics that compel his readers to undergo such reevaluation. Celan’s poetry and his poetics remembers the dead and recalls history not through representation but through actualizing them in the space of the poem, which is possible because of the different temporal frameworks that the poem can erect. The poem folds and inverts the linear narratives of history into its Now. Readers seeking to respond to what the poem brings into its Now must therefore also trade in learned mechanisms of representation to relate what the poem speaks of, including when what it speaks of is history. Celan’s poetry wants the reader-

critic to align her or his writing to the poem, which means that he or she also aligns to its structures of temporality. My project asks what the consequences of such alignments are, and takes Peter Szondi's essay "Eden", his *Celan-Studien*, as well their institutional context of literary scholarship as exemplary *Versuche* to write about literature from this aligned angle, from this different place in time. What I will show is that remembering history, writing about history, if we follow after Paul Celan, means that what literary studies begins to produce are texts, that was literary studies does is writing.

CHAPTER I: Paul Celan Conjures Hölderlin: Literary Criticism, Literary History
and the Other

Night Train to Tübingen: Paul Celan Consults Walter Jens

“Wir brauchen vier, vielleicht fünf Stunden. Und nur Philologie,” Paul Celan writes to Germanist Walter Jens before he hurries by night train from Paris to visit him in Tübingen on January 28, 1961.⁵⁸ The poet and the philologist meet there to discuss plans for Jens' article in *Die Zeit*,⁵⁹ in which he will provide further philological evidence in defense of Celan against accusations made by Claire Goll that Celan plagiarized from her late husband Yvan Goll, accusations that she had published six months prior in the Munich literary journal *Baubudenpoet*. In the same letter to Jens, Celan apologizes in advance for losing his nerve over the topic: “Verzeihen Sie, wenn ich das eine oder andere Mal ein wenig die Nerven verliere.”⁶⁰ After an afternoon of working through the materials with Jens, Celan leaves Tübingen in the same state of frenzy in which he planned the visit.⁶¹ He takes the night train back

⁵⁸ Correspondence between Paul Celan and Walter Jens (1957 – 1961) in the Walter Jens Archive, Akademie der Künste, Berlin. Walter Jens' archive includes a folder with documents (letters, other reviews, Celan's books of poetry) that he worked with, and the correspondence with Celan. Some of the letters that document Jens' work with Celan require special permission and a written request for viewing. Celan's letters to Jens are not available for public viewing.

⁵⁹ Walter Jens, “Leichtfertige Vorwürfe gegen einen Dichter: Ein abschließend klärendes Wort zu der von Claire Goll behaupteten Abhängigkeit Paul Celans von Yvan Goll,” *Die Zeit*, 6 June 1961.

⁶⁰ Walter Jens Archive.

⁶¹ Karl-Josef Kuschel gives a detailed account of Celan's hasty preparations for the visit. Celan's letters to Jens, according to Kuschel, exhibit a “nervöses Drängen.” Based on my own consultation of the documents at the Akademie der Künste, I agree with his interpretation. Celan writes many

to Paris on the same evening. His wife Gisele Celan-Léstrange notes in her diary entry for that day that Celan wrote the poem “Tübingen, Jänner.” Celan's poem on Tübingen, on Hölderlin, is conceived during a visit to Hölderlin's city, where all attention is seized by the plagiarism affair and the associated philological labor that a defense requires.

When Bernhard Böschstein chronicles Celan's encounter with Jens in Tübingen he highlights the private nature of Celan's experience of the very public plagiarism affair. His personal suffering caused by the allegations draw him to Hölderlin, another poet who was misunderstood during his lifetime: “Bei Celan löste ein extremer Moment seines Lebens eine Hölderlin-Evokation aus, ein Moment in dem sich das Private untrennbar mit dem Historischen verband. Celan befand sich damals in Mitten einer Phase einer erneuten Intensivierung der Goll-Affäre.”⁶² The role Hölderlin played for Celan during the Goll Affair becomes apparent on other occasions as well. One of Celan's close friends, the French philologist and theorist Jean Bollack recalls Celan's visit to his summer house in the Dordogne in 1964, in the company of his wife Gisele Celan-Lestrange and their son, as well as Jean and Mayotte Bollack and Peter Szondi. During that visit Celan is drafting his own vindication of Szondi's analysis of a metaphor that Celan supposedly borrowed from Goll, in a letter to the editor of *Die Zeit*. His own philological, auto-hermeneutic undertaking, which he in the end decided not to

letters, amasses documents for Jens, and is more involved in the editing process than might seem customary. Karl-Josef Kuschel, “‘Tübingen, Jänner’: Paul Celan, Walter Jens, und die Schwierigkeiten einer deutsch-jüdischen Begegnung,” Festschrift Prof. Wilfried Selzer: Tübingen, 2008.

⁶² Bernhard Böschstein, “Paul Celan im Gespräch mit deutschen und französischen Dichtern von Hölderlin bis zur Gegenwart,” *Oxford German Studies*, vol. 34, no. 1, 2005.

publish, perfectly overshadows the week in Bollack's summer house. In his short introduction to the book *Pierre de Coeur*, about a poem that Celan wrote during his stay, Bollack writes: "Die Gespräche kreisten um ein ständig wiederkehrendes Thema: die gegen ihn gerichteten Angriffe in der deutschen Presse. Die Bitterkeit, die er deswegen empfand, lies ihn immer wieder darauf zurückkommen."⁶³ Here too, the ghost of Hölderlin makes his appearance:

Immer wieder gab es Momente, in denen Düsternis und Unruhe ihn befielen. Mayotte Bollack notierte über diesen Aufenthalt: „Eines Abends, wo die Gestalten und die Erinnerung Hölderlins ihn beschäftigten sagte er : Je suis la Poesie ...“ Er sprach, denke ich, von dem Verhältnis zwischen seiner Person und der Dichtung, jener Alterität, die er, den seine Schöpfungen stets wie Begleiter und Gefährten umgaben, uneingeschränkt und schmerzvoll erlebte.⁶⁴

What arises in this scene of conjuring Hölderlin is a gesture of identification: The poet is poetry. With his, and maybe all poetry, he sustains the injury of a defamatory misreading, from a place—according to Bollack's interpretation of Celan's exclamation—of shared, and painful alterity.

In the poem "Tübingen, Jänner" as well, Celan's own anguish over the plagiarism attacks coincides with his evocation of Hölderlin. In the poem this gesture of identification, "je suis la poésie," overlaps with a personal identification with the late Hölderlin. The conjuring of a literary ancestor becomes, as I argue in this chapter, Celan's model of literary succession and influence. He posits this against attempts to canonize his poetry that were being debated during the Goll

⁶³ Jean Bollack, *Herzstein: über ein unveröffentlichtes Gedicht von Paul Celan* (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1993), p. 13.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p.11

Affair, as well as against the discussions that were unfolding in various *Feuilletons* in the early 1960s. Celan's reception of Osip Mandelstam's notions of readership, dialogue and its temporal structures and historical dimension can be applied to understand the interdependence of proximity and alterity in the poem "Tübingen, Jänner," as well as the temporal framework of the "punktuelle Gegenwart" of the poem. The poem, because of its claim to temporal presence, becomes the plane and the narrow margin within which the antecedent poet, here Hölderlin, is brought into a position of utmost proximity with Celan's own words. This proximity, which remains conditional upon the circumstance that one poet is carried into the poem from a previous time, makes apparent the alterity of Celan's words and those of Hölderlin, which appear in both quotation marks and as appropriations.

Walter Jens' Review: "Leichtfertige Vorwürfe gegen einen Dichter"

Walter Jens' review of the documents that Celan had sent him came at a time when enough evidence to disprove and perfectly dismantle Claire Goll's grievances had been amassed.⁶⁵ Paul Celan had also received the Büchner Prize, and the prize committee had been the first public organ to publish an official rejection of the plagiarism case.⁶⁶ Yet none of the newspapers who had published these disproven accusations had officially acknowledged their misreading or issued a public or even

⁶⁵ Reviews that helped invalidate the charges included: Peter Szondi, "Anleihe oder Verleumdung? Zu einer Auseinandersetzung über Paul Celan," *Neue Züricher Zeitung*, 19 November 1960; Hans Magnus Enzensberger, "Was zum Fall Paul Celan zu sagen ist," *Die Welt*, 16 December 1960; together with Enzensberger: Dietrich Schaefer, "Was zum Fall Celan zu sagen ist," *Die Welt*, 16 December 1960. All reprinted in Barbara Wiedemann, *Paul Celan, die Goll Affäre: Dokumente einer Infamie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2000), pp. 251–403.

⁶⁶ Deutsche Presse Agentur (dpa), "Erklärung," statement signed by the six members of the award committee and sent to the Deutsche Presse Agentur, 10 January 1961, in Wiedemann, p. 325.

private apology to Celan. *Die Welt* published a retraction in June 1961, titled “Fazit,” and one insistent sceptic of Celan’s poetry, Rainer K. Abel, delivered his corrections a week later in *Die Welt* as well.⁶⁷

In the reviews prior to his change of heart, Abel uses Claire Goll's claims as a springboard to construct the more far-reaching argument that one should interrogate the creative originality of Celan's poetry. He does not wholeheartedly accept the label of plagiarist, but prefers to narrow it down to literary influence in order to discuss the merit of Celan's works as original poetry. “Wer bestimmte Techniken nachahmt, ist kein Plagiator,”⁶⁸ Abel concludes, and then refers to Kurth Pinthus' diagnosis of contemporary poetry: “Die heutige Dichtung zehrt offensichtlich mehr von der Vergangenheit als die vorhergehenden Strömungen.”⁶⁹ Abel applies Pinthus' diagnosis to Celan, and states that Celan does not plagiarize but is noticeably influenced by Yvan Goll's surrealist image register. The question then becomes whether originality can remain a viable category for critiquing modern poetry: “Man fordert vom Dichter Originalität. Aber angesichts der zahlreichen 'Dichterschulen' der Gegenwart, der zahllosen Abhängigkeiten und Ähnlichkeiten in der modernen Poesie wird die Originalität ein fragwürdiges Kriterium.” The problem in this literary landscape of overlaps and interdependencies then becomes how to determine literary value. “Die Problematik

⁶⁷ Redaktion der Welt, “Fazit,” *Die Welt*, 2 June 1961; Rainer K. Abel, “Erklärung,” *Die Welt*, 12 June 1961, in Wiedemann, p. 364, 375.

⁶⁸ Rainer K. Abel, “Es gollt in Celans Lyrik. Wird Paul Celan zu Recht des Plagiats bezichtigt?” In Wiedemann, p. 292.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 293.

liegt auf der Ebene der Bewertung.” Abel then concludes by advancing his own concept of originality: “Der unverwechselbare eigene Stil als Ausdruck künstlerischer Gestaltungskraft zeichnet den Dichter aus. Dieser eigene Stil aber scheint Celan zu fehlen, vergleicht man seine Werke mit denen Yvan Golls. Die Ähnlichkeiten sind verblüffend.”⁷⁰ Even though Celan is not a plagiarist, in Abel's eyes he does not possess a signature style. When measured against Abel's criteria of what constitutes a poet, Celan is not one. In his conclusion, the terminology that he uses to seriously consider the validity of the plagiarism allegation now becomes the critical vocabulary to describe Celan's lack of stylistic originality and his merit as a poet. In a different review published a few weeks earlier, the critique of originality becomes a dismissal of Celan's difficult, hermetic language:

Golls dichterischer Rang wird bestimmt von seinen einzigartig genauen, nachempfindbaren Metaphern. In surrealistischer Manier verbindet er fremdartige und scheinbar gegensätzliche Begriffe (...) Paul Celan bedient sich der selben dichterischen Technik. Seine Bilder und Metaphern sind jedoch von tiefer Dunkelheit, die zunächst fasziniert, dann jedoch wegen ihrer gänzlichen Undurchdringlichkeit enttäuscht.”⁷¹

Celan uses Goll's surrealist techniques, but his dark and indecipherable metaphors do not hold the same value that Goll's do. Abel's evaluation of the allegations is more than merely a philological examination of the verse and quotes under scrutiny. His larger claim is that Celan not only lacks originality as a poet

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Rainer K. Abel, “Umstrittener Ausflug in die Vergangenheit: Anleihe oder Verleumdung? – Zur Kontroverse um Yvan Goll und Paul Celan,” *Die Welt*, 11 November 1960, in Wiedemann, p. 261.

whose stylistic register is close to his surrealist predecessor Yvan Goll, but that his work pales in comparison to Goll's. Even though he admits that the case does not warrant a plagiarism charge, his review does not end there: Instead he uses his article as a platform for critiquing Celan's poetry in terms that belong to literary criticism, and not to those of a legal case. Even though he distinguishes plagiarism from literary influence, on the level of vocabulary and syntax construction, these two waters appear very much to have become muddied. It is therefore no surprise that, after having discussed Celan's lack of original style, he concludes with a call for further investigation into the plagiarism issue. Abel, and as I will now show, also Claire Goll's attacks contain a criticism of Celan's allegedly failed recognition of Yvan Goll's influence over him, and therefore of Goll as a central figure of the tradition he—in their eyes—comes from. The relationship of Celan's poetry to tradition, to Goll in particular and to the French surrealist tradition more generally, is one common thread not only in Claire Goll's and Rainer K. Abel's claims, but also in Walter Jens' work on Celan, albeit with a much more positive conclusion.

It is also one very central current in the reviews and interpretations of Celan's work of the 1950s: his books *Niemandrose* and *Sprachgitter*. These reviews attempt to reconcile the symbolist register in Celan's earlier poetry with the increasing trend towards abstraction, which becomes pronounced in *Sprachgitter* (1959). What is at stake is nothing less than Celan's position in the tradition of German poetry. Does he follow in the footsteps of French surrealism, or the modern German-language poetry of Rilke and especially Trakl?

It is Claire Goll herself who from the beginning frames the plagiarism

charge within the literary categories of originality, periodization and heritage. In her line of argumentation, Celan's failure to acknowledge the similarity of his and Yvan Goll's images is first and foremost a dismissal of the influence that Yvan, and with him symbolist poetry, had on Celan. The dismissal in Claire's eyes is not just a betrayal of a literary friendship, but also fails to acknowledge Yvan Goll's rank in the canon of 20th century poetry, a rank that Claire fears is not yet secured. Celan is therefore portrayed as being complicit in the perceived lack of attention that Yvan's poetry receives after his death. According to Claire Goll, Celan, as well as critics such as Walter Jens, fail to see where he learned his poetic techniques: "Wenn Horst Bieneck und Walter Jens wüsten, wo Celan die 'Konturen seines zweiten deutlichen Lebens' und die 'sich verklammernden Symbole gelernt hat!' Trotz zahlreicher Angriffe hat Celan die Erinnerung an den Lehrer völlig verdrängt."⁷² Unpublished drafts of the letter she prepared for *Baubudenpoet* also reveal that her attacks on Celan are in part formulated as part of her other campaign: ensuring that the deceased Goll finds the recognition he deserves:

Gottseidank erscheint in wenigen Wochen im Hermann Luchterhand Verlag ein Sammelband von 850 Seiten der Werke meines Mannes und man wird endlich einen Dichter von einigem Ausmaß, dessen Größe darin bestand immer an sich zu zweifeln, von einem Genie der Assimilation unterscheiden können."⁷³

Claire Goll hopes that the Luchterhand edition can set the hierarchy of literary

⁷² Claire Goll, "Unbekanntes über Paul Celan," *Baubudenpoet*, vol. 5, 1960.

⁷³ Goll in the original longer version of her letter to *Baubudenpoet*, in Wiedemann, p. 256.

significance straight and reveal Yvan Goll's importance as a poet. Establishing Goll's significance in this particular statement is made contingent upon proving that Celan is an assimilator. In the immediate aftermath of the publication of the *Baubudenpoet* issue, Claire Goll writes in an unpublished letter to the editor of *Die Welt*: "Niemand verneint, dass Kandinsky der Vater der abstrakten Kunst ist und so wird man eines Tages zugeben müssen, dass Goll die moderne Metapher, um die der Sänger Wettstreit geht, als erster prägte. Kurth Pinkus sagte nicht umsonst ... 'es wird heute viel gegollt.'" ⁷⁴ What is at stake in the competition between Goll and other poets, of which Celan appears to be the central adversary, is to determine who invented the modern metaphor.

The definition of plagiarism that Claire Goll first terms "Anlehnung," then the work of a "Meisterplagiator" (all these coinages Goll misquotes from others whom she claims have used these terms) become entangled within questions of literary influence and legacy. The plagiarism attack is tied up with Claire Goll's wish to see her deceased husband be recognized for his central influence over 20th century poetry. The plagiarism accusation becomes the foil for arguing for the creative ingenuity of Yvan Goll, an ingenuity that does nothing less than ensure his legacy as the inventor of the modern metaphor.

In both Claire Goll's and Rainer K. Abel's statements, the plagiarism affair becomes the immediate argumentative environment for discussing both Yvan Goll's and Paul Celan's importance as poets, both in terms of literary criticism and in their relevance to literary history.

⁷⁴ Wiedemann, p. 311.

Walter Jens' criticism is pitted against both Claire Goll's and Rainer K. Abel's arguments, yet shows a similar tendency to interlock an investigation of a legal question with an evaluation of the merit of Celan's poetry on strictly literary grounds. Jens' engagement with Celan's poetry predates the Goll Affair.⁷⁵ Jens, a few years Celan's junior, becomes one of the most prominent literary scholars to recognize Celan's central place in the canon of contemporary German-language poetry, and writes a number of laudatory reviews of Celan's poetry. In a 1959 review of *Sprachgitter* in *Die Zeit*, the Tübingen philologist counts him among the great poets of the 20th century. His "Meisterwerke" can contain and handle words and images such as "Aug, Brunnen, Lid, Stein" without succumbing to the symbolic weight a reader might first attach to them, or to an archaic metaphoric register: "Nur ein so ungewöhnlicher Artist wie Celan darf es wagen, sich dem Sog der Bilder anzuvertrauen. Seine Nüchternheit, sein untrüglicher Sinn für die magische Wirkung, die auch die verbrauchteste Vokabel in neuer Umgebung auszuüben vermag, bewahrt ihn davor, den Raum der Kunst auch nur in einer einzigen Zeile zu verlassen."⁷⁶ However these "verbrauchte," overused idioms, are not everyday language, but rather words that carry too much symbolic significance, that have become too literary and do not emancipate from an established history of meaning

⁷⁵ Jens' impression of Celan and his infamous first and only reading in Niendorf for the Gruppe 47 echoed the tenor of disapproval in the audience. He remembers: "Als Celan zum ersten Mal auftrat, sagte man: 'Das kann doch kaum jemand hören!' Er las sehr pathetisch, wir haben darüber gelacht. 'Der liest ja wie Goebbels' er wurde ausgelacht." Documented in Hans Werner Richter, *Briefe*, edited by Sabine Cofalla (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1997). I discuss Celan's relationship to the Gruppe 47 in more detail in the *Introduction* of this dissertation project.

⁷⁶ Walter Jens, "Nüchternheit und Präzision im Hymnos: Nur das auf den ersten Blick Schwere lohnt der Entschlüsselung," *Die Zeit*, 8 May 1959, reprinted in *Über Paul Celan* edited by Dietlind v. Meinecke (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970).

making. Jens' description seems to want to reconcile the symbolist heritage of Celan's "Schlüsselworte" with Jens' own literary taste for the stripped and immediate poetic register of the neo-realist poets favored by the Gruppe 47.⁷⁷ In Jens' description, Celan is able to use a vocabulary that strongly resonates with the poetry of his surrealist predecessors, among them Yvan Goll, as well as his own early poetry, without making them fit into a recognizable archive of literary metaphors. Jens therefore claims Celan as a poet who is unique and original, and who also has his place in postwar German poetry. Jens' argument in favor of the originality of Celan's poetry in the *Zeit* review is dated almost a year before Claire Goll publishes her accusations. In the review which he then later prepares for *Die Zeit* in order to disprove the plagiarism charges, *Leichtfertige Vorwürfe gegen einen Dichter* (1961), Walter Jens denounces the instigators of the attack for confusing plagiarism with literary influence and intertextuality, and goes on to argue that the boundaries between originality and similarity are defined differently in an age of a more pluralistic understanding of literary production:

Warum soll Celan nicht Trakl'sche, Goll nicht Benn'sche Motive erinnert verwandeln? Ungeachtet der gemeinsamen Verpflichtungen gegenüber dem Surrealismus haben beide ihre speziellen Ahnen... In unserer, von den Gesetzen der Pluralität und Kontemporaneität bestimmten Epoche beginnt die Dichtung nun einmal nicht 'von vorn': Austausch, Lernen und Lehren, Geben und Nehmen allüberall, nirgendwo Scheinprivilegien einer

⁷⁷ The unofficial chairman of the group, Hans-Werner Richter, issued his mantra for postwar literature: "Die Reduzierung der Sprache auf das Notwendige, eine Abkehr vom Leerlauf der schönen Worte und eine Hinwendung zu ihrem unmittelbaren Realitätsbezug" quoted in Heinz Ludwig Arnold, *Die Gruppe 47* (Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 2004), p. 39.

sogenannten 'Originalität!'”⁷⁸

Walter Jens deconstructs originality—the way Goll understands it—as a value category. Contemporary poets do not practice a traditional model of originality, but produce poetry in constant contact to other contemporary poets as well as to their predecessors. The canon does not follow a linear trajectory where one poetic tradition neatly segues into the next. Poets rather work with their unique self-selected canon of heirs. However, Walter Jens still deems it worthwhile to situate Celan in a tradition of styles and periods, but comes to the conclusion that Celan is not a direct heir of Goll's surrealist heritage and rather has to be located within a different genealogy, more specifically that of Rilke and Trakl. “Aber was für Celan und die großen österreichischen Lyriker, was für Goll und die expressionistische Avantgarde vor 1914 gilt, gilt noch lange nicht für Celan und Goll: diese beiden haben, sieht man von einigen surrealistischen Praktiken ab, deren Handhabung sie mit dutzenden teilen, nicht viel gemeinsam.” Jens then goes on to give a long comparative analysis of the stylistic hallmarks of Celan's and Goll's poetry. Celan is not like Goll, because his poetry does not exhibit hallmark features of Goll's poetry, among them: “Die ‘Choc’-Technik Golls, das Kontaminieren von Elementen heterogener Bereiche, die Revolutions-Melodramatik, die hochexpressionistische Diktion” and many more. “[D]iese Charakteristika, bestimmend auch noch fürs Spätwerk Yvan Golls, gelten für die mystisch präzise, leitmotivisch durchsichtige Art des Schriftsteller Celans in keiner Weise.”⁷⁹ Jens

⁷⁸ Walter Jens, “Leichtfertige Vorwürfe gegen einen Dichter: Ein abschließend klärendes Wort zu der von Claire Goll behaupteten Abhängigkeit Paul Celans von Yvan Goll,” *Die Zeit*, 6 June 1961, p. 368.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 369.

then offers another rebuttal of the claim that Celan's idioms and images are indecipherable and dark (as Abel has stated, see earlier quotation). He reiterates the argument he makes in *Nüchternheit und Präzision im Hymnos*, namely that Celan's metaphors are different than Goll's and do not continue a symbolist register: "Die Zentralworte, Fixpunkte der Anamnese, bildhaft-konkreter als bei Goll - häufig geradezu von Linnescher Prägnanz ... keine Rede von dunkler Undurchsichtigkeit!" In order to disprove the plagiarism allegation, Jens offers a comparison of the stylistic features of Celan's and Goll's poetry, looking at tone and rhetorical figures of speech. Plagiarism, in both Jens' and Abel's reviews, is understood to occur on the level of style and diction, on the level therefore of an aesthetics that take shape within the frame of literary tradition. Because the passages under scrutiny are not sufficient for a diagnosis of plagiarism in more legally-stringent terms, which would entail exact copies of words and sentence fragments, style becomes the category used to compare Celan and Goll. The similar words, when compared from a literary critical viewpoint, can only be attributed to one single author if they are tied to a specific, original meaning-making process or stylistic context.

The plagiarism debate then becomes platform for a critique of Celan's poetry in the value categories of literary criticism. The central issue becomes the question of how to place Celan within literary tradition and whether he has earned his place in the canon of German-language literature, because his original style can on one hand be traced to a certain lineage of specifically German poetry, and because at the same time it has evolved out of and ultimately emancipated itself from French surrealism.

Celan's own wrestling with his identity as a former surrealist poet, or a poet influenced by surrealism is a fascinating topic in its own right, and relevant for my discussion of the poem "Tübingen, Jänner" as well. For the moment, my analysis will concern itself with the question of literary tradition and its temporal structures and models of history. When Celan writes "Tübingen, Jänner" he also proposes a structure of influence and succession that emerges from its own poetics of encounter, as well as one of writing about and out of history. His own interest does not seem to lie so much with the question of surrealism in his poetry. He rather seeks to deconstruct the fundamental assumptions regarding lineage, tradition and the temporality of a literary canon that underlie these attempts to assign his poetry to one tradition or the other. In his lifelong engagement with a poet from the German literary tradition, Friedrich Hölderlin, Celan performs his unique mode of relating to writers of the past, and through that his act of locating his poems in a tradition, in history and in time.

Paul Celan's Engagement with Hölderlin

Celan's engagement with the Romantic poet is continuous throughout his life and left its traces not only in his poetry, but also in theoretical reflections. A special focus of his interest in Hölderlin lies in what was understood as being a 'break' in Hölderlin's biography, marking the juncture between the 'two halves' of his life: the first half as the 'young poet' who is purportedly mentally healthy, and the second half as the 'mad poet'.⁸⁰ Otto Pöggeler suggests that Celan identified "mit

⁸⁰ One has to be careful when assigning labels to Hölderlin's mental constitution. Evaluations and diagnoses have changed through the course of the history of Hölderlin reception. During his lifetime he was

dem Hölderlin der Jahre 1804 bis 1806 ... der immermehr seiner Krankheit anheim fiel.”⁸¹ In his two Hölderlin poems, “Tübingen, Jänner” as well as a later poem “Ich trink Wein,” Celan evokes aspects of Hölderlin’s madness. The two most immediate references in “Tübingen, Jänner” are the quoting of an expression of Hölderlin’s when he was ill in the tower: “Pallaksch.”⁸² The other, “Jänner” in the title, is a central reference throughout Celan’s work, and appears as “20. Januar” in *Der Meridian*, which is a quote from the first line of “Lenz” by Georg Büchner: “Am 20. Jänner ging Lenz ins Gebirg.” It references the break in Lenz’s (as well as Büchner’s) biography, the moment in time when they lose their minds.⁸³

admitted to an insane asylum and subjected to different medical and experimental treatments, yet historians have not been able to locate an official medical record. Hölderlin’s close friend Wilhelm Waiblinger gives details descriptions of Hölderlin’s constitution, demeanor and daily life in his Hölderlin biography that he wrote in 1827/28, Wilhelm Waiblinger, *Friedrich Hölderlin’s Leben, Dichtung und Wahnsinn* (Berlin: Hofenberg, 2017). Wilhelm Michel’s biography references Waiblinger’s book and continues using Waiblinger’s term “Wahnsinn” to describe Hölderlin’s constitution. Later reviews, such as Wilhelm Lange, *Hölderlin: Eine Pathographie* (Stuttgart: F. Enke, 1909) and Karl Jaspers, *Strindberg et van Gogh: Swedenborg, Hölderlin* (Paris: Ed. De Minuit, 1953) construct case studies and attempt to find medical terms to describe Hölderlin as a psychiatric case, yet as long distance diagnoses. I discuss Lange’s and Jasper’s respective arguments on page 19. Celan’s own reference works, which were Wilhelm Michel, *Das Leben Friedrich Hölderlins* (Frankfurt a. Main: Insel, 1967) and Erich Trummler, *Der kranke Hölderlin: Urkunden und Dichtungen aus der Zeit seiner Umnachtung* (München: Recht, 1921), employ the terms “Krankheit” “Wahnsinn” and “Umnachtung” without articulating a narrow medical diagnosis. Any discussions of Celan’s readings of Hölderlin should, in my view, consider these terms as part of Celan’s reference vocabulary. “Krankheit“, I think, possibly remains an important word for him, who himself was treated for depression and paranoia as diagnosed illnesses in psychiatric facilities. I chose to use the term ”mad poet“, as well as “insanity” as pointers to the history of Hölderlin reception, rather than any medically valid term. Yet I also keep the word “Krankheit” in the back of my mind, aware of all the negative and othering characteristics it embodies, yet at the same time with an acknowledgement of Celan’s experience of suffering and illness.

⁸¹ Otto Pöggeler, “Einleitung,” *Homburg von der Höhe in der Deutschen Geistesgeschichte: Studien zum Freundeskreis um Hegel und Hölderlin*, edited by Christoph Jamme and Otto Pöggeler (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1981).

⁸² Celan explains this “Unwort” to Ilana Shmueli in a letter as meaning both “No and Yes.” Paul Celan, Ilana Shmueli. *Briefwechsel* (Frankfurt a. Main: Suhrkamp, 2004), p. 58.

⁸³ The 20th of January is also a reference to the Shoah, being the date that commemorates the Wannsee Conference, in which the Nazis decided upon their ‘final solution’ to exterminate all the Jews in Europe.

Celan's personal library is exemplary of the central role that mental illness and biography take in Hölderlin's critical reception. Celan's library, which was transferred to the Deutsche Literaturarchiv Marbach in 1990 allows readers of Celan to get insight into Celan's thinking and writing process. Celan did not simply passively read the books that comprise his library but interacted with the language, and mined them for words, phrasings and information that would then find their way into his own poems. Celan's personal selection of books by and about Hölderlin, as well as the reading traces that can be found in some of the books, give insight into how Celan's related to Hölderlin and his poetry. Celan's library encompasses close to forty books, either written by Hölderlin or engaging with Hölderlin, from a literary critical, philosophical or historical perspective. Celan owned three different Hölderlin *Werkausgaben*: Walter von Hellingrath's Historisch-Kritische Ausgabe (1943), Friedrich Beißner's Kleine Stuttgarter Ausgabe (1954) and Friedrich Obenauer's Edition (1923). The edition that Celan consulted the most was Beißner's *Kleine Stuttgarter Ausgabe*. Yet he appeared to have been equally interested in Hölderlin's biography. Wilhelm Michel's biography *Das Leben Friedrich Hölderlins* from 1940 became an important book for Celan and bears extensive reading traces and marginal notes.⁸⁴ The book was also found lying open on his desk on the day of Celan's death, which emphasizes the personal importance the book had for Celan. The markings and underlinings in his own edition of W. Michel's Hölderlin biography, which Celan acquired at least six years after he wrote "Tübingen, Jänner," reveal that it is the last two chapters,

⁸⁴ Wilhelm Michel. *Das Leben Friedrich Hölderlins* (Frankfurt a. Main: Insel, 1967). Celan's edition is from 1967

relating Hölderlin's life after he fell ill, that he studied most attentively. While Celan only underlines two passages within the first seven chapters of the book, which narrate Hölderlin's life until 1804, the eighth chapter, "Homburg 1804–1806," is heavily marked. The last, short chapter, which summarizes the remaining 35 years—accounting for the other half of Hölderlin's life where he succumbs to being a mad poet—is marked abundantly if still less than the previous one, but a page in the chapter was laid open on his desk when he passed away, signaling that it was the last text he had read before his death. The markings in the book give the appearance more than once that Celan actively reads Hölderlin's biography selectively where it echoes themes that are important to his own life and to themes of his poetry. Therefore, an account of a legal affair in which Hölderlin's friend Sinclair—and by extension Hölderlin—were involved, in which Sinclair had to defend himself against a Jewish entrepreneur magistrate who accused Sinclair of treason, is one which Celan reads with heightened attention, focusing on the way in which the Jew is portrayed by Michel, who uses stereotypes of the ill-intentioned deceiver. Otherwise, Celan notes references to multilingualism in the book, such as Hölderlin's habit of switching to other languages from time to time when asked something. Michel quotes the medical record penned by Hölderlin's personal doctor, which issued a formal diagnosis: "und nun ist es soweit, dass sein Wahnsinn in Raserei übergegangen ist und dass man sein Reden, das halb deutsch, halb griechisch, halb lateinisch zu lauten scheint, schlechterdings nicht mehr versteht."⁸⁵ Ultimately, Michel's biography becomes the reference for the word „zackern“ in

⁸⁵ Ibid., p 436.

Celan's poem "Ich trink Wein", written in 1969: "Ich trink Wein aus zwei Gläsern / und zackere an / der Königszäsur / wie Jener / am Pindar."⁸⁶ F. Michel's Hölderlin biography quotes from Hölderlin's host Hofrat Gering's condescending report that Hölderlin's Pindar translation work is the "Zackern eines Halbverrückten." Celan also coins the translation and writing work of the poem's I "zackern", the strenuous, staggering labor of a half-insane poet.⁸⁷

The overall sparse and selective reading traces in the biography, as well as in other books on Hölderlin in Celan's library, make those passages underlined or marked by Celan stand out all the more. Based on these traces, one can suggest that Celan's reading about Hölderlin's life and work focused intensely on Hölderlin's mental state and its effect on language, a topic that occupied him extensively also as a reader.⁸⁸ He furthermore paid particular attention to aspects of Hölderlin's life that spoke to Celan's identity as a multilingual Jew in exile.

Celan also possessed influential examples of secondary literature on Hölderlin, including the titles *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung* and *Holzwege* by Martin Heidegger, Peter Szondi's *Hölderlin-Studien* and essays by the distinguished

⁸⁶ Paul Celan, *Gesammelte Werke III* (Frankfurt a. Main: Suhrkamp, 1983), p. 108.

⁸⁷ Interpretations of Celan's use of the expression "zackern am Pindar" alert us to how the poem also distinguishes its 'I' from Hölderlin. Here the speaker "Zackert an der Königszäsur," which references on the one hand Hölderlin's interpretation of "Cäsur" in Sophocles' tragedies, but on the other hand marks "die Lücken im Dasein, an denen sich kein Sinn mehr zu zeigen scheint," as Pöggeler puts it – see (24).

⁸⁸ As a reader, Celan engaged with psychiatry and psychology intensively. His library included psychiatric reference literature about mental illness, especially his editions of: Ludwig Binswanger, *Der Mensch in Der Psychiatrie* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1957); and Binswanger, *Schizophrenie* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1957). Both of these texts bear extensive reading traces. He also avidly read Sigmund Freud, to which his correspondence with Gisele Lèstrange during his clinic stays testifies.

Hölderlin scholar Bernhard Böschstein.⁸⁹

Notably, Celan's collection of secondary literature on Hölderlin reveal a thematic focus on Hölderlin's mental illness and the years that Hölderlin spent living as a recluse. Examples are *Das Hölderlinhaus in Tübingen*, and Karl Jasper's *Strindberg und Van Gogh: Versuch einer pathographischen Analyse unter vergleichender Heranziehung von Swedenborg und Hölderlin*, within which the chapter on Hölderlin bears extensive reading traces, and Erich Trummler's 1921 book *Der kranke Hölderlin: Urkunden und Dichtungen aus der Zeit seiner Umnachtung*.⁹⁰ A one page reference note, *Zitatsammlung* that Celan devised for Gisela Dischner, with whom he exchanged letters, in 1968, clarifies where Celan read about Hölderlin's expression "Pallaksch", that he quotes in "Tübingen, Jänner". He identifies the origin of the quote in the 1848 report by Christoph Theodor Schwab, and also specifies and formally annotates Trummler's book, of which he owned a copy, as where the quote is reprinted. What here becomes apparent, is that Celan's version of a "Zitatsammlung" with quotes of Hölderlin, exclusively exhibit quotes from biographies on Hölderlin, Hölderlin's supposed live utterance and speaking, as opposed to Hölderlin's literary writings.

⁸⁹ Celan's editions in his library: Martin Heidegger, *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung* (Frankfurt a. Main: Klostermann, 1951); Martin Heidegger, *Holzwege* (Frankfurt a. Main: Klostermann, 1950); Peter Szondi, *Hölderlin-Studien: mit einem Traktat über philologische Erkenntnis* (Frankfurt a. Main: Insel, 1967); Bernhard Böschstein, *Hölderlins Rheinhymne* (Zürich, Freiburg: Atlantis, 1959); Bernhard Böschstein, *Hölderlins späteste Gedichte* (Eggingen: Isele, 1965/66).

⁹⁰ Alfred Kelletat, *Das Hölderlinhaus in Tübingen* (Tübingen: Hölderlingesellschaft, 1957) ; Karl Jaspers, *Strindberg et van Gogh: Swedenborg, Hölderlin* (Paris: Ed. De Minuit, 1953): The French edition includes an introduction by Maurice Blanchot, which also bears thick reading traces. Jaspers reads Hölderlin through the lens of his profession: psychiatry. For a summary of Jasper's argument see page 64 of this chapter; Erich Trummler, *Der kranke Hölderlin: Urkunden und Dichtungen aus der Zeit seiner Umnachtung* (München: Recht, 1921).

Celan's habits as a reader at the same time infiltrate his writing work. Celan frequently read literature, including secondary literature or writings in altogether different genres, to mine words and word fields from them, also at times taking these words out of their textual context. His interest in W. Michel's Hölderlin biography also lay in the individual words, images and phrasing that it offered, precisely as language about the mad poet, and not by him. Celan finds a way to quote from these sources, borrowing their language and words, as a way to craft his own language and poetry out of them, an intertextual practice that makes borrowing and appropriating a central mechanism of his poetry.⁹¹ As I will discuss in more detail still, this is also a mechanism by which language of and about Hölderlin find their way into the two poems, "Tübingen Jänner" and "Ich trink Wein," which strikes as a deliberate and also risky undertaking if considering the immediate background of the Goll Affair. Celan feared that the Affair would exclude him from literary history and erase him and his name as an author. It is Hölderlin's problematic historical reception resulting from the portrayal of his illness that causes Celan to feel a unique kinship with the poet.

An Overview of the Reception of Hölderlin's Works

During his lifetime, the recognition of Hölderlin's poetry faced two obstacles. First and foremost, his poems were not all available in edited form, but survived as fragments. The only more systematic attempt at a comprehensive edition of his

⁹¹ For Celan's reading practice and his reappropriation of words and word fields see, for example: Axel Gellhaus, "Marginalien. Paul Celan Als Leser," in "*Der Glühende Leertext*": *Annäherungen an Paul Celans Dichtung*, edited by Christoph Jamme and Otto Pöggeler (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1993).

works, by Alexander Jung, was compiled hastily and was therefore incomplete and contained transcription errors.⁹² The lack of an ambitious, philologically systematic interest in his work therefore meant that a clichéd portrayal of Hölderlin took center stage, where he was seen as an eccentric poet-recluse who had become a local curiosity and tourist attraction in Tübingen. In Romantic literary circles, however, and among his literary contemporaries such as Bettine von Arnim, Clemens Brentano and Achim von Arnim, he was revered as a poet of poets, as the author who embodied a Romantic idea of the poet-genius who had access to a transcendental language of truth.⁹³ His madness contributed centrally to that reverence, thus Hölderlin was seen as the sensitive poet who broke under the weight of the fallen world.

Even though there was some interest in Hölderlin in the 19th century, and though Wilhelm Dilthey especially venerated Hölderlin in the context of his *Lebensphilosophie*,⁹⁴ it was not until the early 20th century that a comprehensive exegetically motivated review of his work was undertaken. Norbert von Hellingrath, after having discovered for himself the Pindar transcriptions, compiled the first edition of his complete works that would include Hölderlin's late works, the poetry between 1800 and 1806. His fervent veneration of the poet—among other things fueled by his very personal identification with Hölderlin's life and

⁹² Friedrich Hölderlin, *Friedrich Hölderlin und seine Werke*, edited by Alexander Jung (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1848).

⁹³ This did not help Hölderlin's general reputation much, though. The author Clemens Brentano, for example, worked hard to promote Hölderlin in the latter half of Hölderlin's life, but to not much avail.

⁹⁴ Dilthey's account of Hölderlin's illness in positive terms also proved very important to a later reassessment of Hölderlin's late work, for example for Hellingrath.

biography—fueled his endeavor. Hellingrath's friendship with Stefan George and his involvement in the George-Kreis meant that a new approach to Hölderlin, which was characterized by a mythologizing deep veneration, also indirectly instigated the appropriation of the poet for the later distorted myth of Hölderlin as a proto-nationalist redeemer. This veneration of Hölderlin, which both for Hellingrath and George also had its basis in an identification with the poet, resulted in the historical distance between the 19th century poet and his 20th century heirs being eliminated in the imagination of his readers. Hölderlin was presented to his readers as if he was still alive. The historical context or specificity of his works therefore were not really of interest, or even considered, which in turn meant that the nationalism that Hellingrath harbored as a World War I veteran, and the mythologizing 'Junges Deutschland' of the George-Kreis made Hölderlin into an immediate and present contributor to its new sentiments and ideologies, which opened up the doors to a more radical false appropriation of a 20th century model of nationalism at the hands of the Nazis. An intense identification with Hölderlin and the establishing of a relationship with the poet outside of temporal linearity, and detached from historical context, is therefore already a legacy of a uniquely literary and poetic reception. Yet in Celan, Hölderlin is not available for any heroic nationalist narratives, but had to be met outside of linear time because of his marginalized position in literary history prior to his rediscovery in the 20th century.

Psychiatric evaluations of Hölderlin are not at all absent from scholarship from the late nineteen-tens on, most prominently with Lange's comprehensive

pathography from 1917, *Hölderlin: Eine Pathographie*.⁹⁵ There Lange attempts to diagnose Hölderlin's illness on the basis of his poetry, and therefore crafts a very peculiar interpretation of Hölderlin's late work, one that traces a number of stylistic features to the popular diagnosis of the time, dementia praecox. Unusual phrasings and neologisms, and "Verdichtungen," all of which Lange labels 'word salad' become symptoms of a confused mind. "Katatonische Zerstreuung" becomes the psychiatric explanation for the dissolution of fixed meter and rhyme patterns, or the opening of verse patterns towards free verse, which were the formal features of Hölderlin's late hymns that would make them his most celebrated works. Karl Jaspers, among others, inaugurated a similar but more favorable interpretation of these formal features. In the Hölderlin chapter in his 1922 book *Strindberg und Van Gogh: Versuch einer pathographischen Analyse unter vergleichender Heranziehung von Swedenborg und Hölderlin*, he showcases how a reading of the formal features of a poem corresponds to an evaluation of pathography in Hölderlin.⁹⁶ He develops his argument around the fading poetic 'I,' the dissolution of a speaking subject, connecting this to Hölderlin's dissociation from reality. Jaspers stresses its self-referential perception, which he posits as the result of an absent lyric 'I,' which usually functions to create order between poem and represented world. Mechanisms of self-referentiality, which surface as word repetitions within tighter stanza margins, become productive in Celan's "Tübingen, Jänner," which picks up a common thread in psycho-pathological interpretations of

⁹⁵ Wilhelm Lange, *Hölderlin: Eine Pathographie* (Stuttgart: F. Enke, 1909).

⁹⁶ Karl Jaspers, *Strindberg und Van Gogh: Versuch einer pathographischen Analyse unter vergleichender Heranziehung von Swedenborg und Hölderlin* (Leipzig: Bircher, 1922).

Hölderlin's poetry. Celan read Jasper's interpretation of Hölderlin's poetry attentively in the years before he wrote his poem.⁹⁷

Both dynamics conjure a reduction and contraction of space for the poet's lyric language. The world of the poem becomes increasingly small and more self-referential. The poet, as a speaking subject crafting the poem, disappears from his poems just as he disappears from—or never fully appears in—literary history. It is the erasure of this poet from literary history (and his very belated integration) on the basis of a psychiatrically marked biography, that becomes important for Celan during the Goll Affair.

Hölderlin's *Werk*: Disparate Temporalities

The onset of his 'Umnachtung' has functioned as the caesura around which Hölderlin's *Werk* (body of work) has been formatted. Hellingrath sets the tone for this biographically-determined *Werk* structure. It was he who published the first complete edition of Hölderlin's writings, and therefore was the first to grant a place in his edition to the poet's late works, composed in the years 1800–1806 and marking the onset of his 'madness'. The amount of space that his edition allocates to the different chapters and sequences of Hölderlin's creative output is determined

⁹⁷ I here abstain from drawing any direct parallels between Celan's reading of Jasper's argument on self-referentiality in Hölderlin and the dynamic of self-referentiality in the poem "Tübingen, Jänner", even if that ultimately is one central aspect of my own interpretation of the poem. I think the poem provides ample 'evidence' that Celan was interested in the dynamics of self-referentiality in Hölderlin and reworked them in his poem. The reading traces in Celan's edition of Jasper's book chapter are dense and focus on content and argument rather than individual words and phrasings. The reading traces don't highlight any one aspect of the essay, and it is therefore difficult to argue on the basis of these traces that Celan paid special attention to the thematic of self-referentiality. I prefer to argue that Celan was very aware of Jasper's argument when he wrote "Tübingen, Jänner", but that the essay cannot be read as a definitive reference for the poem.

by Hellingrath's appraisal of Hölderlin's spiritual and psychological development over his life span. The edition now grants ample space, two of six volumes,⁹⁸ to include all of Hölderlin's late hymns written between 1800 and 1806, which had previously been excluded. Yet he only includes a small selection, less than one third of volume six, of the "last works," the poetry Hölderlin wrote from 1806 to his death in 1843.⁹⁹

Hellingrath, as well as his contemporaries, holds in the highest acclaim Hölderlin's poetry written between 1800 and 1806 in large part also because they were written in an altered and complex psychological state. In fact, for Hellingrath, Hölderlin's mental health harbored a special significance. His short biography of Hölderlin's life carries the title *Hölderlins Wahnsinn* (Hölderlin's insanity). This insanity becomes the overarching theme of Hölderlin's life, and as the essay seeks to make apparent, also its true meaning and purpose.

Hellingrath does not write Hölderlin's biography as an enterprise separate from his editorial project, to him they are inextricably connected. In the first sentence of the book, Hellingrath poses a radical and complete unity of life and works: "Wenn ich von Hölderlins Leben Ihnen sprechen will, so ist das nichts anderes, als wenn ich von seinem Werke rede. Es gibt da nichts Doppeltes und Trennbares. Sein Leben steht in einem einzigen Dienst."¹⁰⁰ Hölderlin's life unfolds

⁹⁸ Friedrich Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke*, edited by Norbert von Hellingrath (Berlin: Propyläen, 1923). Hellingrath in fact first published Volume 5 (1913) and then volume 4 (1916) which together comprise the poems from 1800 to 1806.

⁹⁹ Hellingrath coined the categories of "spätes Werk" and "spätestes Werk," categories which have become subject to scrutiny, because of the devaluing connotations of "spätestes Werk," which categorize Hölderlin's last writings as marginal.

¹⁰⁰ *Hölderlins Wahnsinn* is a chapter in: Norbert von Hellingrath, *Hölderlin-Vermächtnis* (Munich: F.

according to the higher purpose of his writing and creation, and is entirely in its service. His insanity is understood to have this purpose as well. The psychological development of Hölderlin parallels and serves the development of his creation on a teleological trajectory:

Und wenn ich von Hölderlins Leben Ihnen reden will, dann ist der Wahnsinn nicht nur das Ziel, worein das Leben mündet, der Wahnsinn ist das Geheimnis, das als rätselhaft anlockt und als unverständlich wegstößt. Der Wahnsinn endlich ist unter den Geschehnissen seines Lebens das weithin Sichtbare, Signatur der Form seines Geschicks. Darum, dachte ich, muss ich es „Hölderlin's Wahnsinn“ überschreiben, wenn ich von seinem Leben erzählen will.¹⁰¹

Hölderlin's "Wahnsinn" is the most visible and notorious fact known about the poet, and therefore should not be treated as separate, or excluded from his biography or his work. Instead, its strong grip on Hölderlin's life highlights its significance. To Hellingrath, the reader's attraction to and simultaneous rejection of his insanity further reveals its significance, and the mystery and deeper meaning contained within it.

The poetry that he wrote when he first exhibited signs of insanity becomes the climax of his oeuvre. Hellingrath claims it as "Herz, Kern und Gipfel der Hölderlinschen Werke, das eigentliche Vermächtnis."¹⁰² This moves the climax of Hölderlin's works towards the years 1800 to 1806 to include the years of the onset of his madness, and therefore offers a different timeline than previous critical and

Bruckmann, 1936), p. 155.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 155.

¹⁰² "Vorrede" in Friedrich Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke: Vierter Band*, edited by Norbert von Hellingrath (Propyläen Verlag, 1943), p. 11.

editorial versions of Hölderlin's works. While Hölderlin's Pindar transcriptions, hymns and odes from the years 1800 to 1806 were mentioned only marginally and were considered not of interest to literary scholarship before, the beginning years of his insanity in Hellingrath's account become the new frontier. Nevertheless, Hellingrath does not simply present it as the victorious conclusion of teleological progress, but rather as the natural, and in part tragic, trajectory of the life of a poet whose existence is entirely in the service of poetic language and its truth-speaking powers. Hölderlin has now nearly left behind earthly material existence and is speaking with the gods in their tongues whilst knowing their truths. "[E]s ist ein Irdischwerdenwollen von etwas schon ganz in einer anderen Welt Heimatlichen, das Larvenwerdenwollen dessen, der den Leib abgestreift hat und leicht und körperlos schwebt: es ist ein Wunder von Durchgeistigtsein, von ganz Bewegung."¹⁰³ The poet Hölderlin has already taken up residence in a different realm, and his poetry remains a striving to speak in the language of the material world and reach its inhabitants. To label this language the language of insanity, according to Hellingrath, is a misinterpretation. His account acknowledges Hölderlin's exceptional and drastically changed mental state, yet does not relate it in terms of pathology. Rather, they become the inner development of the poet Hölderlin, who is the "Verkünder, Träger, Gefäß der Götter," the vessel of the language and truth of the gods.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ *Hölderlin-Vermächtnis*, p. 172.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

¹⁰⁴ "Turmdichtung" is a label for the "last" poetry that Hölderlin wrote when he lived as a recluse in the tower in Tübingen.

What follows after this climax of Hölderlin's life, in which he produced his "late" works, are the 36 years that Hölderlin lives as a recluse, and that Hellingrath and others since termed his "last works," or "*Turmdichtung*."¹⁰⁵ The poetry that Hölderlin wrote when he lived in the tower now marks the true outlying margins of his oeuvre. Hellingrath writes:

Dann kommt die letzte Stufe der Übermüdung, die Kälte, eine gänzliche Gleichgültigkeit gegen alles, was ihn vorher bewegte. (...) Er schiebt damit die ganze Last seines Lebens von sich, er lässt sich willenlos treiben, wiegen, „wie auf schwankem Kahne der See“, eine große Beruhigung kommt über ihn, Verzweiflung, Angst, Tobsucht verliert sich, die Dürre weicht, der Pulsschlag der Seele kehrt in sein rhythmisches Fließen zurück. Man gibt den Willenlosen einem Tübinger Tischler zur Pflege; in einem Häuschen, das in die alte Stadtmauer eingebaut ist, in dem Erkerzimmer eines alten Mauerturmes, und in dem Zwingergärtchen zwischen dieser Mauer und dem sanftfließenden Neckar, mit Blick auf die weichen Höhen der Alb und im Verkehr mit den Gezeiten des Jahres lebte er die letzten 36 Jahre seines Daseins, beschwichtigt.¹⁰⁶

Hellingrath summarizes the last 36 years of Hölderlin's life in this one paragraph. Hölderlin's life undergoes a drastic deceleration and the poet, according to Hellingrath, loses the will to engage with life as he had done before; he retreats into a place of indifference, into a place where there is no striving, no direction, no time or destiny to shape. In this timeless, purposeless space, 36 years lose their measure and quality; they can pass in a minute or a millennium. In Hellingrath's description this time span therefore deviates from the narrative time of the remaining biography. But because it is a biography, it serves less as means to build a narrative

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 185.

or plot, but instead becomes a way to qualify and restructure Hölderlin's work. Tied to the marginality of his last works is a temporal structure, which assigns different temporal values and measures to different chapters of Hölderlin's life. The last 36 years are marginal not only in terms of biography and work, but also in terms of time in general: They do not fall into any of the common measures of time which are needed to produce a historical account of the author's life.

This exit from historical time is inextricably linked to the exit from a teleological development of his creation and work. In the preface of volume four of the *Werkedition*, Hellingrath writes:

nach der letzten Barockstufe dieses Weges aber ist eine sichere Grenze zu ziehen: was ich dem sechsten Bande zugewiesen habe, ist nicht mehr die gerade - meinetwegen bis zum Wahnwitz folgerichtige – Fortführung des anfänglich eingeschlagenen Weges, sondern es ist ein Riss dazwischen; es gehört nicht mehr in das feste Gefüge des Schicht auf Schicht sich türmenden Gesamtschaffens, sondern es ist, nicht nur weil das meiste davon verloren ging, ein zielloses sich Geben an dies und jenes, ein zweckloses Entwürfe aufgreifen und sinken lassen.¹⁰⁷

While Hellingrath can be credited for including Hölderlin's late hymns in his *Gesamtwerk*, he nevertheless does not remove the caesura in the middle of the poet's life: He only moves it up a few years. The distinction he draws between the late works and the earlier works is an uncompromising one. In his view, Hölderlin's last writings are mere scribbles and drafts that do not reach the level of art that can be a stepping stone in the development and maturation of a poet's works. Meanwhile, his earlier development has a solid structure and interrelation, and

¹⁰⁷ Hellingrath, *Sämtliche Werke: Vierter Band*, p. 19.

marks progress, a tower of achievement and greatness.

The caesura of Hölderlin's late, fully established *Wahnsinn* becomes the place where one temporal order is replaced with another, a historical modus is followed by one that has no historical time, and in that retreat from time and history, writings are produced, but no *Werk*. Some Hölderlin critics have proposed alternative models of his *Werk* and life, ones which do not understand the event of the onset of mental illness as the caesura which divides his life and *Werk* into two distinct halves. Bernhard Böschenstein has brought Hölderlin's own relationship to his writings from earlier periods to our attention. Hölderlin read and studied his own earlier work, especially "Hyperion," intensively later in life, and it appears that he understood his later writings to be in conversation with earlier works.¹⁰⁸ Böschenstein also rejects the way in which much Hölderlin criticism reads his later works primarily through the lens of biography and mental illness, and therefore constructs artificial hierarchies of literary value which emerge less from a critical reading of the literary text than from value judgements over his mental condition and the supposed impacts of psychosis on cognitive functioning. Moreover, the biographical account by Hölderlin's contemporary Wilhelm Waiblinger, who writes as a witness to the poet's "Halb- und Schattenleben," reveal Hölderlin's own experience, in which writerly practice continues to have a firm place in his daily life, albeit with different work habits.¹⁰⁹ There seems to be a mismatch between the

¹⁰⁸ Böschenstein finds "Denkformen der großen Hymnen" in the last poems. See: Bernhard Böschenstein, "Hölderlins Späteste Gedichte," *Über Hölderlin*, edited by Jochen Schmidt (Insel Verlag, 1970).

Anselm Haverkamp sees an intertextual relation to earlier poems as an "introvertierte Intertextualität." See: Anselm Haverkamp, *Laub Voll Trauer: Hölderlins Späte Allegorie* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1991).

¹⁰⁹ Wilhelm Waiblinger, *Friedrich Hölderlins Leben, Dichtung und Wahnsinn* (Tübingen: Klöpfer & Meyer, 2017), p. 59.

caesura and drastic change that Hölderlin criticism emphasizes, and the continuity that other critics think Hölderlin experienced. Hölderlin's actual experience of his life and his mental state meant that his work to him developed in a different non-hierarchical relationship to his 'previous' life and therefore also developed along a different temporality, one which is not teleological, but more intertextual, circular and non-hierarchical, rewriting and rereading previous poetry.

Hölderlin's last writings continue to produce little critical interest. The categorization of Hölderlin's writings after 1806 as "spätestes Werk" remains authoritative for later editorial practice. These specific editorial interventions have presented them as an appendix to Hölderlin's so-called 'proper' work, as therefore not part of his '*Werk*.' In a 1992 edition of Hölderlin's works compiled by Jochen Schmidt, the section "Späteste Gedichte" does not follow after the poems from 1800–1806 in the section order, but is added on after the later sections "Drafts and Fragments" (*Entwürfe, Fragmente, Skizzen*), and "Plans and Notes" (*Pläne, Bruchstücke, Notizen*), a structure which visibly distinguishes and separates the last poems from Hölderlin's other poetry. In his commentary on the poetry after 1806, Schmidt emphasizes the gap between this poetry and all previous writings: "Kein größerer Abstand ist vorstellbar im Werke ein und desselben Dichters als derjenige zwischen den hochgespannten späten Hymnen und den Gedichten, die Hölderlin in den langen Jahrzehnten seiner Umnachtung im Tübinger Turm schrieb."¹¹⁰ Schmidt gives editorial form to the unsurpassable gulf that he perceives between these time

¹¹⁰ Friedrich Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke Und Briefe*, edited by Jochen Schmidt, (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1992).

periods in Hölderlin's life and writing, and interpolates the two sections that contain notes, drafts and fragments between the poetry before and after 1806. Schmidt's formulation seems to want to stabilize a conception of Hölderlin's *Werk* that is limited to his writings before 1806, but to also indirectly disenfranchise Hölderlin after 1806 as author. Mirko Nottscheid's critical commentary on the Schmidt edition suggests: "Es hat den Anschein, dass Schmidt hier vermitteln will, es handele sich den den Gedichten der Werkphase nach 1806 nicht eigentlich um Werke des *Dichters* Hölderlin."¹¹¹ Schmidt sees that Hölderlin is not crafting language anymore in the way a poet would when he is mentally ill, but has lost his language. 1806 marks the beginning of the end of his language ("das Ende seiner Sprache"), and not only his language has expired ("erloschen"): "die Existenz Hölderlins wird gleich mit beendet."¹¹² An editorial conception of Hölderlin's *Werk* becomes at the same time a conception of the person and poet Hölderlin: one being a poet crafting great poetry, and the other being a man estranged from the world and from himself, having no language, not really existing.¹¹³

¹¹¹ Mirko Nottscheid, "Der Editor Als Kunstrichter – Die Behandlung Der 'spätesten Gedichte' Hölderlins Durch Die Editionsphilologie unter Besonderer Berücksichtigung von Jochen Schmidts Klassiker-Edition (1992)," *Hölderlin: Lesarten Seines Lebens, Dichtens Und Denkens*, edited by Uwe Beyer (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1997).

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Editorial work on Hölderlin has since, and in fact also prior to Schmidt's edition, attempted to provide a more inclusive picture and especially to avoid the censoring categories of "spätes" and "spätestes Werk." The Frankfurter Ausgabe, edited by D. E. Sattler, titles the section "Dichtungen nach 1806" and employs the same philological instruments, the same detailed commentaries and background, for these poems as for all other ones. The Stuttgarter Ausgabe, edited by Friedrich Beißner, organizes the works strictly chronologically, and therefore places the section of drafts and fragments before the section of the latest works. It must be added that most of the documents of Hölderlin's writing are in draft and fragment form. A clean distinction between fragments and completed poem cannot be drawn.

Stylistic Features of the “Last” Poems

It is apparent however, that Hölderlin’s last poems are unique in form and style, and differ especially from the expansive (“hochgespannter Stil”) hymns in free verse from the period of 1800 to 1806. Some hallmark formal qualities are their brevity, copious use of rhyming couplets and perfect rhymes, which had disappeared in the late hymns, and a reduction of semantic variety.

The stylistic peculiarities of Hölderlin’s last poems have previously overwhelmingly been understood as symptoms of his psychotic disorder. During Hölderlin’s own time, his poetic style was described as being a symptom of late dementia praecox,¹¹⁴ in which the former episodes of rage and intense expression have subsided into a near apathetic state. The poems were read as “eine Art psychomotorischer Auswurf des Irrsinns,”¹¹⁵ the predominantly physical expression of a catatonic state marked for example by repetitive pacing through the room. The poems therefore lacked coherence, and their short rhyme schemes were understood as a spontaneous performance of poetic language, rather than a thought-through composition.¹¹⁶ When one interpretation reads the poetry as Hölderlin’s “letztes Zungenreden,”¹¹⁷ others see its content and vocabulary as repetitive and laden with poetic clichés, the naïve expression of an “einfältiger

¹¹⁴ The now disused diagnosis has been gradually replaced by the term schizophrenia.

¹¹⁵ Gregor Wittkop, “Die Jahre 1806 – 1843,” *Hölderlin Handbuch: Leben – Werk – Wirkung*, edited by Johann Kreuzer (Stuttgart, Weimar: J.B. Metzler, 2002).

¹¹⁶ A symptom that Jean Bollack sees Celan exhibit as well when they are together in a tower in Mois, France. See footnote 6.

¹¹⁷ Wilhelm Böhm, *Hölderlin: Zwei Bände*, (Halle [Saale]: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1928), p. 747.

Bilderbuchpoet.”¹¹⁸

To give an example of literary criticism that is more attuned to irregular forms of language and poetry, and is especially drawn to the perceived psychopathological origin of such utterings, Christoph Wingertszahn writes for a 1996 issue of *Text + Kritik*:

Ein Grund für die Anziehungskraft der späten Gedichte aus Hölderlins Krankheitszeit ist wohl ihre in der Rezeption nicht zu hintergehende Verbindung zur Schizophrenie ... des Autors. ... die ungefähr fünfzig erhaltenen Gedichte faszinieren auch den heutigen Leser durch ihre kompositorische Stringenz, die gleichzeitig mit faszinierenden Verstößen gegen Sprachnormen verbunden ist.¹¹⁹

The way in which these poems deviate from language norms is not elaborated or supported with textual evidence. Criticism of Hölderlin’s last writings does not really evolve beyond a pathological reading, which foregrounds what is different from Hölderlin’s previous writings, and what is peculiar not only in the context of Hölderlin’s oeuvre, but in the context of poetic language generally.

Critics have also especially pointed out the spatial flattening and two-dimensional perspectives which many poems describe, and announce their description of images, “*Bild*”, often a contemplative view of a landscape, as in this excerpt from the poem “Das fröhliche Leben”:

Holde Landschaft, wo die Straße
Mitten durch sehr eben geht,

¹¹⁸ Martin Anderle, “Das Gefährliche Idyll: Hölderlin, Trakl, Celan,” *The German Quarterly*, vol. 35, 1962.

¹¹⁹ Christof Wingertszahn, “‘Die Aussicht Scheint Ermunterung’. Hölderlins Spätes Gedicht ‘Das Fröhliche Leben,’” *Friedrich Hölderlin*, edited by Heinz Ludwig Arnold (München: Edition Text+Kritik, 1996), p. 223.

Wenn der Mond aufsteigt, der blasse,
Wenn der Abendwind entsteht,
Wo die Natur sehr einfältig,
Wo die Berge erhaben stehen¹²⁰

The poems are not organized spatially around the integrated perception of a sentient, responsive ‘I,’ but instead appear like static images without three-dimensional depth. Oestersandfort for example links this poetically immanent depiction of images to reduction and “*Diätetik*” in the last poems. The reduction in semantic variety and the brevity of the poems, together with the preference for contemplative images of landscapes, seem to Oestersandfort to be the poet’s active self-therapeutic response to counteract the overactive imagination that was at that time understood to be a symptom of his “Dichterwahnsinn.”¹²¹ Even if Oestersandfort’s analysis also connects the formal features of the poems to Hölderlin’s mental state, he underlines Hölderlin’s agency and deliberate crafting. The poems are not understood as failed attempts at writing by a poet rendered incapable by illness, but as places where Hölderlin is negotiating with his environment, where he is orchestrating his contact with the world around him, and possibly, is writing to heal his mind.

A formal criticism of the poetry unequivocally recognizes a reduction, which lets the poem appear like tokens of Hölderlin’s retreat from a busier, more

¹²⁰ Excerpt from the poem “Das fröhliche Leben” in Friedrich Hölderlin, *Bd. 9 in Sämtliche Werke: Frankfurter Ausgabe*, edited by D. E. Sattler (Frankfurt am Main: Stroemfeld Verlag, 1999), p. 78.

¹²¹ Christian Oestersandfort, *Immanente Poetik Und Poetische Diätetik in Hölderlins Turmdichtung* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2006). Oestersandfort’s book is the most comprehensive study of Hölderlin’s Turmdichtung to date, which takes its task as being proper literary scholarship that primarily pays attention to the literary text, and does not read it through the lens of psychology.

complex previous world. This reduction in the poems can be seen on the page: Their lines, stanzas, words all become shorter. There is a reduction in verbs and movement, and Hölderlin now draws on a much smaller pool of words, which have less multivalence. The rhyme scheme additionally organizes and contracts the lines and keeps them from spilling over. This “*Stringenz*” is a tighter economy of language, and a reduction in the variety and spatial expanse of the poem.

As will be discussed later, “Tübingen, Jänner” is also a poem in which reduction and diminishment take place, within a tight word and rhyme economy. In Celan’s poem, this reduction takes place on a non-hierarchical temporal plane. Reduction takes place outside of a teleological arrangement of the body of work, of which a poem is part.

For a discussion of Celan’s referencing of Hölderlin, and specifically the last poems of Hölderlin, a careful delineation of his interest in the language of psychosis and the negative portrayal of a supposedly incapable poet has to be undertaken. Celan is both evoking a diminished language as being an unfair sentence of criticism, and equally as the deserving and worthy language of the mad or even ill poet. Celan’s poem exhibits a kinship with the Hölderlin who was portrayed by his critics as the stuttering non-author who is not writing poetically; his poem legitimizes this language as genuine poetic language. To that end, Celan connects with the language of insanity. He does not simply reject the critical diagnosis of Hölderlin’s last poems as non-poetic, but instead harnesses both Hölderlin’s own stuttering language (Pallaksch) and equally the negative, pathologizing representation of his language which amounted to an erasure of Hölderlin’s language from books and

editions, erasing his poetic language itself. Repetition, contraction and rhyme scheme in “Tübingen, Jänner” therefore echo both Hölderlin’s illness and how the representation of him and his illness was publicly received. Celan also saw his critics portray him as suffering from mental illness: “außerdem werde ich ... wahnsinnig gesprochen”, Celan writes to Lenz.¹²² The Goll Affair caused him to fear his erasure as author, a judgement of his poems as not resulting in a true body of work, and therefore as having no place in literary history.

The Publication History of “Tübingen, Jänner” and Horizontal Models of Succession

When “Tübingen, Jänner” was written on a day (January 28, 1961) in which the work of literary scholarship, of philology and of editing for publication took up most of the poet’s time, Celan’s editorial decision-making around the publication of this poem is itself revealing. The poem appeared in the spring 1963 issue of *Neue Rundschau*, before it was published by Fischer Verlag as part of the collection *Die Niemandrose* in October 1963. The order in which the poems are printed in the book differs from that in the magazine issue. Celan successfully insisted on the order of poems he had specified when he sent the poems to the editors of *Neue Rundschau*: “Ich bitte Sie, darauf zu achten, dass die Gedichte in dieser – und keiner anderen Reihenfolge – gesetzt werden.”¹²³ In addition, the magazine issue includes Celan’s translation of two poems by Osip Mandelstam (“Im Herz des Bergs,” and

¹²² Celan, “Letter to Siegfried Lenz,” 30 January 1962, Wiedemann, *Die Goll Affäre*, p. 557.

¹²³ Celan’s letter to the editor of *Neue Rundschau*, Gottfried Bermann Fischer, 30 Nov. 1962. In Gottfried Bermann Fischer and Brigitte Bermann Fischer, *Briefwechsel mit Autoren* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1990).

“Wo’s mich nicht gibt”), which reveals that this set of original poems is indebted to Mandelstam’s legacy. Celan dedicates the book *Die Niemandrose* to Mandelstam. For the *Neue Rundschau* publication, Celan insisted that his translations of Mandelstam’s poems appear before his own: “Die Mandelstam-Verse müssen vor den meinen stehen.”¹²⁴ Placing his translations before his original poems can be understood as an additional way of dedicating his poems to Mandelstam, yet it also purposefully interferes with a standard formal establishing of authorship. When original work usually is granted the more visible and principal position, and translations supplement these original writings as the additional work of the author, here Celan’s translations are presented as an integral part of his own oeuvre and not only as a supplement. As translations, though, these poems cannot be claimed by one author alone. The original poem is authored by Mandelstam, and Celan’s translation affirms and celebrates the importance of Mandelstam’s poetry. Yet they are also authored by Celan, who does not view his translation as a mere technical transcription, but as a poetic act in its own right, one which deserves a prominent position in this selection of his poetry for *Die Neue Rundschau*. Furthermore, “Tübingen, Jänner,” quotes from Hölderlin as well as Georg Büchner. Quotation and translation both become ways of granting the original writings of a predecessor a place within the space that Celan claims as author on the select pages of the journal. When Celan’s editorial decision-making destabilizes claims of authorship, it simultaneously rearranges the lineage of succession. Even though Celan’s translation of Mandelstam locates Mandelstam as coming before Celan, the

¹²⁴ Celan’s correspondence with Fischer, 4 Dec. 1962.

fact that it is a translation already undermines a simple chronology. After all, the translation itself states its own belatedness, the fact that it always comes after an original creation and depends upon it. Within the selection of Celan's original poems, quotation operates in a reverse order: The poem does not arrange the quoted verses in chronological fashion, but rather becomes interjected with fragments of the writings of his predecessors. At the same time, the verses are direct quotations, which means that the poem cannot be firmly located in the period following the publication of Hölderlin's and Büchner's original writings, as the Mandelstam translations were. These quotations bring the previous text, with all its claims to being its own text, to the new poem. Hölderlin and Büchner are brought into the here and now of Celan's poem, yet also remain fragments from the past, where they remain the past texts that they are. This dialectical tension between appropriating these other words into the newness of Celan's poems, and not tampering with the original words' claims to being of their time and of their own origin, constructs a different model of succession and influence. As Reinhard Zbikowski argues, Celan's editorial processes generally follow a non-hierarchical model of literary influence.¹²⁵ Such "horizontal" arrangements of succession also surface in a separate instance where Celan speaks about Mandelstam. The first paragraph of his radio essay "Die Dichtung Osip Mandelstams" includes one confusion of tenses, which did not escape the editor of the radio program, Wilhelm Asche, either. Celan writes about Mandelstam: "It is known, among other things, that Osip Mandelstam

¹²⁵ Reinhard Zbikowski, "'Schwimmende Hölderlintürme: Paul Celans Gedicht ,Tübingen, Jänner,'" *Der glühende Leertext: Annäherungen an Paul Celans Dichtung*, edited by Christoph Jamme and Otto Pöggeler (Munich: Fink, 1993).

has studied philosophy in Heidelberg, and presently raves about Greek” (“Philosophie studiert hat und gegenwärtig für das Griechische schwärmt”).¹²⁶ The sentence includes two different tenses, the past tense in “studied” and present tense in “raves”. Mandelstam at the broadcast of the radio essay in 1960 had been dead for over two decades, so Asche changes the tense in his transcription, assuming that the irregular usage was not deliberate. Celan, however, asks Asche to revert the text back to his original wording and verb tense sequence with the words: “On page 1, line 13 of the manuscript which you kindly have sent me I find that the perfect and present I have placed are being replaced by a preterit. Please let the originally placed tenses enjoy their rights again in both cases.”¹²⁷ Celan insists on the irregularity of the tenses. He writes Mandelstam’s biography as if he was still alive, as if any past event in his life—here his studies in Heidelberg—still responded to a present in which the poet is now living. In Celan’s short biographical fragment, Mandelstam is portrayed not as a deceased poet, rather as Celan’s contemporary, who shares his time and place.

This adjustment of perspective and temporal distance between the two poets responds to Mandelstam’s own formulations on the relationship between a poet and posterity. Mandelstam envisioned that his poems would be read and properly received only in the future. This future would be a place where words would be understood without the baggage of conventionalized word meaning and

¹²⁶ Paul Celan, “Die Dichtung Osip Mandelstams,” *Der Meridian: Endfassung, Vorstufen, Materialien* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1999), p. 213.

¹²⁷ Paul Celan, *Mikrolithen sinds, Steinchen: Die Prosa aus dem Nachlass*, edited by Bertrand Badiou and Barbara Wiedemann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005), pp. 884–885.

predetermined structures of signification, which do not allow poetic language to emerge from a more immediate relationship to lived reality.¹²⁸ An undetermined future allows for words to become dislodged from former contexts which determine their meaning, and thus enter into a fresh relationship with a reader.

In his essay “On the Conversation Partner,” Mandelstam writes that all poetry be addressed to an undefined conversation partner in the future. Mandelstam in a first step stresses the monologic quality of poetry. Because the moment of reception is suspended, the poem in its here and now does not get interrupted and, before it enters into dialogue with a “you-to-come,” speaks alone. Yet the poem nevertheless communicates, because it desires to be poetry, which is always directed towards a horizon where reception takes place.¹²⁹ This relationship of listener to speaker is, as Anna Glazova translates, a “juridical relationship,” further explained with: “I speak, that means, someone listens to me, not for nothing and not as a favor, but as an obligation.”¹³⁰ The reception of a speaker’s address is bound by law, not voluntary, not incidental or contingent, but necessary if the exchange takes place within the formal parameters of conversation. Mandelstam transfers this “juridical” alignment to poetry and the reception of poetry. Poetry to

¹²⁸ Mandelstam sees the danger of a codification of meaning, especially in surrealist poetry, where “rose stands for sun, sun for rose, dove for girl, girl for dove” (translation see next footnote). His slogan “stoniness to the stone” declares to liberate words to have a direct relation to phenomena, in the end to be independent from both listener and speaker.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p 1110.

¹³⁰ I am quoting from Anna Glazova’s individual translations from Russian into English for her article about Celan and Mandelstam, which are especially sensitive to Celan’s appropriation of words and concepts. Celan, who translated Mandelstam into German, read his works in the original Russian, and so German editions of Mandelstam are therefore less fitting as a reference than Glazova’s translation of individual passages. See: Anna Glazova, “Poetry of Bringing about Presence: Paul Celan Translates Osip Mandelstam,” *MLN*, vol. 124, 2009, p. 1109.

Mandelstam remains always a form of speaking directed at another, even if no actual act of reading a poem to a listener occurs. “Even if single poems can be addressed to an individual, poetry as a whole is always directed at a more or less distant unknown addressee, whose existence the poet cannot doubt without doubting himself.”¹³¹ Poetry, as the driving force that makes individual poems desire to become more than speech directed at another, becomes poetry when it is directed at the unknown conversation partner, at an audience that exceeds the immediate context of the author, and releases its language towards a horizon that is not yet completely established. What underlies this tension—between the monologic character of a poetry whose conversation partner is indefinitely suspended and its dialogic orientation towards another—is a temporal structure. The poem in a way requires temporal distance, but when it is read and received it is not perceived as something obsolete or rendered past and invalid, but rather enters into the here and now of the moment of its reception as the place where it is received by the reader as poetry, participating in ‘poetry as a whole’.

Celan’s appropriation of Mandelstam’s ideas of dialogue into his poetic system develops its own understanding of the temporality of poetry, and the dialogic structure that underlies it. The orientation of dialogue in Celan’s poetics is just as much towards the past as it is towards its addressee in the future. Poetry always becomes the “*Gespräch*,” in which everything it speaks of, addresses and also names is constituted within the communicative encounter. The poem in all its being is an encounter with everything it names and addresses. Within that encounter

¹³¹ Ibid., p. 1111.

lies a temporal expanse towards a time before (and also after) the poem. In his Meridian speech, Celan articulates the quality of this encounter in poetry:

Erst im Raum des Gesprächs konstituiert sich das Angesprochene, versammelt es sich um das 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 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.¹³²

It is the poem's existence in the here and now, in that very punctual, narrowly delineated presence, in which whatever appears is always on the periphery of not-anymore, that an acute proximity is generated that makes all that the poem addresses and speaks of visible as being Other. The poem's claiming of the present moment draws all that it addresses and speaks of into this intense space where what is addressed finds itself in utmost proximity to the addressee: the poem. Because of this proximity, which the tight temporal order of the here and now establishes, the addressed and spoken of can be recognized as the addressee. The temporality of the poem becomes the force of making visible the Other: This Other can have come in a time before the poem, an Other that brings its own other place in time, its own history, along with it. It is not posited as a distant, former Other which the poem has overcome, developed away from, or chronicles. It participates in the poem's presence, where it at the same time can state its own beforeness, its own former place outside the poem, its own Otherness. Its own historicity enters into the poem as a tangible, actualized reality that has not been archived and deposited in any

¹³² Paul Celan, *Ausgewählte Gedichte, zwei Reden* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2015), p. 145.

historicist sense. Within the here and now of the poem—in which what is named and addressed participates while remaining its own and of another time—is embedded a model of history that is not linear.

The editorial decisions that Celan makes for the publication of select poems for *Die Neue Rundschau* reflects his poetics of encounter and the temporality embedded in it. Mandelstam is not added to the selection as a poet of a previous age, a poet that Celan dedicates his poems to. Celan grants a space for his speaking within the here and now of his translation, which is a poem that he also authors, and within the here and now of this selection of poems, which are in proximity to Mandelstam's speaking. This happens again in the poem "Tübingen, Jänner," where Hölderlin and Büchner bring their very own into the poem, and are speaking with their own language in the here and now of Celan's poem. These moments where a poet from the past is speaking do not adhere to a chronological order, where Mandelstam, Hölderlin and Büchner can be established as poets from a previous age, as predecessors. The line of succession that this selection draws up is a non-linear and non-hierarchical one, which originates in the poem's claim to presence. They speak their "eigenste" in the here and now of the poem, which creates distance to its Others. The editorial form of the publication can be understood as Celan's realization of his poetic model of succession, lineage, and also literary history. It opposes the model of history that underlies the negative criticism of his works during the Goll Affair, which attempts to negate Celan's place in a history in which authors are lined up on a linear chain of succession.

Quotation, Caesura, and Repetition in “Tübingen, Jänner”

In the following section, I am looking at the poem “Tübingen, Jänner” without attempting to provide a comprehensive close reading. Rather, I am looking at its modes of incorporating the voice of Hölderlin, which is Other and external, and at the same time the voice of Celan’s poem. Hölderlin finds his way into the poem via quotation, and is present in the poem’s form of speaking, especially when the poem narrows into a register of repetition. These modes of connecting to the voice of the other, of Hölderlin, are held in the structure of the two halves of the poem, which echo the temporality that biographies of Hölderlin’s life often adhere to.

Tübingen, Jänner

Zur Blindheit über-
redete Augen.

Ihre – „ein

Rätsel ist Rein-
entsprungenes“ -, ihre

Erinnerung an
schwimmende Hölderlintürme, möwen-
umschwirrt.

Besuche ertrunkener Schreiner bei

diesen

tauchenden Worten:

Käme,

käme ein Mensch,

käme ein Mensch zur Welt, heute, mit

dem Lichtbart der

Patriarchen: er dürfte,

sprach er von dieser

Zeit, er

dürfte
nur lallen und lallen,
immer-, immer-
zuzu.

(„Pallaksch. Pallaksch.“)

Forming relationships with his predecessors on the temporal plane of the poem, in its present, is not only achieved through editorial interventions, but also within the poem by means of quotation, which, as I will argue, is made to correspond to the formal register of repetition that governs “Tübingen, Jänner.” The poem quotes from Büchner and Hölderlin, in the latter case both from his poetry as well as from his biography. Quotation marks signal that the quoted text is from an Other, and grants that Other its own proper space within the new poem. That Other does not only appear as an Other poem, but also as the Other poet, when it quotes from Hölderlin’s biography: “Pallaksch. Pallaksch.” It does not quote poetic language, but rather Hölderlin the poet, and also the speech of the mad poet who is speaking from the margins, from the tower in Tübingen. The purpose of quotation therefore is not only to reference back to another work, just as the purpose is not to quote from a primary text in order to produce a text about the first one, a secondary text. Rather, the quoted text grants the deceased author and all of his language, the language of his own experienced time, a fitting place in Celan’s new poem.

Quotation is the place in the poem where an Other, a stranger, is allowed to speak, where the “eigenste” of Celan’s speech meets the “Fremde” of Hölderlin’s speech, as Anja Lemke puts it in her reading of “Tübingen, Jänner.” She reads this

meeting of Celan's very own speech and the Other of Hölderlin in these quotations as being a way to conjure a "Fremde Nähe," which points Lemke to Heidegger's figure of "Andenken", and its implied temporality.

Dieses Wechselspiel zwischen Eigenem und Fremden lehnt sich an Heideggers Figur des 'Andenken' an, das heisst, es ist ein erinnerndes Zurückdenken an das gewesene Andere und ein gleichzeitiges Vordenken an ein Kommendes, dass sich strukturell am Gewesenen orientiert. Achse und Umschlagpunkt bildet dabei der Jetzt-Moment des Heute.¹³³

The now of the poem becomes the place where a thinking back and a thinking ahead intersect. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe had at first situated "Tübingen, Jänner" into Heidegger's model of history. His diagnosis in his book on Celan, *Poetry as Experience*, is that: "Tübingen is Hölderlin, and Todtnauberg, Heidegger," which opens up the possibility of reading them together.¹³⁴ He writes:

For everyone who is, as we say, "concerned about our times" and "mindful of history" (European history), the two names, Hölderlin and Heidegger, are now indissolubly linked. They give voice to what is at stake in our era (*dieser Zeit*). A world age—perhaps the world's age—is approaching its end ... What has not been deployed, what has been forgotten or rejected in the midst of this completion—and no doubt from the very beginning—must

¹³³ Anja Lemke, "Andenkendes Dichten: Paul Celans Poetik der Erinnerung in 'Tübingen, Jänner' und 'Todtnauberg' in Auseinandersetzung mit Hölderlin und Heidegger," *Die Zeitlichkeit des Ethos: Poetologische Aspekte im Schreiben Paul Celans*, edited by Ulrich Wergin and Martin-Jörg Schäfer, (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2003), p. 96. Lemke points out that Celan was the one who noted the term „Fremde Nähe“ once as the possible title for a volume of his translation. The term is also the title of the catalog for the 1997 exhibition "Celan als Übersetzer" in the Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach.

¹³⁴ Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *Poetry as Experience*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 6. Lacoue-Labarthe sees Celan's use of these two place names to be forever fixed to the names of the poet and philosopher. This possibility that places can be fixed with certainty to a name, to a tradition or culture, is by no means an open or available one in Celan's poetry. The connection between place name and personal name has otherwise been eradicated. Places in his homeland in the Bukowina, a place where "Menschen und Bücher lebten," as Celan put it in his Bremer Rede, "ist nun der Geschichtlosigkeit anheimgefallen." Todtnauberg and Tübingen can still harbor the history of "Bücher und Menschen," of Heidegger and Hölderlin.

now clear itself a path to a possible future ... For this task, art (again, *techné*), and in art, poetry, are perhaps able to provide some signs. At least, that is the hope, fragile, tenuous, and meager as it is.¹³⁵

Lacoue Labarthe here effectively proposes that Celan has the same role that Hölderlin, according to Heidegger, had at the advent of modernity. Celan now stands at the end of this epoch, and at a new caesura, which is a more precarious one, because the Shoah might have not only inaugurated the end of the modern epoch, but the end of history altogether. From this caesura, which Heidegger had previously claimed Hölderlin spoke from and occupied as the place of the end of an ideal Greek world, and therefore the advent of a flawed modern world, remnants of previously unclaimed, unrealized possibilities of the previous age become apparent. These gaps, these unfulfilled potentials become possible openings towards a future. In Heidegger's thinking, moving towards a possible future, thinking ahead ("Vordenken") at the moment of caesura is always a thinking back ("Zurückdenken"), a reminiscing about the unclaimed possibilities, the not-yet-lived possible future of a past world and past consciousness. Heidegger posits that Hölderlin is situated at the threshold in time where the past in all its Otherness, its "Fremdheit" reaches towards the present and can there be picked up as an unclaimed possibility. Hölderlin, who constitutes his very own speaking through a permanent confrontation with the foreign, the "Fremde," the unclaimed reaching to him from the past, can become this agent of the unfolding of the future. Lemke, however, seeks to differentiate Celan's model of history from Heidegger's figure

¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 7.

of Hölderlin, while acknowledging their structural relation. The caesura, the fold in time as the ‘today,’ where past and future meet, to Celan is cloaked in darkness and therefore not available for perception or recognition. In the drafts to his Meridian speech he writes:

Ich spreche nicht vom “modernen” Gedicht, ich spreche vom Gedicht heute. Zu den wesentlichen Aspekten diese Heute – meines Heute, ich spreche ja in eigener Sache, gehört seine Zukunftslosigkeit: ich kann Ihnen nicht verschweigen, daß ich die Frage, worauf sich in Richtung auf welches Morgen das Gedicht sich bewegt, nicht zu beantworten weiß; wenn das Gedicht an ein solches Morgen grenzt, so besitzt es Dunkelheit. Die Geburtsstunde des Gedichts, meine Damen und Herren, liegt im Dunkel. Verschiedene wollen wissen, daß es sich um das Dunkel vor Tagesanbruch handelt; ich teile es nicht, dieses Wissen.¹³⁶

Celan refuses to understand poetry as becoming recognizable and locatable in a place where the future is dawning. He does not seem to negate the possibility that such a poem, on its way to a future, exists. If a poem possesses such a quality, this is however not visible to Celan. It is cloaked in darkness. The question of whether it exists in the first place can therefore not be answered conclusively. As a poet making poems, Celan here stages himself as in a way removed from the poem, from all its qualities and abilities. The poet cannot anymore be the one who optimistically launches his poems into a future. Instead, their path, and even their potential to get onto this path, is hidden from the poet. There appears to still be hope that the language he releases with the poem into the here and now can also get released into

¹³⁶ Paul Celan, *Der Meridian: Endfassung, Vorstufen, Materialien* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1999) p.

a future, but that hope is extremely slim, and as Celan's statement emphasizes, is also not at all optimistic.¹³⁷

Heidegger's figure of "Andenken" proves to provide a fitting structure for understanding how the poem pulls from the formal use of quotation to a temporality that connects the poem with Hölderlin. The poem stands in its 'now,' which is the opening of history towards an imminent new epoch, that is made possible through the harnessing of the remaining future potential of the dissipating epoch. Standing in such a now is also Heidegger's Hölderlin. This somersault of past into future bears a significant resemblance to Celan's poetics of history and remembrance, in which the punctual present of the poem is understood as being the space where a form of speaking that is recuperated, thrust from the past is able to carry the poem and language towards a continuation of language, a future of language—even if that speaking is severely compromised and ultimately thwarted. However, the surviving language that can propel forward is not an unclaimed, unrealized and therefore hopeful potential of a past language or world. Rather it is a surviving language, a compromised remnant: "Aber sie spricht ja!" The hopeful moment in Celan's poetics does not emphasize the remaining possibilities of language in a new age, but is a moment of surprise that language has survived despite the death of its

¹³⁷ The figure of Andenken harnesses its optimism in part from an understanding of time that Heidegger develops in his figure of "Sein zum Tode," and the life-affirming bolt of energy and drive the subject experiences when confronted with the reality of his or her death and end of being. Being always bending and curving towards its own end is not consumed by that end, but affirms itself as alive within that curvature, that *telos*. This ultimately more positive ontological structure to Lemke differs from Celan's relationship to death and time. Celan's poetics pivot on an experience of death as content-heavy, actual, not transcendental, and caused by a violent external force, through murder. This realization of an external inhumane deathly content as what forcefully eclipses and renders invisible a subject's experience of its own death is what makes it difficult to come to a life-affirming understanding of being towards death.

speakers. The exclamation contains a degree of disbelief. The poet must first realize and come to terms with what has survived, what remains, and whether this surviving language can be an agent of possibility. Language at first does not continue as a remnant of possibility, but with the burden of being an unlikely, unexpected survivor amidst too many who have died and have experienced utmost terror.

The future directedness of a speaking in the 'now' of the poem, when it is one that is a future possibility thrust from a past, is therefore rather a compromised and burdensome continued speaking of a surviving language. This in some ways nearly undermines the beginning/end or caesura structure, as the now and the future become more of an unwilling, reluctant continuation of their past and the history they have gone through. The present is desperate to find within itself its potential to be different from itself, produce difference while living up to the task of telling, of remembering.

In the poem, the task is brought to the poem itself, to the constellation and relation it assigns between the imperfect language at its disposal and a history, here also of a failing language, Hölderlin's language, which is an earlier language that also has not properly been able to communicate the terror of the loss of a connected world. It is in the tight close encounter between the failing language of Hölderlin and the failing language of Celan's poem that two things can happen. For one, the poem can open up moments of differentiation and Otherness; there are very few words, or fragments of words available, but they come from two poets encountering each other, so even when all of the poem's words belong to itself and are one poem,

there is difference. They are inhabited by two voices who are different from each other.

At the same time, quotation creates a genealogy, a lineage and history that connects its representatives through a failing language. Yet history is created not against the odds, or in spite of a failed language. Rather it is through the encounter of failing languages that history is created. The poem brings each of them into a proximity where they can become apparent to each other as Others. This Otherness becoming apparent through the structure of the poem is where moments of differentiation are taking place. It is these moments of differentiation where language can find its new potential to invent and create.

The encounter with the Other, at least in this poem, specifically draws together historically distant Others from the German literary tradition, and thereby creates its own lineage, from Hölderlin to Celan. This proposes a model of literary history that is based on Otherness, on an Other language (a marginal language), from Hölderlin, who is Other to Celan, Other to Literary History, and Other to himself, or Other to his earlier, sane self. This layering of many constellations and folds of Otherness produces a language that is as new/different as it is compromised, and that because it can create difference or change on the grounds of its own failings and loss, can also remember and speak from and of the past.

The Two Halves of the Poem

“Tübingen, Jänner” is often read as consisting of two halves: The colon at the end

of the middle stanza marks the end of the first half and the beginning of the second. Counting its title line, the poem consists of 24 lines; the colon appears at the end of line 12, before line 13, marking the poem's precise middle. Winfried Menninghaus reads the colon in Celan's poem as:

Geste des versammelnden Ausrichtens ... es leistet eine retrospektive
Versammlung der bis zu ihm exponierten Sprachmomente ... und verleiht
ihnen dabei gleichzeitig eine prospektive Ausrichtung ('rüstet wieder zur
Fahrt'). Sie wird auf eine analoge Struktur im Umgang mit vergangener Zeit
bezogen: auf die 'eingedenkene', zu einer neuen 'Fahrt' sich rüstende
Aneignung vergangener Leiden und Hoffnungen.¹³⁸

The temporal structure that the colon marks resembles that of Heidegger's "Andenken." The colon becomes an intersection of past and future, the place that gathers in past words, which accumulate in a shared presence to then jointly point towards what comes after. At the same time the colon is an opening towards a next speaking, and links that next, future speaking back to what has come before. The

¹³⁸ Winfried Menninghaus, *Paul Celan: Magie Der Form* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1980), pp. 245–248.

Menninghaus here also refers to Marlies Janz's reading of the caesura, and her link to Benjamin's philosophy of history and his concept of "Jetztzeit," the revolutionary moment when time ceases and where through an act of remembrance ("Eingedenken") fragments of the past can be ruptured (herausgesprengt) from a continuum of history. See: Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften I*, edited by Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1990), pp. 701–702; Marlies Janz, *Vom Engagement Absoluter Poesie: Zur Lyrik und Ästhetik Paul Celans* (Frankfurt am Main: Syndikat, 1976). For a reading of the colon and its function for situating the poem "Tübingen, Jänner" in the now, Benjamin's Jetztzeit, while again having a strong structural resemblance to Celan's poetics of history and also Heidegger's "Andenken," is too charged and energetic. The revolutionary force that motivates Benjamin's Jetztzeit is not available to Celan. When Benjamin's fragments of the past have the power of "heraussprengen," and can powerfully rupture from their previous context to release their future-building revolutionary powers, language and images in Celan's poems are "hindurchgegangen" ("und gab keine Worte her für das, was geschah"), language "durfte wieder zu Tage treten." Agency and self-realizing power ultimately does not reside fully with poetic language that has survived the past and is emerging into the now. It seems that Heidegger's figure of "Andenken" is more useful here because of its incorporation of the "Fremde."

‘now’ of the poem here also becomes the place where a thinking and speaking ahead and a thinking back fold together.

In “Tübingen, Jänner,” the colon opens up the poem to the Hölderlin who is stuttering, whose continued speaking towards the future might in fact lack the force and world-building powers of Heidegger’s Hölderlin. Here it is the Hölderlin who resides in the tower, who has fallen ill. “Besuche ertrunkener Schreiner bei diesen tauchenden Worten” references Hölderlin’s landlords and caretakers, the carpenter Ernst Zimmer and wife Charlotte, who provide him with a room in the tower adjacent to their main house on the Neckar in Tübingen. The “tauchende Worte,” or diving/plunging words, are the words of the ill Hölderlin living by the Neckar, words that dive beneath the surface, that are in a cascading downward, maybe backwards motion, not moving upwards or ahead. The next stanza then is an expanding sentence¹³⁹ that circles around the subjunctive verb “käme,” which posits a hypothesis: The stanza does not make use of a conjunction, such as “wenn” or “falls,” but draws on the subjunctive verb form to generate its hypothetical force. The use of the subjunctive verb alone, without meaning-binding conjunctions, withholds a structure of logic, consequence or relation from the syntactical construction. The sentence rather becomes like an invocation, or, as its opposite, a lament. In that, the subjunctive verb intensifies the hypothetical presumption: The advent, the coming of this “Mensch” is unlikely, is not a reality. At the same time, it is energized by the hope of the speaker. What carries this lament over the absence of a coming “Mensch” and what at the same time carries the hope of this call is the

¹³⁹ The expanding sentence, spanning the remaining stanza, has been read as an echo of Hölderlin’s hymns in free verse and their expansive sentences.

verb “käme,” which generates movement, both because “käme” describes the movement of coming, and because it is a verb, which in the poem pushes movement. Even if that movement in the end is hypothetical, or a hope that remains unfulfilled, it still operates in the poem as a dynamic of movement. The poem, from the “heute” in the 12th line, is moving forward by means of the verb “käme.” It is the “heute,” however, that pulls back this forward movement. Without this “heute,” the “Mensch” would have more time, an open horizon, to still make an appearance. Without this “heute,” the sentence would sound more hopeful, the advent of “Mensch” more likely. But time is running out in this “heute,” a future horizon is not relevant or helpful, because it is necessary that the advent of this “Mensch” still happens today. If we remind ourselves of Celan’s understanding of the punctual presence of the poem in its “heute,” this advent has to take place in the poem. As we have the poem in its completed form in front of us, and no advent is visible in the poem, we read and perceive more doubt than hope in the verb “käme.” “Heute” forecloses an open future horizon, and makes it appear irrelevant to the poem. Yet the future directionality of “käme” is retained, and now gathered into the space of “heute,” which is then charged with the forward thrust of the sentence, of the verb “käme” which pushes the sentence forward. The “heute” of the poem therefore remains a full and complete “heute,” in which a directionality is fully operating, and an aliveness in time is fully available. At the same time, these words are “tauchende,” diving or plunging words, and they are Hölderlin’s: When the “Schreiner” visits these “words”, he visits Hölderlin, and he stands by these words (“bei”), in the sense of next to them, near them, as when a visitor comes near

someone. The “Schreiner” is the one arriving, visiting from somewhere else, entering into the scene: He is arriving at Hölderlin’s words. This coming near to Hölderlin’s words is the advent that the poem enacts. Hölderlin then speaks “diese tauchende Worte,” these diving words that the “Schreiner” has come close to. The poem moves near, close to Hölderlin’s words, to his lament, to his invocation of an advent of another language, one that will not be fully voiced, because its speaker has not come to this world yet, and if the speaker were to come to this world, his or her voice would be restrained from being fully articulated.

Repetition

The second half of the poem repeats the verb “käme” three times, and contains other word repetitions: “Mensch,” “dürfte,” “lallen” and “Pallaksch” all appear twice, and in the case of “immer-, immer- zuzu” one part of the word is reiterated, and “zuzu” produces a neologism through repetition of “zu.” These repetitions are ways of expanding and continuing the original word, as well as expanding the sentence. The stanza opens up to accommodate the surplus of these words. At the same time, the sentence restrains their onward repetitive thrust by imposing a syntactic structure and especially by narrowing into the ever tighter margins of the poem.

As previous interpretations have proposed, the second “half” of the poem references Hölderlin’s speaking in the second half of his life; the repetitions become the stutters and babbles of the madman, and they are diminished in the speaking power through the use of the subjunctive and their status as diving words that are beneath the sphere of the visible, audible, public. If these repetitions can be read as

references to Hölderlin's speaking, they become an additional and related way of referencing Hölderlin in the poem, in addition to the poem's direct quotations from Hölderlin. The poem connects repetition and quotation as two techniques that draw Hölderlin's language into the poem. In this way, repetition and quotation are both the places in the poem where an encounter takes place between Hölderlin's and Celan's language, where therefore some form of cross-generational relationship is being established.

The use of quotation marks signals that some words in the poem are not Celan's original language, and therefore negotiates the narrow line between original poem and external text. Repetition becomes a way in which the language of the poem can internally negotiate with originality. Repetition appears where language begins to feed off of itself, and becomes its own limited, recycled resource. This undermines a strong claim of authorship, which would have access to language as a limitless open resource. The poem lays down a claim to a self-sufficient originality not only when it draws on Hölderlin's language to complete itself, but also when it quotes from itself, when it repeats its own words, to complete a poem from a language as a limited resource.

In "Tübingen, Jänner," repetition of single words and syllables creates the appearance of stuttering and the dissolving speech of the mad poet, his "lallen." Repetition becomes the agent for delivering psychotic speech. This decisively severs the link between madness and originality. Hillard for example understands the repetition in "Tübingen, Jänner" as a critique of the concept of originality that can be assigned to a genius aesthetic. "Tübingen, Jänner," according to Hillard,

precisely dismantles the connection between prophetic speech and mental illness that it conjures in its referencing of Hölderlin. Both quotation and repetition in the poem function to deconstruct an aura of authenticity often attributed to the poet prophet and instead turn towards language as self-referential and self-creating. This emphasis on textuality in this critique also means that the poem or the poet's project is not an optimistically utopian project. It does not claim language as an openly available, generative force in the creation of a better world after the Shoah.¹⁴⁰ A creation from a blank slate is not an option, instead, the question is how language can at all be mobilized to be anything different than the language of the perpetrator.

The "immer-, immer- zuzu" in the last stanza emphasizes the repetition and dissolution on the semantic as well as phonetic level. "Immerzu" already describes relentless ongoing repetition. The hyphen, which appears throughout the poem, interrupts the flow of that incessant "lallen," and gives the line the appearance of stuttering. And the "immer," as well as two other words in the last three lines of the poem (lallen, Pallaksch), includes a double consonant ("mm"). These consonant doubles evoke how a stuttering speaker can get locked on a consonant, and repeat that one consonant. The double consonant also contracts a word by turning the preceding vowel into a short vowel, which makes the word sound less melodious, and choppier.

The double consonant enacts the repetition of single words (käme, lallen, dürfte...) on the phonetic level. The contraction of the word through the consonant double mirrors the general movement of contraction and reduction in the last stanza of the

¹⁴⁰ Derek Hillard, "The Rhetoric of Originality: Paul Celan and the Disentanglement of Illness and Creativity," *German Quarterly*, vol. 75, no. 4 (2004).

poem. The poem contracts its previously more expansive lines and sentences that fill the entire stanza into short, tight word clusters that find space in a very tight page margin in the last lines of the poem.

John Felstiner, as one very prominent early translator of Celan's poetry into English, singles out repetition as one of the most striking features of Celan's poetry, and understands it to be the place where Celan's poetry most acutely wrestles with its originating potential. Originality in poetry becomes the place where language, after it has gone through the "deadly language" (*todbringende Sprache*) of the Nazis, could potentially be invented anew. Such hopes for finding a new language has to also be thwarted, though, because poetic language carries the responsibility for remembrance of the victims of the Shoah. In that way Felstiner sees repetition as an overlap and tension between commemorating and propelling forward, between past and future: "each new instance of repetition moves ahead as it harks back, seeking through remembrance a regenerative impetus."¹⁴¹ While repeated words rely on existing words and repeat what has already been uttered, they also generate a movement forward, because they carry in themselves a small but hopeful potential for slight deviations and therefore changes. Felstiner points to rhymes in Celan that operate on the threshold between rhyme and repetition such as in one verse in the poem "Die Winzer": "um fernher als Lichtstumpf zu leuchten, / wenn endlich die Lippe sich feuchtet." He understands these as "a differencing, the least possible change that presses repetition toward restitution."¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ John Felstiner, "Repetition and Restitution: Translating Celan's 'Die Winzer.'" *Proof texts*, vol. 10, no. 1 (1990).

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

Within this spatial contraction on the page, repetition serves to increasingly limit the space granted to language to proliferate, develop and change. It is revealing that the repeated words in the poem with the exception of the first reiterated verb (“käme, käme, käme”) appear only as doubles, are repeated only once. In addition, the repeated words syntactically and visually move ever close to one another. When the repetition of “dürfen” still occurs within a longer sentence, which interpolates the two verbs with a subclause (“er dürfte, / spräche er von dieser Zeit, er/ dürfte”, the next word double, “lallen und lallen” is separated only by one conjunction (“und”). The next double, “immer-, immer-” is separated only by a hyphen and comma. And the final, “zuzu” now shares the space of one word and does not separate into two different words. The final double, the exclamation “Pallaksch. Pallaksch,” with which Hölderlin meant either no or yes depending on the situation, might at first appear to open up the word to mean anything possible, no and yes. But as the words can mean either no or yes, the word is locked up in an opposition and double bind, which again forecloses any true semantic openness or possibility for multiple meanings. In addition, it is an *Unwort*, a word that has no meaning, which again stems from the contingency of its use, but also a contingency that is in a deadlock of diametrical opposition.

In the poem, which also visually contracts and narrows towards the end, repetition on the one hand creates an incredibly tight linguistic economy, which gradually takes away space that language might want to claim. In that way it curtails language’s desire to expand, fill the page, speak and invent. At the same time, the use of doubling forces the words into a space of utmost proximity, a proximity that

Celan's poetics posit as encounters with an Other. This proximity in the end is not what makes the words or phonemes alike, but what constitutes their separateness, their Otherness. In Celan's poetics of proximity and encounter, words only become manifest as Other to each other once they share the tight space of the poem, its punctual presence ("punktuelle Gegenwart").

Language here is not proliferating; its possibilities are few and become ever fewer. But it still has the potential for creating difference, in spite of its use of word doubling with the result of being locked into a state of an ultimate and seemingly final foreclosure of difference. It is at first in spite of, and then, in a final turn, *because* of narrow repetition that a differentiation that is based on Otherness can emerge. This Otherness, though, happens neither on the semantic nor the phonetic level. It manifests because of the poem, and the proximity that the poem drives its words into. Because the poem exists in its punctual presence (punktuelle Gegenwart), it constitutes the words' Otherness in relation to each other only on the basis of the proximity it itself establishes. On the page this becomes visible through typography, for example "zuzu" becoming the place in the poem where the doubling of the word "zu" must now share the space of one word. It moves into such a tight proximity with the other "zu" that they together create a new word, a neologism. This new word is both a perfect copy of the original word "zu," and also Other to it. The babble and stutter of Hölderlin comes into the poem not as an unraveling language, a language profusely proliferating, either to produce no sense or to create sense anew. It comes into Celan's poem as the language of the Other, and its Otherness is revealed within a bind of repetition, mirroring, exact quotation

and copying. Celan might have wanted to write a poem that was wholly original, in a language he entirely created. But this would have been untrue to his experience of authorship, in not being able to see or access such future generating potential of his language. His language rather has to turn backward. The poem becomes the “heute” where this look backward is not really a backwards look, but rather one that hopes the Otherness of that previous language can be what now allows his language to continue and speak originally, differently. In a way this is “Andenken.” But only as a second step can this Other language, this Otherness of the past emerge as the “unabgegoltene Möglichkeiten.” What it is at first is what has already been erased, what has been marginalized and worked to keep out. This experience and memory of erasure, of the murder of this Other, is in those words, whatever potential and generative possibility lies within them. This is why Celan is drawn to Hölderlin’s failed language, his illness, the erased one. Not to now retroactively proclaim his victory as the unlikely hero and harbinger of a new language after the Shoah.

Quotation and Repetition: Otherness

Otherness emerges in the poem because the poem is the space that at first makes Otherness apparent, as it structurally brings words into a new relation, and reestablishes their relation to each other even when they are the same. But at the same time it is quotation, it is brought into the poem from a lineage, from an inheritance and genealogy, a literary history which includes the Other of Hölderlin, and also an Other poetry of Hölderlin, as well as a later psychotic Hölderlin who is

Other to the Hölderlin who is included in that literary history.

The Hölderlin that Celan references is the Hölderlin of the “last works,” the poet recluse living in the tower. This Hölderlin writes outside of an accepted body of work, outside of a properly recorded literary history, and after the life of the great poet has ended. It appears that what comes after this ending is not the dawning of a new epoch, or the “hymnischer Aufschwung” of Hölderlin’s late celebrated hymns which proclaim a new poetic language and form. In the last Hölderlin poems, the lines become shorter, poetry and language diminish, and do so within a temporal space that is outside of developing time, outside of a time that makes history. In this space outside of time and history, Hölderlin still speaks, though it is a diminished speaking from the margins of its own possibility. And it is easily overlooked, omitted from literary history.

The nearly impossible language of the last Hölderlin poems, and the nearly impossible language of Celan, both speaking from an ‘after’ within history, from after a caesura, meet in the poem as Others. They are Others who are moving ever closer to another through quotation, repetition, doubling and duplication, and because of that movement towards near sameness they can open up moments of differentiation in the poem that maintain the possibility of difference between all the words it harbors, of multivalence and of the creation of a new word from two or one.

It is therefore relevant to read the poem “Tübingen, Jänner” in the immediate context of its conception. It spills from two days of an uneasy encounter with Celan’s own critical reception, with the gatekeepers of literary history who

determine whether Celan's work is able to maintain a perhaps impossible balance: between being independent and original, but at the same time influenced by—and recognizable as a successor of—an established tradition.

“Tübingen, Jänner,” though, does not establish its autonomy by claiming its language as a new, authentic language which does not take from and appropriate other poets. Instead, it decides to move closer to its lender Hölderlin, and is willing to surrender much of its own original language to get locked within the narrow margins of a page with a handful of words at its disposal that, in order to produce a poem, must repeat themselves. It is in this closest proximity—of Celan to Hölderlin, of each word of the poem to its neighbor—where a formation, maybe creation of language finally occurs. Any possibility for language to continue creating poetry is therefore tied to its willingness to surrender its claims of autonomy and find itself only as an Other to a previous speaker. For literary history, in which Celan wants his poems to find a place, this means that literary works do not aid in the production of a narrative of history in which works of art mirror the positive development of a tradition and nation. Instead, they become planes that have their own time altogether, that are excluded from history, and create a genealogy based on Otherness.

CHAPTER II: Writing for and as a Jewish Minority in Postwar Germany: The Peter Szondi-Institut für Allgemeine und Vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft at the Freie Universität Berlin (1965–1972)

“Tödliche Bedrohung” – Writing a History of Szondi’s Institute as a Minority Establishment

Werner Hamacher writes about the Institut für Allgemeine und Vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft¹⁴³ in 2015: “Dieses Institut ist mit dem Tod von Peter Szondi, für den es eingerichtet und von dem es weniger geleitet als animiert worden ist, untergegangen. Darin vor allem liegt seine Besonderheit.”¹⁴⁴ What makes the Institute unique is not its curriculum, its faculty, its prominent students, nor the definition of its field of study. What first and foremost makes it unique is its founder and director Peter Szondi and, as Hamacher emphasizes, also the meaning of his suicide to the Institute, which abruptly follow the end of his seven-year tenure as director. To be sure, Szondi’s death in 1972 did not in fact mean that the newly established and then still growing Institute closed down. The *Peter Szondi-Institut*, which since 2005 bears the name of its founder, exists to this day. But Hamacher’s sentence is an unyielding one: Szondi’s death discontinued the Institute in spite of its official continuation. It is a provocation especially because he writes it to be included in the edited volume *Nach Szondi: Allgemeine und Vergleichende*

¹⁴³ Hereafter I shall refer to this by its initials, AVL, or also simply as “the Institute.”

¹⁴⁴ Werner Hamacher, “Ein Brief,” *Nach Szondi: Allgemeine und Vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft an der Freien Universität Berlin 1965–2015*, edited by Irene Albers (Berlin: Kadmos, 2015), pp. 293–298.

Literaturwissenschaft an der Freien Universität Berlin 1965 – 2015, which accompanied the exhibition at the Freie Universität (FU) in October 2015 on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Institute. The 500-page volume with contributions by prominent representatives of Germanist literary studies provides a much more inclusive history of the Institute, even though the editor Irene Albers refers to Hamacher in her introduction, when she states that any history of the Institute can only be considered from the point of the caesura of Szondi's death.¹⁴⁵ Other histories of the Institute similarly emphasize the rupture of Szondi's death and its impact on literary studies. Philipp Ekardt illuminates the title of a roundtable discussion, *Nach Szondi: Literaturtheorie und Kritik*, that also included Armen Avanesian and Jan Niklas Howe in 2014: "‘Nach Szondi’ bedeutet enggelesen, ‘in der Folge von Szondi’, aber eben auch unter Umständen nach Verschwinden eines bestimmten wissenschaftlichen Raumes, den Szondi miteröffnet hat."¹⁴⁶ Szondi's style of philology, which flourished around the 1970s in the contact zones of structuralism and arriving poststructuralism, began to lose its allure in the following decades. The hegemony of literary theory and its focus on language and its products, namely literature, dissolved to make room for the study of other media and theoretical, or cultural historical approaches to literature and cultural artifacts.

¹⁴⁵ The editor Irene Albers is responsive to Hamacher's judgement, which she also quotes in her introduction. Her ambition for the volume is neither to write a "Theoriegeschichte" nor a "Festschrift," which both tend to offer accounts that are too linear and teleological. She instead wants to think of the history of the Institute always, as Hamacher has required, from the caesura of Szondi's death. The volume nevertheless includes sparse writings or materials that document the conflicts and difficult years before Szondi's death.

¹⁴⁶ Christian Steinau, "Gespräch mit Armen Avanesian, Philipp Ekardt und Jan Niklas Howe," *Nach Szondi*, ed. Irene Albers (Berlin: Kadmos, 2015).

For them, the forms that the AVL Institute took after Szondi's death mirror the gradual detachment of literary studies from theory.

Hamacher, pointing in a similar direction, but in harsher terms, articulates the Institute's development after Szondi's death as a surrender of Szondi's principles for literary study, of "Allgemeine Literaturwissenschaft," to the "terror of totalities" ("Terror der Totalitäten").¹⁴⁷ It had been Szondi's hard work to resist the tendency to generalize, synthesize, and adapt the singular, different and unique in a literary text to a generalizing totality. For the purpose of academic literary studies, his effort therefore had also been to emancipate the study of literature from existing disciplinary hierarchies, structures, and "totalities." This meant in practice that Szondi and his peers were vehement about having the Institute be independent, especially from Germanistik. If we believe Hamacher's account, the following decades saw a decline of these strong claims that had been made for the Institute. One reason for this decline, in Hamacher's view, is that the once experimental and pioneering site for the study of literature relinquished its hard-fought independence from Germanistik: "Die AVL verkümmerte von Semester zu Semester zu einem Appendix der Germanistik."¹⁴⁸ For six years after Szondi's death, until 1977, the Institute was not able to find a new director. In the meantime, Szondi's unique style of philology and emphasis on literary theory, which had molded the curricula, seminar topics, required reading lists, exams, and the choice of invited speakers lost its stranglehold over the Institute's profile.

¹⁴⁷ Hamacher, "Ein Brief," p. 294.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 296.

But Hamacher's judgement goes beyond the effects of Szondi's form of literary study and his absence from it. He equally evokes this "Terror der Totalitäten" as being the general atmosphere Szondi experienced in the University, and as the toll this took on Szondi as a private individual. Hamacher presents Szondi's suicide as being driven by the hostilities amongst the faculty and governing bodies around the Institute, which Szondi experienced as "eine einzige institutionalisierte Bedrohung."¹⁴⁹ Hamacher sums up: "Ein von Feindseligkeiten derart zerrissenes Institut dürfte es selten gegeben haben."¹⁵⁰ Szondi's death cast a shadow over academic politics and life, and the continued thriving of the Institute could not redeem this failing of the academy. How the University failed Szondi, and failed others that Hamacher mentions, if not by name, but as those whose "fell apart," "disappeared," and whose academic careers ended, also means that a history of the Institute is not readily available for narration.¹⁵¹ Hamacher presents the circumstances of Szondi's death, and the academic culture he became a victim of, as that which complicates narration and historicization. And it is to Hamacher even more the death in itself, as a "crude" non-negotiable fact, which stalls narration: "Über das krude Faktum dieses Todes und dieses Untergangs kann keine geschichtliche Darstellung hinweggehen, aber keine solche Darstellung, und wäre sie noch so detailliert, kann diesem Faktum entsprechen."¹⁵² Accounts that integrate

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 295.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 297.

¹⁵¹ "etliche sind zusammengebrochen, einige verschwunden, vielleicht sind die meisten . . . in der ein oder anderen Weise . . . untergetaucht. Untergetaucht, dass soll hier auch heißen: wurden entstellt und aus der Bahn, beileibe nicht nur ihrer Karriere, geworfen." Ibid., p. 294.

¹⁵² Ibid., p. 296.

this death into a seamless historical narrative do not reveal how Szondi's death disrupted an imagined continuum. An appropriate account of this death would rather have to disrupt historical narrative in such a way that it could not tell this history in any readily accessible or legible fashion. Hamacher speaks of "stocken"—a difficult, stalling and interrupted movement—as the fitting form of historical narration for this institute. "Stocken" is a quotation from Celan's poem "Du liegst im großen Gelausche," which was the poem that Szondi wrote about in his last and unfinished essay "Eden," composed in his institute office on Kiebitzweg, a street in Friedenau, Berlin.¹⁵³ The unfinished draft of Szondi's essay and his notes were found open on his desk after his suicide. In Celan's poem, the last two lines "nichts/ stockt" describe the inappropriate continuation of history, as well as the river Spree in Berlin, after it had been a site of murder and death at the hand of the Nazis and during the crimes of World War II. Szondi writes in his handwritten note: "Darüber, daß nichts stockt, stockt das Gedicht. Daß nichts stockt, macht das Gedicht stocken." "Stockt" is the final line and word of the poem, and therefore makes the poem cease and halt when it was trying to relate the brutal executions of Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht, and the conspirators of the 20 July 1944 plot to assassinate Hitler. The poem "stockt" (balks at) the "In-differenz der Geschichte und der Menschen," which accepts that the river does not cease and halt, which Szondi translates into "Gleichgültigkeit." Hamacher decides to cease and halt when he arrives at the fact of Szondi's death. He draws on the word "stocken" for his

¹⁵³ Paul Celan, *Gesammelte Werke III* (Frankfurt a. Main: Suhrkamp, 1983); Peter Szondi, *Celan-Studien* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2016).

rejection of a linear, integrated historical narrative of the Szondi Institute and therefore discloses how he has been taught by Celan, via Szondi, who before had learned from Celan when he wrote about the verb “stocken” in his final years as a professor at the AVL institute. Hamacher reveals that he has been taught how to write history as ‘stockend.’¹⁵⁴ When he writes down what he remembers from the Institute, he therefore falters when he thinks of Szondi’s death.

The other circumstance that stalls narration and an objective history in Hamacher’s letter are the converging biographies and deaths of Paul Celan and Peter Szondi. Szondi committed suicide by drowning in Berlin’s Halensee lake in 1971, a little more than one year after Celan had drowned in the Seine:

Man kann, auch wenn man dazu neigen sollte, nicht für bloßen Zufall zu halten, dass dieser Tod eine erschreckende Ähnlichkeit mit dem von Paul Celan hatte, der sich im Jahr zuvor in die Seine gestürzt hatte; . . . Als in der bundesdeutschen Presse, und nicht nur in ihr, der fatale Parallellismus zwischen diesen Toden diskutiert wurde, musste er als ebenso verfälschend wie unabweisbar empfunden werden: verfälschend, weil es drei bis zur Unvergleichbarkeit verschiedene Leben waren, die da in Beziehung zueinander gesetzt wurden; unabweisbar, weil niemand die tödliche Bedrohung in Abrede stellen konnte, auf die in jedem einzelnen Fall ein Selbstmord die Antwort war.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁴ “Stocken” captures a different dynamic and movement than “frenzy”. When Hamacher’s here practices a philology of “stocken”, I in my project argue that Celan issues a “frenzied philology”. Yet both movement registers are activated in the aftermath of loss and death, they describe that time is out of joint, and is moving either too fast or too slow, and superimposing either past or future onto the present moment, as a delay, or as a prematurity.

¹⁵⁵ Hamacher, “Ein Brief,” p. 293. “[D]rei . . . verschiedene Leben” refers to Celan, Szondi and Walter Benjamin, the latter of whom had also committed suicide, though in his case when he was expecting to be turned over to the Nazis in 1940.

Hamacher here, as he does when he uses the word “stocken,” links Celan and Szondi together, and links them to the Institute through their shared deaths, because the Institute was one of the threatening contexts which drove Szondi to commit suicide. What is this deadly threat, which Hamacher here presents as one unified single threat, that pushed Szondi and Celan, as it had Benjamin in the lineage that Hamacher invokes, to end their lives within one year of each other and both by water?

It is well known, of course, that Paul Celan and Peter Szondi both suffered from depression and were hospitalized for the condition multiple times, both spending extended time in mental health clinics.¹⁵⁶ Their correspondence conveys that they were aware of each others’ mental health condition. Both however refrain from discussing this experience in their letters. Szondi only once alludes to it during one such clinic stay.¹⁵⁷ Official biographies name this condition as the cause of their suicides. Yet in the case of Paul Celan, he understood his condition to be linked to his experience of Nazi persecution, both in Nazi Germany and in postwar Germany. In Szondi’s case, Hamacher also details this threat as a form of persecution, especially during his time at the Freie Universität Berlin.

¹⁵⁶ Their illnesses are often referenced as depression, yet during Paul Celan’s lifetime were also designated as, for example, “paranoia,” which in one instance led him to physically attack his wife Gisele Léstrange.

¹⁵⁷ Szondi writes to Celan: “Jean hat Ihnen vielleicht erzählt, dass es mir seit vielen Wochen nicht gut sehr geht. Das Kollegschreiben wird dabei zu so einer quälenden und anstrengenden Sache, dass zur Korrespondenz . . . kaum noch die Kraft habe. . . . Sie werden das verstehen.” To which Celan responds: “Aber verlieren Sie nicht die Zuversicht, Lieber Peter! Ich weiß aus Erfahrung, wieviel Widerstand und Arbeitskraft unsereins mitbekommen hat.” Paul Celan and Peter Szondi, *Briefwechsel* (Frankfurt a. Main: Suhrkamp, 2006), p. 66-67.

Celan's Fears of a Reemerging Nazism: Antisemitic Persecution and Paranoia

A paramount cause for Celan's feeling of being persecuted after the end of World War II was the Goll Affair and, connected to that, his reception in Germany.¹⁵⁸ Celan himself understood the allegations as a "Diffamierungskampagne"¹⁵⁹ to destroy his reputation as a poet, with antisemitism as the underlying motive. In a letter to his Jewish Bucharest friend Alfred Margul-Sperber he writes:

Sie kennen die Umtriebe des Neonazismus in der Bundesrepublik. Im deutlichen Zusammenhang mit diesen Umtrieben erfolgt nun auch seit längerem der Versuch, mich und meine Gedichte zu zerstören. Zu diesem Zwecke bezichtigt man mich des Betrugs, der Erbschleicherei, des Pagiats.¹⁶⁰

Celan developed an extreme fear of becoming a victim of Nazism again, a fear which many of his contemporaries found to be out of proportion and a reflection of his mental illness. In 1969, Celan's friend Klaus Demus wrote to him of his concern that Celan was suffering from paranoia and that his extreme reaction to the Goll Affair was one symptom of his condition.¹⁶¹ The relationship to Demus from then on was strained and disrupted. Celan did not accept that his psychological

¹⁵⁸ For a detailed account of the Goll Plagiarism Affair and its effect on the reception of Celan's poetry, refer to Chapter 1.

¹⁵⁹ Celan, "Letter dated February 8, 1962," *Briefe an Alfred Margul-Sperber*, edited by M. Rosenkranz (Aachen: Rimbaud, 2015).

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Paul Celan, and Klaus and Nani Demus, *Briefwechsel*, edited by Joachim Seng (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2009). A pretext for Klaus Demus' diagnosis was his work with Celan on the text "Entgegnungen" with Ingeborg Bachmann and Marie-Luise Kaschnitz. The authors decided to publish a much shorter version of the text that Demus had worked on mostly with Celan, which Celan perceived as a breach of solidarity. Lyon erroneously states that Celan broke off all contact with Demus after his suggestion of paranoia. Celan continued to send Demus tokens of his friendship and later resumed the correspondence.

constitution distorted the true scope of the case. He understood references to his mental illness as part of an agenda to discredit his rejection of the allegations even further.¹⁶² Nevertheless, his own acceptance of his mental health condition and episodes of paranoia became more pronounced. In that respect, Erwin Leiser remembers:

Celan beklagte sich in den Gesprächen mit mir oft darüber, dass die Psychiater, die er in Paris aufsuchte, nicht den Zusammenhang zwischen seinen Depressionen, den Erlebnissen in Czernowitz und den Schuldgefühlen gegenüber seinen Eltern verstehen konnten. “Sie sagen immer, dass das zu lange her sei.”¹⁶³

The notion—that Celan’s experience of himself being victim of a new form of persecution at the hand of neo-Nazis was merely a part of his mental health struggle—surfaced in literature about Celan again and again.¹⁶⁴ As late as 1989, James K. Lyon states that Celan’s coming to terms with his Jewish identity and his fear of a newly erupting neo-Nazism meant that his reaction to the affair was “verständlich . . . paranoid” and ultimately contributed to his “Geisteskrankheit.”¹⁶⁵

In his evaluation of Celan’s response to the Goll Affair, Lyon enumerates examples

¹⁶² “Außerdem werde ich . . . ‘wahnsinniggesprochen’. Herr Schroers hat im Vorwärts bereits meinen ‘Zusammenbruch’ verlautbart.” Celan, “Letter to Siegfried Lenz,” 30 January 1962, in Barbara Wiedemann, *Paul Celan, die Goll Affäre: Dokumente einer Infamie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2000), p. 557.

¹⁶³ Erwin Leiser, *Leben nach dem Überleben. Dem Holocaust Entronnen - Begegnungen und Schicksale* (Königstein im Taunus: Athenäum, 1982).

¹⁶⁴ Reviews from the period of the Goll Affair, for example: Hans-Jürgen Heise, “Es ist ein Land Verloren,” *Deutsche Zeitung*, 1964; Kurt Oppens, “Blühen und Schreiben im Niemandsland,” *Merkur*, vol. 19, no. 1, 1965, which sees Niemandsrose to exhibit the beginnings of a “Genesungsprozess.”

¹⁶⁵ James K. Lyon, “Judentum, Antisemitismus, Verfolgungswahn: Celan’s ‘Krise’ 1960-1962,” *Celan-Jahrbuch*, vol. 3, 1990.

that attest to Celan's supposed paranoia, a paranoia of neo-Nazism taking hold of Europe and of surviving Nazi sentiment in academic and literary circles in Germany.¹⁶⁶ It does not do Celan's experience justice to file away his fears surrounding the Goll Affair, and its potential underlying motives being rooted in a reemerging Nazism and antisemitism, as mere paranoia. Neither is it useful to discredit his vehement response as being simply the effect of his mental illness. For one, Celan's fear that neo-Nazi sentiment would gain support in Germany again was by no means unfounded or overstated.¹⁶⁷ Celan also correctly perceived the fact that many representatives of German academia and literature had a Nazi past and that Nazi ideology lingered on in these circles after the war. Secondly, voicing such fears and concerns in a state of paranoia or mental illness does not cancel out their truthfulness or force us to edit these perceptions into a 'saner' version of the

¹⁶⁶ Lyon argues and provides numerous examples that Celan's paranoia went so far as to perceive most German authors as affected by neo-Nazism, including many who came to his defense during the plagiarism allegations: "Sein Geisteszustand zwischen 1960 und 1962 ließ ihn überkritisch gegenüber beinahe allen westdeutschen Dichtern wurden . . . Er glaubte nicht nur, dass sämtliche seiner Kritiker und viele seiner Verteidiger neonazistische Intriganten waren, sondern er schloss außerdem die meisten Autoren, 'im Lande der Neonazi-Deutschen' (wie er es nannte) in die Kategorie der ehemaligen oder Neonazis ein. Es war auch nicht nur ihr vermeintlicher Neonazismus allein, der ihn störte, sondern auch ihr unbefangenes Verhältnis zu ihrer Vergangenheit." Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ See: Armin Pfahl-Traughber, *Rechtsextremismus in der Bundesrepublik*, 4th edition (Munich: Beck, 2006); and for a recent summary: Johannes Radke and Toralf Staud. "Die Falschen Vorstellungen von rechtsextremem Terror." *Zeit Online*, 19 June 2019.

These overviews reveal the uninterrupted existence of right-wing extremism in postwar Germany which, in spite of some differences in voter demographic and ideological content, is the seamless continuation of Nazism after the Third Reich.

Reinstating the NSDAP party was not possible in the immediate postwar context of the 1940s while denazification laws and interventions were in place. The Adenauer government of the 1950s accommodated and tried to control right-wing extremist and neo-Nazi political sentiment within the outlying factions of the CDU, and small parties which only formally pledged themselves to the new democratic constitutions began to form. 1964, however, saw the election success of the new right-wing party NPD. European intellectuals were very alert to the continued presence of right-wing and Nazi opinion, which could be seen for example in Adorno's lecture "Aspekte des neuen Rechtsradikalismus" from April 6, 1967. See: Theodor W. Adorno, *Aspekte des Neuen Rechtsradikalismus* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2019).

truth. Rather, Paul Celan's and, as an additional example, Nelly Sachs' mental breakdowns and episodes of intense paranoia over the possible reemergence of Nazism and antisemitism have to be understood as a symptom both of being a Jew in postwar Europe who has survived the death camps, and of the continued existence of Nazism in Europe to which its surviving victims have a heightened sensitivity.¹⁶⁸ Lyon also diagnoses the "Kollision zwischen 'mad Germany' und Celans Judentum," where "mad Germany" refers to Germany's Nazi past *and* present, as the cause of Celan's "Wahnsinn" which ultimately ended his life.¹⁶⁹ His analysis attempts to recognize Celan as a victim: of the Holocaust, of Nazi and postwar Germany, and of the "Wahnsinn" that Lyon also attributes to these realities of Celan's biography. Yet the form in which he relates Celan's difficult relationship to many postwar authors and critics, and the vocabulary he employs, equally paint a picture of Celan as a poet whose rejection of many of his contemporaries is paranoid, hostile and even malicious.¹⁷⁰ Beyond these contradictory and very controversial arguments, Lyon's 1989 contribution to the *Celan-Jahrbuch* has to be understood as the lingering remains of a psychological reading of Celan as the poet struck with paranoia because of historical trauma, a reading which had more currency during Celan's lifetime. His pathologizing reading becomes the point of departure for a description of Celan as a Jewish poet who only comes to terms with

¹⁶⁸ See my introduction for an account of Nelly Sachs' mental breakdown.

¹⁶⁹ Lyon, "Judentum, Antisemitismus, Verfolgungswahn".

¹⁷⁰ "Verdammungsurteil über deutschsprachige Autoren," "tiefes Misstrauen," "verbitterete Einstellung," "militante Haltung," "Verachtung des assimilierten Juden Theodor Wiesengrund-Adorno," and "vergiftete Beziehungen." Phrasings such as "gequälter Geisteszustand," or "Schrei der Seelenqual" which introduce these appraisals as their triggers fail to make these descriptions seem milder and less aggressive, and rather further disenfranchise the poet and his response.

his identity as a Jew amidst the Goll Affair and his fear of neo-Nazism. Centrally, Lyon argues that Celan's emerging self-awareness regarding his Jewish identity around 1960, an identity he had hitherto concealed and also suppressed, coincides with his paranoia over neo-Nazism and the antisemitic character of the Goll Affair, each affirming the other. Celan's engagement with his identity as a Jew while under threat of defamation indeed focuses on the threat to him as a *person*. In a letter to Siegfried Lenz, Celan proclaims that the Goll Affair seeks to annihilate him: "den Autor Paul Celan gibt es ja nicht . . . es gibt mich, da ich ja als Person und Autor nicht mehr existiere, als – literarisch so oder so verwertetes – Objekt."¹⁷¹ The author and person Celan, his identity as a person beyond his poetry and as a specifically Jewish identity, is what is under threat of erasure. Celan therefore indirectly asks to be included as a biographical person and author, who is Jewish, in any encounter with his poetry. Celan as a person and his identity as a Jew get instantiated in the critical writing about him as a crucial variable. Celan's insistence on his personhood and Jewish identity to his friends becomes an instruction in how to write about him as a Jew, as a Holocaust survivor. As I will discuss later, this will instruct Szondi in how to practice literary criticism after the Holocaust, with the AVL serving both as laboratory, protective space and leading example of a framework for literary studies that can attest to the persecution of a minority.

"Durchstehen" and "Selbstbewahrung": Peter Szondi's Experience of Persecution

¹⁷¹ Letter to Siegfried Lenz, January 30, 1962, *Goll Documents*, p. 557.

In Peter Szondi's case, Hamacher points to the immediate academic environment as being the one that Szondi was reacting against and feeling threatened by:

Was seinen analytischen Habitus grundierte und ihn zu politischen und hochschulpolitischen Interventionen veranlasste, war ein Gefühl existentieller Bedrohung, das am Institut allenthalben spürbar, aber nur von wenigen begriffen und von kaum jemanden geteilt worden zu sein scheint.¹⁷²

Hamacher does not mention many names or details which would help paint a clearer picture of this threat. The question nevertheless arises of what form this threat took, and whether it could be described as a hostility that also stems from discrimination and the treatment of Szondi as a member of the Jewish minority in postwar Germany. No documents, letters or statements have been discovered as of yet that make a direct claim about how Szondi as a Jewish scholar was included or how he experienced the University as a member of a recently persecuted and murdered minority. However, the conflicts and animosities that Szondi was entangled in and in many situations was a victim of, which he described sometimes with scattered allusions and other times with clearer formulations, offer a glimpse into the social and academic environment at the Freie Universität Berlin. When admittedly these conflicts are never formulated in the framework of discrimination or minority scholarship, the question begs to be asked, especially because of the noticeable absence of such a discussion of discrimination. How do these conflicts and difficulties become threats, not only to Szondi's professional but also private

¹⁷² Hamacher, "Ein Brief," p. 295.

existence? Did a German university in the 1960s succeed in establishing an academic and political environment that was safe and inclusive for a Jewish scholar who had grown up being persecuted and was the victim of National Socialist (NS) institutionalized racism?

Szondi himself established and developed the Institute amidst a host of conflicts, centrally the 1968 student revolts and the many demands the protest movement made on the university and its frameworks for research and education, and especially the large-scale policy and governing changes that the Freie Universität undertook in response. Many of these changes were intended to tighten government hierarchies, academic requirements and policies as a way to crack down on the unrest the revolts had brought. The volume *Über eine "Freie (d.h. freie) Universität": Stellungnahme eines Philologen* (1973), which Szondi's students published posthumously, demonstrates how deeply involved Szondi was in the conflicts that arose from the revolts, and what efforts he put into intervening in plans for policy and curriculum changes. Szondi occupied a middle-man position for actors with diverging positions. He for example came to the aid of two student protesters, Fritz Teufel and Walter Langhans, when he wrote a philological assessment of the pamphlets "Aufforderung zur Brandstiftung" which the protest group *Kommune I* had circulated under Teufel and Langhans' names. Szondi's philological approach was designed as a counter-reading of the official report on the pamphlets, and argues for a reading of the pamphlets that is sensitive to their use of satire and irony. At the same time, Szondi bolstered Theodor Adorno, especially at his infamous Freie Universität guest lecture, "Zum Klassizismus von

Goethe's Iphigenie." The lecture was interrupted by student protesters, who proceeded to hand out a pamphlet attacking Adorno as a false prophet who remained silent on the protesters' critiques, in spite of his own lifelong work of critiquing society and its power structures. Szondi supported the movement's attacks on institutional structures, for example on matters such as degree time limits or study abroad policies. His own literary criticism was also consciously indebted to Frankfurt School dialectics and the Marxist positions especially of Walter Benjamin. Nevertheless, he rejected the neo-Marxist demands that the movement made on curricula and study programs, and granted only a small place to the trending sociological literary criticism in the curricula of the AVL. When Szondi writes to Erich Loos in May 1969, he says that the faculty in the philologies cannot reach consensus anymore because the conservative faction of the department pushes back against any modernization efforts in order to preserve academic structures that have been in existence since the 19th century. He states quite clearly what such conservative pushbacks to new academic forms, such as the AVL, mean for his own academic path:

Wenn heute ein Mindestmaß von Einigkeit in der Fakultät nicht mehr möglich ist, so ist daran jener "harte Kern" des konservativ-reaktionären Lagers schuld, dessen Äußerungen und Aktionen seit bald zwei Jahren es ganz deutlich machen, dass es ihm nicht um die "künftigen Formen" der Universität geht, sondern darum dass diese sich nicht von den aus dem 19. Jahrhundert stammenden unterscheiden. Mit diesem Existenzkampf von Kollegen kann ich nicht solidarisieren, denn er bedroht alles, wofür ich an

der Universität eintrete, er bedroht die Möglichkeit meines Verbleibens in Berlin.¹⁷³

The threat that Szondi mentions stems from the deep conflict with the conservative and powerful faction at the faculty who promote institutional forms in which a small independent institute such as the AVL would not be able to survive. Indeed, the following years brought changes in policy that delegated the direction of the Institute to a committee made up of faculty from other departments, and therefore took away Szondi's power over developing the Institute independently. This became the main reason for Szondi's planned departure to Zurich in 1971, as he did not see any possibility to further grow and develop his newly founded discipline. The threat therefore was one of academic culture and the policies that some factions were able to push through. Szondi here posits the threat as being one coming from conservative faculty; a threat to innovation and modernization. Yet the threat is also one to a minority: a minority of researchers who fight to claim a niche within the university and its set hierarchies, to create space for the scholarship of a different, an outside alliance. Or, to use Joshua Gold's words to describe the lineage that Szondi places his work into, of a "minority report."¹⁷⁴ In a 1995 speech, Eberhart Lämmert provides further details of the tense academic and political climate of the years before Szondi's death, and the ramifications of the changes in academic policy for the small innovative institute that Szondi founded:

¹⁷³ Peter Szondi, "Letter 113" *Briefe*, edited by Christoph König (Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1994).

¹⁷⁴ Joshua Gold, "Minority Report: Approaching Peter Szondi's Hölderlin Studies," *Telos: A Quarterly Journal of Radical Social Theory*, vol. 140, fall edition, 2007. Gold understands Szondi's work on Hölderlin to locate itself in the lineage of Adorno and Benjamin's writings on Hölderlin, with all three attuned to Hölderlin's voice of difference, of the Other and thereby forming a "minority report."

Gerade in seinen letzten Jahren mehren sich auch die brieflichen Zeugnisse dafür, wie sehr ihm zur Bewährung der eigenen Lebensform an der Markierung bestehender Differenzen, und dem Durchstehen der von ihnen erzeugten Konflikte gelegen ist.¹⁷⁵

Szondi's last years are marked by the confrontation with and the living-through of existing conflicts. In his last semester at the Institute, before his planned but never realized transfer to Zurich, Szondi states that he is now challenged to endure the conflicts at the Institute he is leaving behind and that is dissolving: "aber nun muss ich es durchstehen," writes Szondi about this last semester in Berlin.¹⁷⁶ Furthermore, Eberhart Lämmert emphasizes Szondi's own method of distancing and differentiating as a form of self-preservation and protection, "Selbstbewahrung":

Jenes selbst so benannte philogische Ethos der Differenzierung, die sich an Hölderlin Texten so gut bewährt wie an der Unterscheidung zweier Reden von Jaspers und von Gerstenmaier über Deutsche und Juden, das untentwegt seinen Blick auf Texte wie auch Menschen schärft: diese Vermögen wird ihm auch zum Instrument der Selbstbewahrung gegenüber politischen wie literarischen Gegnern. Für Freunde bleibt Sils und für kurze Zeit ein Stammtisch bei Habel in Berlin, um hier wie dort Orte zu unterscheiden, an denen dieser Zugang haben soll und jener nicht.¹⁷⁷

Lämmert paints a picture of a social arena in which Szondi had to create separate spaces where he was safe from his enemies. He presents Szondi as someone who is proactively separating and distancing himself, creating or participating in exclusive

¹⁷⁵ Eberhard Lämmert, "Peter Szondi: ein Rückblick zu seinem 65. Geburtstag," *Poetica*, vol. 26, no. 1/2, 1994.

¹⁷⁶ Peter Szondi, *Briefe*, p. 351.

¹⁷⁷ Lämmert, "Peter Szondi: ein Rückblick."

cliques who are not open to anyone but a designated few. As in the case of Sils, Adorno's residence and summer meeting place for an intellectual elite, these select peers are all of the highest academic and intellectual rank. Szondi is portrayed both as someone who is retreating from and fending off people he is in conflict with or feels excluded from, but also as an agent of creating spaces for a discriminating exclusivity that quickly turns a possible experience of discrimination into the formation of a counter public. In fact, both Hamacher and Lämmert pose tropes of threat, persecution, endurance and self-protection ("Bedrohung," "Verfolgung," "Durchstehen," and "Selbstbewahrung") and place these tropes next to a celebratory representation of Szondi as creating comparative literature as a counter-academic fringe discipline. The question has to be asked, though, how a more conclusive picture of the environment at the Freie Universität can be drawn—one which sheds more light on Szondi's experience as a minority scholar. This experience informs the way in which he studies literature, it drives the formation of the AVL institute, and it is also what motivates his *Celan-Studien*. These studies are a testimony to his loyalty to Celan when the poet experiences antisemitic persecution during the Goll Affair, and which Szondi wrote at the AVL and in dialogue with his creation of institutional forms of literary studies. The AVL Institute, also because of the many *Festschriften* which serve as institutional memory and history, is too quickly made into the champion of a new international, border-crossing feat of the study of literature in Germany. It too easily falls into an accepted narrative of democratization and cross-cultural sentiment in postwar Germany. The fact is, though, that Szondi's Institute struggled to survive and that

institutional policies put in place in response to the 1968 student revolts curtailed the innovative border-crossing ambitions of the Institute. Lämmert refers to Szondi's Institute as a minority establishment in its final years:

In die Lage, selbst eine nahezu aussichtslose Minderheit darzustellen kam Szondi allerdings erst nach der Verabschiedung der Reformgesetze im Spätherbst des Jahres 1968. . . . Denn seinem Ein-Mann-Seminar billigte das Gesetz nicht einmal mehr den Status einer Wissenschaftlichen Einrichtung, der kleinsten Einheit mit eigener, wenn auch begrenzter Verwaltungsbefugnis, zu.¹⁷⁸

The reform, which mandated that institutes be governed by a committee made up of faculty from across the university instead of by their own members, meant that decisions over the reforms that Szondi had in mind for the AVL Institute were now not in his or the Institute's hands anymore, but in the hands of the conservative majority at the university. The small institute presented a marginal position in the academy and Lämmert remembers how Szondi evaluated the treatment of marginal positions and practices in the university:

Besonders reizte ihn hier das späterhin auch von anderen Fakultätsmitgliedern gern verwandte und schließlich von einer überörtlichen Tageszeitung übernommene Schlagwort von der "Unterwanderung" akademischer Gremien, mit dem nicht etwa eine Bedrohung durch Fremde bezeichnet, vielmehr eine Minderheit in den eigenen Gremien zum aggressiven "Fremdkörper" erklärt werden sollte.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁸ Lämmert, "Peter Szondi: Ein Rückblick."

¹⁷⁹ Ibid. ; Lämmert refers to Szondi's criticism of the assessment report that two faculty members published about the pamphlet "Kritische Universität" that circulated during the student revolts: "Auf Grund eines Vergleichs . . . meint das Gutachten von einem 'einheitliche(n) Konzept zur . . . Unterwanderung . . . der FU' sprechen zu dürfen, als wären die Initiatoren der K.U. nicht Angehörige der FU und als stellten sie ihren Plan nicht in der Öffentlichkeit zur Diskussion." Peter Szondi, *Über Eine "Freie (d.h. freie) Universität": Stellungnahme Eines Philologen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972), p. 81.

Lämmert portrays the Institute, and Szondi as its director and only full professor, as occupying a place on the margins of mainstream academic culture, as well as being a minority institute that struggles to be adequately represented through self-governance amidst an environment that is not accommodating of minority positions, and considers them to be invasive threats.

It is notable, however, that neither Lämmert's nor Hamacher's accounts spell out a connection between the respective minority positions of the Institute, of Szondi's practice of literary studies, nor of Szondi's status as a Jewish scholar. Even though Hamacher speaks of how academic culture and politics became a threat to Szondi's status as a private individual, he does not suggest that the private individual Szondi, and his status as a (Jewish) minority, is connected to the minority status of the AVL Institute. The AVL Institute in both accounts occupies the margins because of its theoretical positions and scholarly methods, which do not align with conservative curricula. Even when Hamacher points to the similarity between Szondi's and Celan's deaths, and speaks of "tödliche Bedrohung" he does not say that this threat is connected to their role as Jews in postwar Germany.

Scholarship on Szondi always introduces Szondi as a Jewish scholar, and frequently briefly recapitulates his biography: Szondi was born in Budapest in 1929. He and his family were deported to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in 1944, from where they were rescued by way of the Kasztner train to Switzerland.¹⁸⁰ Any more details of Szondi's experience as a Jew in his adult years

¹⁸⁰ The Kasztner train was a rescue operation negotiated and funded by the Swiss Orthodox Jew Yitzchak

are often not appropriately related, with the explanation that Szondi himself was very private about it and adamant about withholding any details on his personal life or experience as a Jew, including his childhood.¹⁸¹ Exposing his Jewish experience in my analysis therefore might be a breach of the “philological tact” that, according to James McFarland, Szondi’s writing exhibits, and that “any philological engagement with his posthumous work must strive to preserve.”¹⁸² When Szondi treated both the lives of the authors he discussed and his own personal life with discretion and care, any writing about him must be responsive to what his texts already demand. At the same time McFarland acknowledges that Szondi is unique as a philologist in the way that his writing and indeed his own self can become the object of philological enquiry, in the sense of “speaking *about* someone” as opposed to “*with* someone,” that is to say speaking about his theories and arguments.¹⁸³ It might therefore be appropriate to reconstruct which potentially more cautious ways Szondi found to articulate his experience and defend the precarious positions of displaced, non-German scholars in Germany. Szondi understands especially his Jewishness primarily as something deeply personal. In a letter to Rudolf Hirsch, who had sent him a copy of Celan’s prose text “Gespräch

Sternbuch. The operation carried over 1600 Jews on cattle wagons from Budapest via Bergen-Belsen to safety in Switzerland on June 30 1944. Sternbuch had negotiated the mission with Rudolf Eichmann, against a payment of a large ransom.

¹⁸¹ Christoph König, who edited and published many of Peter Szondi’s writings and his letters registers: “Peter Szondi, der von großer Diskretion in allen Dingen war, die sein eigenes Leben betrafen” in Szondi, *Briefe*, p. 7.

¹⁸² James McFarland, “Embodied Reading: On Peter Szondi’s Benjamin Reception,” *Telos*, vol. 140, fall edition, 2007, pp. 65–76.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

im Gebirg,” Szondi writes: “Im Augenblick fällt es mir schwer, etwas darüber zu sagen, was übers Persönlichste (mein Judentum und die Erinnerung an die Spaziergänge mit Celan in Sils, die langen Minuten des Schweigens vor der fremden Natur) hinausginge.”¹⁸⁴ Again, his Jewishness is the most personal; it can only be related within parentheses and does not qualify as a critical, readerly response. However, one can argue that Szondi, in spite of his extreme discretion in the “personal” matter of his Jewish identity, worked to represent the Jewish minority in his writing, his scholarship, and his role as the director of a new, yet marginal institute. Joshua Gold lays out how Szondi’s method, especially as it is enacted in his writings about Hölderlin, is a writing about and for a minority. Gold consults Szondi’s *Hölderlin Studien*, and reminds of the Hölderlin quotation of which Szondi kept a handwritten version on his desk: “Unterschiedenes ist/gut.” He relates this to how Szondi’s philology develops a form of reading that is attentive to the voice of the singular, to the voice of the Other and the foreign, as also seen in Hölderlin’s language in his late hymns, which does not conform to an existing language or poetic norm: “According to Szondi, Hölderlin’s texts also testify to the capacity of literature to name what is different to the extent that they reveal how artworks assume the voice of the minority.”¹⁸⁵ Szondi’s readings of Hölderlin, as they are attentive to Hölderlin’s voice as the voice of the “alien” and the “foreign,” therefore also align themselves with a tradition of Hölderlin reception

¹⁸⁴ Szondi, *Briefe*, p. 97.

¹⁸⁵ Gold, “Minority Report.”

that goes against the presentation of Hölderlin, especially at the hand of nationalist readings, which present him as the prophet of a new Germany:

It is against this Hölderlin, harbinger of the “Secret Germany”, that Szondi, along with Benjamin and Adorno, is writing; together, these three figures constitute a tradition of dissent – a minority report, as it were – in the history of German Hölderlin reception. . . . Among other things, these three readings share a concern with drawing attention to those aspects of Hölderlin’s texts that bear traces of what is foreign.¹⁸⁶

When the reception of his poetry by Hellingrath and the George Kreis in the nineteen-tens had sought to read his language as internally unified to match a vision of a unified German nation, during the First World War Walter Benjamin also sees an “oriental, mystical principle, overcoming limits, which in this poem (“Timidity”) again and again so manifestly sublates the Greek shaping principle.”¹⁸⁷ Hölderlin’s language is marked by moments of difference or Otherness, which interrupt a perceived unified and harmonious whole. In his 1950s essay “Parataxis,” Theodor Adorno firmly rejects the notion of nationalism and its “hatred of the Other” in Hölderlin’s writings, and Szondi warns of the dismissal of Hölderlin’s embrace of the foreign: When Hölderlin learns the warmth of “Pathos” from the Greek, as Hölderlin relates in his letter to Böhlendorff, he makes his own

¹⁸⁶ Gold’s use of the term “minority” never attaches to the term “Jewish” in his article, or is used as a political or social category. However, the use of the word “minority” as well as “foreign” and “alien” evokes and allows it to echo along, especially because the other members of the “minority report” are Jews as well. Gold effectively allows for there to be a tension and reverberating relationship between the alien, foreign, other language in a literary text, and the minority status of the one using such a language. Walter Benjamin, “Two Poems by Friedrich Hölderlin: ‘The Poet’s Courage’ and ‘Timidity,’” trans. Stanley Corngold, in *Selected Writings, Volume I: 1913-1926*, edited by Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 34.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

again what he had learned from his German origins: “Präzision und tüchtige Gelehrsamkeit.” Szondi issues a reminder: “Entscheidend ist für Hölderlin, daß für diese Aneignung des Eigenen als Preis nicht der Verlust des Fremden mußte bezahlt werden.”¹⁸⁸

Peter Szondi also engaged with the question of discrimination against Jews and their status in postwar Germany in his correspondence. He therein reveals that discrimination against Jews in postwar Germany was inextricably linked to, and became manifest in, the language used to speak about the Holocaust and about Jews in Germany before, during, and after the war. As he did in other conflicts that infiltrated the public sphere, such as the student revolts, Szondi presented himself as a philologist who is attentive to the language employed to describe and relate historical events or texts. As an example of the role he acquired, he offers a detailed critique¹⁸⁹ of two speeches he had read in the edited volume *Deutsche und Juden*,¹⁹⁰ one by the philosopher Karl Jaspers and the other by the president of the German Bundestag, Eugen Gerstenmeier, where Szondi draws attention to the differences in vocabulary that each uses to reference Nazi crimes against Jews. Jaspers calls the crimes by name: “Der Massenmord an sechs Millionen Juden, vollzogen im

¹⁸⁸ Szondi writes this in his *Hölderlin-Studien*. Peter Szondi, *Schriften I* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2011), p. 357

¹⁸⁹ Peter Szondi, ““Deutsche und Juden,”” *Über eine “Freie (d.h. Freie) Universität”*: *Stellungnahme eines Philologen*, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1973), pp. 62-67.

¹⁹⁰ Szondi’s critique was included in a 1967 radio feature in response to the book: *Deutsche Und Juden: Beiträge von N. Goldmann, G. Scholem, G. Mann, S.W. Baron, E. Gerstenmeier, K. Jaspers* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1967). That same book had published a selection of speeches delivered at the conference “Deutsche und Juden – ein ungelöstes Problem,” Brussels, August 1966.

Namen des Deutschen Reichs.” Gerstenmeier, on the other hand, mentions “Schwindel,” “Grauen des Abgrundes” and “Erscheinung des wahrhaft Bösen in der Geschichte der Deutschen.” Szondi confronts Gerstenmeier’s imprecise, pseudo-metaphysical circumscriptions of the factual war crimes: “Nebel herrscht, wo der im Namen des Deutschen Reiches vollzogene Massenmord auf den falschen Namen ‘Katastrophe’ hört und die Verantwortung dafür nur in Form eines ‘Teils der Mitverantwortung’ dem deutschen Volk ‘zufällt’.” The failure to call the crimes by their proper name, which is to clearly name what has been committed and who was responsible for it, is what Szondi criticizes about the emerging culture of Holocaust remembrance in Germany. Not only does he criticize the choice of words to relate historical events, but also how word choice serves as a tool of exclusion. As a telling example, Gerstenmeier introduces Jaspers, who had spent 65 years in Germany, as a “bekannter Baseler Professor,” casting him in effect as a foreigner (Ausländer). Szondi writes :

Die Intoleranz, die einen Andersdenkenden gleichsam mit dem stilistischen Mittel der Umschreibung ausbürgert, ist die Kehrseite der falschen Toleranz, die den Juden nur als Deutschen, nur als ‘Mitbürger’ kennt. Ein ‘Judenproblem’ habe es erst gegeben, ‘als Hitler vor den Toren der Macht stand. Unsere jüdischen Mitschüler galten uns selbstverständlich als Deutsche’. Und daran habe sich für ihn ‘auch später gar nichts geändert’.¹⁹¹

Szondi then refers to Jaspers when he proposes that a dialogue has to take place between “einzelnen Juden und einzelnen Deutschen, beide sie selbst, beide ihres Judeseins und Deutschseins bewusst.”¹⁹² Szondi here alerts us to the nuances in

¹⁹¹ Szondi, “Deutsche und Juden,” p. 67.

¹⁹² Ibid.

wording, which effect exclusion or inclusion. When Gerstenmeier introduces Karl Jaspers as a non-German in spite of his life-long German resident status, he deprives a resident with foreign roots of being seen as German. In the case of Jews in Germany, it appears to work the other way around. Failing to validate the Jewishness of German Jews by means of, also retroactively, understanding them only as German citizens whose Jewishness is not visible or noteworthy, masks the fact that in Nazi Germany this supposed ‘color blindness’ on the part of the Germans did not hold. In addition to that, it also does not grant space for a way of being German which is at the same time a markedly Jewish Germanness, one that does not erase its difference, its Jewishness, under the umbrella of a common identity as German citizen.

The disconnect between the accepted celebratory narrative of the Szondi Institute, and the atmosphere of exclusion and threat that Szondi himself experienced and that ended his life prematurely, connect this story to that of Celan. In the case of Celan, we now too readily accept a narrative in which Celan has always been the celebrated poet that he is today, and especially tolerate that the antisemitism and non-acceptance that Celan was a victim of after the Shoah in postwar Germany is rarely mentioned or addressed. This holds true even for the *Celan-Handbuch*, which covers all relevant aspects of Celan’s life, work, and the reception of his work, yet grants very little space to the documentation of postwar discrimination directed against him in meetings of the Gruppe 47 or during the Goll Affair.¹⁹³ In Celan scholarship, antisemitism, which could be understood as the

¹⁹³ “Die Goll-Affäre,” *Celan Handbuch: Leben – Werk – Wirkung*, edited by May, Markus, et al. (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2012), pp. 20–22.

exclusion of and discrimination against Jews in postwar Germany, is usually presented as the Jewish experience of World War II and the Holocaust. Therefore, wherever antisemitic portrayals or treatment of the poet arises, it is understood as a lingering remnant of a not completely denazified German academy or public. Nevertheless, on the one hand, Celan (and the same might hold true for Szondi) did not experience antisemitic discrimination solely from the vantage point of the structuring caesura of the end of World War II. Instead, Celan and Szondi's experiences of persecution are a structuring principle for their entire lives and biographies. On the other hand, the pair both clearly stated that antisemitic and also Nazi ideological sentiment was present in postwar Germany and that they directly experienced its threat. In a letter to Gershom Scholem from 1967, Peter Szondi condemns German politics for its failure to treat the rise of the right-wing NPD (National Democratic Party) as the threat that it is.¹⁹⁴ Paul Celan was more vocal about these worries, as numerous critical remarks to friends and correspondents show.¹⁹⁵

The small AVL Institute not only represents a minority in its methods and practice of literary studies, but as Gold aptly recognizes, its methods and practice of philology also serve to speak for a minority, to understand the language of the Other, the alien tongue of Hölderlin, to draw them out of exclusion into recognition. Official narratives of the history of the Institute, in my estimation, do not draw sufficient attention to this sub-story of the Institute's agenda. Even though Szondi

¹⁹⁴ Szondi, *Briefe*, p. 240.

¹⁹⁵ See page 114.

never directly or officially articulated that the Institute served to represent a not appropriately represented minority, or the Jewish minority that he was a member of, the Institute was meant to become a safe haven for a new literary studies that responded to the language of the Other, the language of difference. One facet of Szondi's lifelong relationship to Celan was that he felt obligated to heed Celan's appeal for a criticism that represents him as a Jewish writer. As the most pertinent example, the *Celan-Studien*, written at the AVL Institute at the end of Szondi's life, respond to this call as a subtext, yet by means of its philological method. As I try to show in this and the subsequent chapter, in order for the *Celan-Studien* to meet this requirement of representation within a hermeneutic and non-historicist form of writing, they must set their hope upon a new kind of reading, a reading attuned to textuality.

A Little 'Chair' for the Study of Literature: The Founding of the Institut für Allgemeine und Vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft

In February 1964, Peter Szondi, who was teaching in Göttingen at the time, wrote to the Germanist Rainer Gruenter: "Wäre die Universität der Weihnachtsmann, es stünde auf der Liste ein winziger Lehrstuhl (ein Schemel, aber kein Klappstuhl) für allgemeine und vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft."¹⁹⁶ Szondi's vision is not a grandiose one; he does not require a large institute, but neither does he desire an impermanent or overly flexible one. Szondi imagined this institute as a place where

¹⁹⁶ Szondi, *Briefe*, p. 150.

especially the study of literature would take on a new form and would be able to free itself from existing traditional disciplines, especially from Germanistik. The study of literature at that time was firmly tied to the different national philologies, which were separated from each other as disciplines. In Germany, Germanistik was the field of study that dominated the study of literature. The previous years had indeed seen the rise of comparative literature departments in Germany, with new institutes in Bonn, Mainz and Saarbrücken. But in Szondi's view, their curricula and research agendas did not go far enough in their emancipation from the separate national philologies. Even though these new institutes had established comparative literature (*Komparatistik*), they had not also included a "general literature," (*allgemeine Literaturwissenschaft*). While comparative literature at that time was limited to the comparative method which focused on differences between national literatures, general literature included the theoretical question of the nature of its object of study: It asked the broader question of what literature is, and therefore in what way national literatures were alike rather than different. The mere work of comparison did not help the discipline to truly think across borders. Rather, the borders that had existed in the imagination since 19th century German nationalism had erected them became the point of departure for the comparative approach, and thereby reinforced them rather than grew beyond them: "Die vom Nationalismus im 19. Jahrhundert errichteten Barrieren wurden in der vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft vielmehr zum Ausgangspunkt des Vorgehens und bestätigten sie so."¹⁹⁷ In his petition to the Dean, in which Szondi outlines the plans for the new

¹⁹⁷ Eberhard Lämmert, "Zur Einrichtung einer 'Allgemeinen und Vergleichenden Literaturwissenschaft' an der FU Berlin," lecture at the *Szondi-Tag*, 16 December 2013, *Nach*

Institut für Allgemeine und Vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft, he states that “general literature” does not merely serve to compare differences (“Vergleich von Unterschiedenem”), but its quest is rather to find out what different literatures have in common: “Erforschung des Gemeinsamen.”¹⁹⁸ As a consequence, the task of general literature becomes a sustained theoretical effort directed at the whole of literature: “eine aufs Ganze der Literatur zielende theoretische Bemühung.”¹⁹⁹

In 1965, just a year after he had uttered it, Szondi’s wish was granted. Shortly after his appointment as a professor to the Freie Universität Berlin, the University established the first independent *Seminar für Allgemeine und Vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft* in Germany. In close cooperation with other Germanistik scholars, especially Eberhard Lämmert, who had been instrumental in getting Szondi to Berlin, Szondi became the director of the Institute. Eberhard Lämmert writes in his retrospective of the Institute: “Mit dem Nachdruck auf einer ‘Allgemeinen Literaturwissenschaft’ war einem Studium der Literatur endgültig der internationale Horizont geöffnet.”²⁰⁰ It was no longer the merely comparative philological study of foreign languages and literary histories that opened up this new horizon, but a literary studies that was concerned with literature as an aesthetic phenomenon, not only of times past but also of the present day. “Nicht zur Verabschiedung der Literaturgeschichte, die sehr wohl ein wichtiges Moment jeder

Szondi: Allgemeine und Vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft an der Freien Universität Berlin 1965–2015, edited by Irene Albers (Berlin: Kadmos, 2016), p. 30.

¹⁹⁸ Peter Szondi, “Brief an den Dekan vom 26. Mai 1965.” *Nach Szondi*, p. 20.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁰ Lämmert, “Zur Einrichtung einer «Allgemeinen und Vergleichenden Literaturwissenschaft» an der FU Berlin.” *Nach Szondi*, p. 30.

Nationalgeschichte bleiben soll, wohl aber zur Entfaltung einer stets gegenwartsnahen Einbeziehung der Dichtung in den Umkreis der Künste und deren Theorie hat Szondi seinerseits den Grund gelegt.”²⁰¹ Literature now becomes the new object of research, including contemporary literature, and is regarded as an art form which requires a theoretical approach to its poetics. The study of literature, which engages literature as an aesthetic and present-day phenomenon, was able to perceive literature as a phenomenon that existed across borders, which different national literatures share and have in common: The addition of “general literature” served to give the field its independent theoretical and methodical foundation. The comparative method alone was perceived as an overly empiricist undertaking. The Comparative Literature department at Yale University under the direction of René Wellek, as well as René Wellek and Austin Warren’s book *Theory of Literature* (1949) were central influences for Szondi, especially the book’s definition of “general literature” and its distinction from “comparative literature.” They write: “comparison is a method used by all criticism and sciences, and does not, in any way, adequately describe the specific procedures of literary study.”²⁰² The comparative method of their time focused predominantly on factors external to the literary text, such as the success of a novel in another country, and the international fame and influence of an author. “Such studies do not permit us to analyze and judge an individual work of art, or even to consider the complicated work of its genesis” say Wellek and Warren.²⁰³ Szondi also criticizes the empirical motivation

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² René Wellek and Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature* (New York: Penguin, 1976), p. 46.

²⁰³ Ibid., p. 46.

of the literary studies of his day, which he says are taken from methodical paradigms in the natural and social sciences, in order to validate the status of Germanistik or literary studies as a science. In his preface to *Hölderlin Studien*, “Traktat über philologische Erkenntnis,” he writes: “Dass die Problematik der philologischen Erkenntnis in der Germanistik kaum beachtet wird, scheint damit zusammenzuhängen, dass sie sich als Wissenschaft versteht.”²⁰⁴ Germanistik strives to be a ‘proper’ science, and does not reflect or draw on its own specific form of studying and understanding. Szondi pleads for literary science and its methods to be fashioned in a way that makes them adequate for their specific object of study, the literary text. Literary science, if it wants to actually be a science, needs to have its basis in the specific way in which reading and studying a literary text creates knowledge. The epistemological property of literature requires an approach that is no empty empiricism (“keine geistlose Empirie”), but rather “perpetuierende Erkenntnis.” The specific way in which literary studies has to approach its object, the literary text, is “Versenkung,” an immersion into the artwork and the artwork’s unique way to reach knowledge time and again in the present moment of the reader, when the reader is immersed into it. For Szondi, and for Wellek and Warren, the epistemological specificity of the literary work is intrinsic to and shared by all literature, and is therefore not tied to a national literature. Wellek and Warren write:

“general literature” studies those movements and fashions of literature that transcend national lines. . . . It is important to think of literature as a totality

²⁰⁴ Peter Szondi, *Schriften I* (Berlin: Surhkamp, 2011), p. 264. Szondi prefers the term used in anglo-speaking academia of “literary criticism,” which does not include the word “science.”

and to trace the growth and development of literature without regard to linguistic distinctions.²⁰⁵

This focus on the totality of literature is what can make literary studies overcome national and linguistic boundaries. Peter Szondi and Eberhart Lämmert translate this into their definition for the profile of their new institute: “Die Allgemeine Literaturwissenschaft fragt nach dem, was Literatur ist.” What general qualities of literature can be discerned, when the literary text is not read through the filter of national tradition and history?

The new focus on the shared qualities of literary texts also reframes how the work of comparison in ‘comparative literature’ is undertaken. Szondi and Lämmert’s version of comparative literature does not assume that the individual, separate national literary traditions are stable in themselves and therefore can be compared as distinct units. This comparative literature is less interested in differences, and instead focuses on influence and the ways in which aspects of literatures change when they are brought into contact with other literatures. In the application letter to the Dean, Szondi and Lämmert write: “die Vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft untersucht [sie] die Wandlung, welche Motive und Stile, eine Gattung oder ein Werk beim Übergang von einer Sprache in die andere erfahren.”²⁰⁶

This form of comparative literature thus does not assume the stability of separate national literatures, and does not employ the comparative method to

²⁰⁵ Wellek and Warren, *Theory of Literature*, p. 49.

²⁰⁶ Lämmert, “Zur Einrichtung einer «Allgemeinen und Vergleichenden Literaturwissenschaft» an der FU Berlin,” *Nach Szondi*, p. 30.

disclose and thereby affirm those perceived differences. Instead, the contact zone between literatures is of interest. The question becomes what changes and is brought into motion through this contact. The petition letters sums up: “nicht der Vergleich von Unterschiedenem, sondern der Erforschung des Gemeinsamen” is what literary studies at the AVL foregrounds.

Germanistik in Postwar Germany and the AVL Institute

From its inception, this new course of study positioned itself consciously as an alternative to Germanistik. Even more than that, it understood itself to be an attempt to influence and modernize Germanistik from the outside.

At first, the study of literature should now open up into an international, multilingual space and not remain exclusively in the hands of Germanistik. To that end, the AVL Institute in its early years established itself on the border of Germanistik and articulated itself in a dialectical and critical relationship to it. One of the central questions for the founders of the Institute at first was its departmental affiliation. As a very small and new institute and single academic program, it had to be assigned to one larger department. How such an affiliation would shape the new program was a major concern for the founders, who posed the question of departmental affiliation as a key issue (“Grundsatzfrage”²⁰⁷). Henriette Beese, who was a doctoral student at the Institute in its founding years, articulated the Institute’s consensus regarding the interdisciplinary nature of the new program in her

²⁰⁷ Irene Albers (ed.), “Welche Interdisziplinarität?” *Nach Szondi: Allgemeine und Vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft an der Freien Universität Berlin 1965–2015*, (Berlin: Kadmos, 2016), p. 85.

“Wissenschaftstheoretischen Begründung einer Fachbereichszugehörigkeit des Instituts für Allgemeine und Vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft.” More importantly she argues that the way literature is read and interpreted strongly depends on how a theoretical apparatus, which becomes the lens through which the literary text is read, defines what literature is. Beese points out and gives a summary of the emerging and trending theories in the humanities: A media-theoretical analysis might define literature as a medium; a sociological reading on the other hand, which has a strong currency during the student movement, understands the literary text primarily as an expression of social context and processes. Beese also considers the intellectual climate of the “1968 generation” in which deep conflicts about the methodical and theoretical approach to literature prevail. Especially Marxist sociological literary studies enjoyed attention, and the Institute was compelled to take a clear position in these debates.²⁰⁸ Beese writes: “Jede Anbindung der Literaturwissenschaft an eine bestimmte andere Humanwissenschaft bedeutet eine literaturtheoretische Präjudiz.”²⁰⁹ Her vision for the Institute is one of a critical interdisciplinarity. She posits the exchange with other fields of study as a welcome and necessary property of comparative and

²⁰⁸ Szondi’s critical evaluation of the student protests is nuanced. He supported the students’ demands on many points, and intervened on their behalf on more than one occasion. He vehemently fought against most of the changes in policy that were implemented to create tighter and less liberal academic structures, such as a stricter handling of degree completion time limits, or new regulations around study abroad programs that did not allow credit earned abroad to count towards the FU degree. At the same time he did not approve of the demands for a sociological, political literary studies.

²⁰⁹ Henriette Beese, “Zur wissenschaftstheoretischen Begründung einer Fachbereichszugehörigkeit des Instituts für Allgemeine und Vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft,” *Nach Szondi: Allgemeine und Vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft an der Freien Universität Berlin 1965–2015*, edited by Irene Albers (Berlin: Kadmos 2016), p. 82.

general literature, but emphasizes that any such exchange and affiliation with other fields impacts how literature is studied and understood at the AVL Institute. Beese's proposal for an interdisciplinary position of the AVL in the humanities requires both an openness towards outside influences, and an informed position on how other disciplines do not merely offer interesting new perspectives, but make fundamental demands on how literature is understood and treated. Where the Institute's campaign for a critical interdisciplinarity becomes most polemical is when it draws a clear boundary between itself and Germanistik. Even though a large part of the earliest curricula is devoted to German literature, Szondi rejects the idea of the AVL becoming part of the department of Germanistik. He reasons:

Würde die Allgemeine und Vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft dem Fachbereich Germanistik angehören so würde ihre interdisziplinäre (bzw. interphilologische) Funktion, für welche die genannten Sprachen und Literaturen von gleicher Relevanz sind, darauf eingeschränkt werden, die aus dem 19. Jahrhundert stammende nationale Selbstbeschränkung der Germanistik aufzubrechen. So wichtig diese Aufgabe ist und so sehr das Fach Allgemeine und Vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft zu ihrer Lösung beizutragen versuchen muss, ist sie doch nicht die einzige Aufgabe dieser Disziplin.²¹⁰

Here he stages the relationship between Germanistik and the AVL as a polemical one. In the case that comparative literature were to become a subfield within the larger field of Germanistik, it would first have to reform Germanistik at its core, and break open the discipline's traditional understanding of itself as being

²¹⁰ Peter Szondi, "Stellungnahme zu der zukünftigen Fachbereichszugehörigkeit vom 3. Februar 1970," *Nach Szondi: Allgemeine und Vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft an der Freien Universität Berlin 1965–2015*, edited by Irene Albers (Berlin: Kadmos 2016), p. 79.

exclusively reserved for the study of German literature and history. The inclusive treatment of literature in the AVL's agenda for comparative literature will not only offer a possible addition to, or new interesting dimension of German literary studies, but rather requires a fundamental flattening of the hierarchies and walls that Germanistik has erected between German and non-German traditions. "Nur wegen des bescheidenen Stellenplans gibt es für sie die Beschränkung auf einen Teil der der für die Literatur der Neuzeit besonders relevanten Sprachen und Literaturen, nicht aber eine Rangfolge oder den festen Ausgangspunkt der deutschen Sprache und Literatur."²¹¹ In the first few years, Szondi is the only full professor teaching at the Institute, and therefore can only offer what is part of his expertise, namely German, French, British, US and Russian Literature. Because Szondi was trained in Germanistik, German literature also dominates the curricula and exam reading lists. Yet he nevertheless insists that no one language or group of languages and literatures are more relevant for the study of literature than another. In his statement, he also articulates that some literatures have been especially influential for the formation of modern Western literature. Yet in his phrasing this does not entail that these literatures are ranked higher than others. What is central for him is that Germanistik does not offer the adequate framework in which to study literatures in a non-hierarchical fashion, and that the AVL does not want to spend its limited resources on a necessary reconstruction of Germanistik, and therefore requires a space independent from a national philology. His arguments against Germanistik also reveal that the Institute does have an investment in the future of

²¹¹ Ibid.

Germanistik and tied to it the future of literary studies. While Szondi envisions that a comprehensive and influential literary studies can be undertaken outside of Germanistik in Germany, he also proposes that this advancement of literary studies, its theories and methods, would in turn modify Germanistik. Not from within, but from a more or less determinate and radical outside.

Szondi's, Beese's, and Lämmert's efforts to break away from Germanistik while remaining critically invested in the future of the field demonstrates how institutional spaces for the study of literature were embattled and recolonized. Nevertheless, Szondi's rejection of Germanistik as the place for literary studies also echoes the more generally critical and disapproving attitude towards Germanistik of his time. The 1960s saw the exposure of the indebtedness of Germanistik and its faculty members to National Socialism.²¹² The revelations of this history also became a central motivation for the AVL Institute to break away from Germanistik. Gert Mattenklott writes: "es würde dieses Institut nicht geben ohne die Scham angesichts der Geschichte der deutschen Philologie während des Faschismus."²¹³ Investigations in the 1960s brought to light that some of the Germanistik faculty had been members of the Nazi party. Additionally, as a less obvious discovery than these former party affiliations, the intellectual and scholarly profile of the field had

²¹² For discussions of the failure to dismiss faculty members with former NSDAP affiliations see for example: Silke Seemann, *Die Politischen Säuberungen des Lehrkörpers der Freiburger Universität nach dem Ende des 2. Weltkriegs (1945–1957)* (Freiburg: Rombach, 2002); Wilfried Barner, "Literaturgeschichtsschreibung vor und nach 1945: Alt, Neu, Alt/Neu," *Zeitenwechsel: Germanistische Literaturwissenschaft vor und nach 1945*, edited by Christoph König and Wilfried Barner, (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1996).

²¹³ Gert Mattenklott. "Rede aus Anlaß des Institutsjubiläum." speech held on 18. Januar 1996 at the AVL Institute at FU Berlin, reprinted/published on the website of the Institute: www.geisteswissenschaften.fuberlin.de

not come under enough scrutiny in the postwar years and retained its curricula and methods from the Germanistik of Nazi Germany. Eberhart Lämmert's address on the Germanistentag 1966 in Munich, which had as its topic the "current crisis of Germanistik," is a testimony to the ambivalence that many literary scholars of his time felt towards Germanistik. This Germanistentag became keystone postwar event and a platform for important representatives of Germanistik, such as Walter Killy and Karl Otto Conrady, to address the connection between Germanistik and National Socialism. In his contribution, "Germanistik – eine Deutsche Wissenschaft," Lämmert contends that Germanistik did not really reform its curricula, teaching materials, and contents, nor its conception of the field after the collapse of Nazi Germany. Lämmert explains the oft-cited rationale for the failure to reform the field. A common reasoning was that Germanistik did not change in significant ways during the process of *Gleichschaltung* (enforced political conformity), when the National Socialist regime forced university departments to adapt their research and teaching to Nazi ideology.²¹⁴ Defenders of existing postwar Germanistik claim that this meant that Germanistik did not have to be reformed after the war, as it never really submitted to Nazi ideology. But Lämmert argues that Germanistik remained rather untouched by *Gleichschaltung* not because it resisted Nazi ideology, but rather because its contents and curricula passed and met the ideological standards of *Gleichschaltung*. Since its beginnings in the 19th century, the field had cultivated a self-image of being the primary academic area

²¹⁴ Later research confirms this continuity argument, see for example: Holger Dainat, "Germanistische Literaturwissenschaft," *Die Rolle der Geisteswissenschaften im Dritten Reich 1933–1945*, edited by Frank-Rutger Hausmann (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 2002).

that studied and helped sustain the notion of a German national spirit, as it was first expressed in the writings of 19th century Romanticist nationalism and its literary heirs. This version of the German spirit was, at least from the perspective of Gleichschaltung policies, conducive to a new and radical version of nationalist sentiment. A curriculum that aimed at teaching and defining the German national spirit, along with a literary canon that emphasized medieval German literature, the literature of the Goethe era, and Romanticism, did not have to undergo any notable alterations and was able to retain its core identity and mission. Lämmert argues that Germanistik even became one of the preferred places from which National Socialist ideology developed and was disseminated. What this meant was that the existing faculty did not have to bend their teachings or research much to accommodate new nationalist sentiment. Many faculty members maintained after the war that they resisted an ideological subjugation to the National Socialist regime, because in practice they did not change or adapt their topics much. But Lämmert convincingly demonstrates that this in fact showed how favorable Germanistik was to Nazi ideology and that a failure to self-reflect on this easy marriage between Germanistik and the Nazi regime was a dangerous non-critical continuation of the field. Lämmert laments the fact that Germanistik and its faculty members in the postwar years simply continued their previous teaching program, and tried to advertise it as a return to the original, pre-Nazi Germanistik. Lämmert casts his judgement over Germanistik and its role in Nazi Germany in his conference presentation. At the same time he denounces the Germanistik of his time in the 1960s:

Der historische Durchblick macht evident, dass der Gesamtauftrag an das Fach, das *«geistige Leben des deutschen Volkes»* auszuforschen, und seine

grenzüberschreitende, ja phasenweise imperiale Ausweitung über viele angrenzende Geisteswissenschaften eng miteinander zusammenhängen. Beides lässt sich herleiten aus der besonders nachdrücklichen Fundierung des deutschen Nationalbewusstseins auf der Annahme einer naturgegebenen Spracheinheit der Nation, deren Geschichtsnotwendigkeit im angehenden 19. Jahrhundert nicht bestritten werden, wohl aber für das 20. Jahrhundert in Abrede gestellt werden kann, da sie seit 1866 zunehmend mehr störend als konstruktiv in die europäische Staatenbildung eingewirkt hat.²¹⁵

Lämmert contends that the dominant position that Germanistik enjoys in the humanities and across other fields of study can be traced back to its leading role as the field that studied the products of the German language. If the German language proved to be of paramount importance for the establishment of the German nation and national identity, the study of this language and its products, which happened under the wings of Germanistik, became a principle academic field in the humanities. Germanistik, as the only field which was comprehensively focused upon the products of the German language, was then assigned with the task of forming a national identity. Lämmert writes that this meant that Germanistik was granted too much power and influence within the humanities, and it tried to hold onto this power in the postwar years as well, when topics such as national identity or pride were met with a lot more skepticism. As an example, Lämmert observes: “daß in den Mitteilungen des Deutschen Germanistikverbandes noch Mitte der fünfziger Jahre Veteranen der deutschkundlichen Bewegung zur Weiterpflege einer poetischen Deutschbewusstheit aufrufen.”²¹⁶ The Germanistik faculty still called

²¹⁵ Eberhard Lämmert, *Germanistik: Eine deutsche Wissenschaft* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1967), p. 34.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p 35.

for the continued fostering of German nationalist consciousness in the 1950s. What is most relevant for a history of the AVL under Lämmert's involvement, though, is Lämmert's account of the institutional politics of Germanistik of the moment. Lämmert's primary criticism is that the profile of Germanistik is too unified and homogenous:

Schwerer wiegt es schon, dass die Hochschulgermanisten 1964 einer Resolution über die mögliche Aufgliederung des Faches den unbedachten, aber empathisch geforderten Schlusssatz aufprägten, die Einheit des Faches müsse unbedingt gewahrt bleiben. Hier wie auch in Verlagsprojekten, die neuerlich für die zweite Hälfte der sechziger Jahre Sammelwerke vorsehen, in denen der Horizont der Germanistik mit Monographien über Religions-, Rechts- und Kulturgeschichte abgesteckt wird und Nordistik so gut wie Volkskunde umfasst, zeigt sich die langwährende Belastung dieser Disziplin, zwischen wissenschaftsgeschichtlicher Verpflichtung und geschichtsgerechter Konzeption ihrer Forschungsgegenstände klare Abgrenzungen nicht treffen zu können.²¹⁷

Germanistik fails to draw necessary boundaries, both internally and between itself and outside disciplines. Establishing more such boundaries, for example between linguistics and literature, would help break open the assumed unity of the German language and its literary, cultural and historical items. Lämmert pleads for a Germanistik that is a less pretentious and imposing field of study: "eine unpräntentöse Fachdisziplin, die sich für die Studenten und für die Öffentlichkeit überschaubar gliedert in Sparten der Linguistik, der Literaturgeschichte und der Literarästhetik."²¹⁸ Lämmert argues for a more transparent structuring of the

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Ibid., p. 37.

subfields of Germanistik. What this can prevent, for example, is that the study of Middle High German becomes the handmaid for a reflection of the origins of a German spirit and points to its fulfillment in the 19th century nation-building. Beyond this, his larger interest appears to be to open up new institutional spaces that are not overseen by Germanistik and its profile and mission, so that especially literary studies can be separated out from Germanistik, German history, linguistics, culture and literature. Interestingly, Lämmert prefers a less compartmentalized structure for comparative and general literature. In the field of comparative literature, the separate specializations, such as linguistics or history, are again organized around one larger unifying principle: literature.

At the same time, literature is envisioned as an altogether different kind of unifying center. When the German language and German national character in Germanistik served to erect boundaries to “other” and different languages and literatures, and therefore served to create structures of inclusion and exclusion, literature as the unifying principle for Comparative and General Literature accommodates difference and works against binaries of inside and outside, foreign language and national language. I argue that the not-immediately-visible agenda of the Institute, which is to a large extent motivated by Celan’s request for a criticism that does not organize languages into categories of self and other, “deutsch” and “artfremd,” also moves beyond existing schools of comparative literature and theories, as for example in the tradition of Wellek and Warren. Wellek and Warren understand “literature as a totality” within a “conception of universal literary

history.” This universal literary history, however, is not inclusive of all national literatures. “Literature” here is presented again in historical and geographical terms:

Western literature, at least, forms a unity, a whole. One cannot doubt the continuity between Greek and Roman literatures, the Western medieval world, and main modern literatures; and, without minimizing the importance of Oriental influences, especially that of the Bible, one must recognize a close unity which includes all Europe, Russia, the United States, and the Latin-American literatures.²¹⁹

This argument presents previous conceptions of national literature as working within false boundaries, and not recognizing the true scope of what a universal literature must include. The whole of literature is here understood to be Western literature, from its Judeo-Christian, Greco-Roman origins up to its modern world colonial expansions into the Americas. What remains excluded from literature, however, is the literature of Asia and Africa, which are not seen as having developed from a Greco-Roman origin. The curricula and exam reading lists that Szondi issued for the AVL Institute largely mirror this canon of national literatures and their origin stories. Yet it is especially Szondi’s engagement with Celan, and before with Hölderlin, that shows that his interest lies within an “other” literary language, which is a dimension of language internal to German as a literary language, and brought into the German language from a nationally, culturally, and linguistically marginal position. Celan’s German developed not within a stable German national language and culture, but as part of a German speaking minority

²¹⁹ Wellek and Warren, p. 49.

in the region of Bukovina in Northern Romania that had been part of the Austro-Hungarian empire until the end of World War I. After World War II, Celan very deliberately wrote in the German language from a geographically removed place—from France—speaking German as a language of exile, not as a language of home and nation. Szondi's first work to disrupt any stable conceptions of national borders and literatures is accomplished by looking at the products of German language, and German's internal difference and non-belonging to a nation or homogenous culture of origin.

Subjectivity, Écriture, Identity: Szondi's Later Writings Instructed by Celan

In Szondi's later writings, evident especially in his major project undertaken at the AVL Institute, the *Celan-Studien*, the presence of a writing subject, a subjective voice, becomes more noticeable. When Szondi fulfills his promise to Celan and writes about his poetry after Celan's passing, he does so as someone who has been instructed by Celan himself on how to account for the author as a subject, and how to write criticism that does not gloss over this presence. Szondi had had more than one firsthand experience of Celan's guidance of and intervention into his interpretive contributions.²²⁰

Szondi's friendship with Celan, unlike a number of Celan's other friendships that were tainted by the plagiarism affair and Celan's extreme anxiety over it, remained

²²⁰ Celan kept in close contact with Szondi when Szondi wrote and then published his first review for the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*. Peter Szondi, "Anleihe oder Verleumdung? Zu einer Auseinandersetzung über Paul Celan," *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 19 November 1960. See *Introduction*, p. 16.

unbroken until Celan's death. The friendship also included Celan instructing Szondi in how to write about him, with Celan seeing Szondi as one of the few who would write about him under a seal of alliance and Jewish kinship.

In his correspondence with Szondi during the immediate aftermath of the press campaign, Celan writes:

Ich bin ihnen keineswegs böse . . . nur ist jetzt die schmerzliche Feststellung hinzugetreten, dass es gelingen konnte, ihren Namen für die Zwecke dieses finsterem Döhl-Martini-Kasack=Elaborats zu missbrauchen. . . .

Sie sind, wie ich, Jude, und so kann ich hier über manches hinweggehen und, in *diesem* Zusammenhang, einen Gedanken äußern, der wir weiß Gott nicht frei in der Luft zu schweben scheint: Noch von den "Besten" wird der Jude – und das ist ja nichts als eine Gestalt des Menschlichen, aber immerhin eine *Gestalt* – nur allzu gerne als Subjekt aufgehoben und zum Objekt bzw. "Sujet" pervetiert.²²¹

Celan at first expresses his concern that Szondi's analysis of the poems and their publication dates in question had become vulnerable to exploitation by the critics that were responsible for the circulation and affirmation of Claire Goll's defamatory letter. He then addresses Szondi as a Jew, and as his ally, and as someone who has a privileged understanding of what Celan presents as being the central problem of the allegations: What they accomplish is that they deny him subjecthood, and talk about him as an object who has no ownership of his writings and the lived

²²¹ Ibid., p. 39. Celan refers to a review penned by Fritz Martini's research assistant Rainhard Döhl (Rainhard Döhl, "Geschichte und Kritik eines Angriffs: Zu den Behauptungen gegen Paul Celan," *Jahrbuch 1960 der Deutschen Akademie für Sprache und Dichtung* (Heidelberg, Darmstadt: Schneider, 1960)) that quotes from and explicitly acknowledges Szondi's refutation of Goll's charges in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (see Chapter 1, footnote 8). Celan rejected Döhl's review, which presents what Döhl calls "wandernde Bilder" as a quality that Celan's poems share with Yvan Goll's.

experiences he expresses therein. Such denial of his subjecthood is an antisemitic cliché. Celan wants the Jew to be perceived as a “Gestalt des Menschlichen,” as a moving, breathing being with limbs and a voice that is human, and not as a categorized object which differs in essence from the German human. He then inverts the categories of human and non-human when he portrays the penmanship of his negative critics, which has lost its humane sensitivity: “Das Fatale ist, daß einige allen ernstes und vielleicht in aller Einfalt daran glauben, daß die “Klaue” die Hand ersetzen kann.”²²² The hand here is a token for a kind of writing that guards and recognizes the poet as subject. The human Gestalt of the interpreter, therefore also his own status as subject, produces writing that matches and is attuned to the subject of the poet-author. The interpreter therefore is not asked to veil the author, to detach him from the text and describe him in objective, historical-biographical terms. Rather they should address the presence of a writing subject in the poem, and address it by means of employing the author’s own full humanity. This addressing the poet as subject at the same time redeems the antisemitic intent of the disregard of the subject. Addressing the poet as subject means also to recognize the humanity of the Jew, to grant him subjecthood. Criticism that addresses Celan as subject is therefore already a form of advocacy for him as a Jew, a deliberate act to speak on his behalf as a Jewish writer. Szondi’s writing hand is therefore one that writes also in order to write *for* a Jew, and this requires him to write about the poet as subject, as well as to write *as* a Jew, and therefore also as a

²²² Ibid.

subject. When Szondi writes as a Jewish critic, he therefore must also choose a language that does not distance itself from him by means of a cold objectivity.

Yet if he the critic as a subject is brought to his writing, does that also require that he expresses his subjectivity when he responds to the poetry he reads? Rainer Nägele describes this as a conundrum in the attempt to grasp Szondi's critical gesture. On the one hand he perceives "an objectifying, distancing gesture, an insistence on preciseness and differentiation," which meant for example that Szondi was a meticulous editor of his own writing and even in his seminars and lectures did not allow himself any spontaneous imprecision. On the other hand, Nägele observes a "noticeable, intensive presence of the writing subject in this very gesture of objectivity, which in every phrase almost . . . enounces the ethos of a personal calling."²²³ This presence of the writing subject is not one which demonstrates his "individual sensitivity," his capacity for "Einfühlung" which hinges on a psychologizing reading. Nägele reminds us of Szondi's articulation of a reading praxis as a "Nachvollzug des Geschriebenseins,"²²⁴ and complements it with a more radical "Mitvollzug des Geschriebenseins."²²⁵ Nägele understands the Nachvollzug as a "retracing" of the text's "traces and traits." This assumes that we meet the text from a new premise altogether, as a plane in which previous spatial measures of interior and exterior have collapsed into the linguistic surface of

²²³ Rainer Nägele, "Peter Szondi: Positions of a Literary Critic (at the Border)." *Telos: A Quarterly Journal of Radical Social Theory*, vol. 140, fall edition, 2007.

²²⁴ Nägele takes this concept, "Im Nachvollzug des Geschriebenseins", from: Peter Szondi, *Das Lyrische Drama des Fin de Siècle* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1975), p. 16.

²²⁵ Nägele, "Peter Szondi: Positions of a Literary Critic (at the Border)."

écriture. This surface recognizes the totality of relations that takes place within written language, which produces itself and the world through its ability to continuously generate difference and, through that, meaning, instead of by becoming a secondary instrument to reference the spoken word and its supposed immediate relationship to presence.

This tracing after, which holds up a distance to the text while never removed to be exterior to the text, is according to Nägele then complemented in Szondi's writing by a more radical "Mitvollzug." Nägele writes that Szondi, in his Hölderlin interpretations, responds to the interference of a misplaced subjectivity in Hölderlin's poem "Wie wenn am Feiertage." Szondi warns of such interferences from a common psychologizing reading, and instead tries to engage this subjectivity as one not eliciting "empathy, pity or identification" in the reader, and not constituted in the intersubjective exchange between a pair, but as taking place in the "excentric sphere of a third agency."²²⁶ This third agency is in effect an extreme suffering that is no longer attached to psychological or historical form but is moved to an excentric plane where only basic measures of time and place hold. The reader's encounter with this suffering and subjectivity calls him to a "Mitleiden," rather than a psychologizing "Einfühlung," and engages the text on that excentric plane.

In his encounter with Celan's writings, this "Mitleiden" however means that a "wound of a very personal nature opens up" for Szondi, which is his own

²²⁶ Ibid.

experience of persecution as a Jew.²²⁷ When Szondi writes about Celan with this calling for a new kind of subjectivity, Nägele wants to perceive at first a more belabored critical distance in the essays of the *Celan-Studien*. Yet “these three essays, as controlled and distanced as they present themselves, vibrate and tremble from the shock of an encounter where *Nachvollzug* and *Mitvollzug* can no longer clearly be separated.”²²⁸ Szondi seems to reach an ultimate border when any reading act, any following after the traces of the text, is already eliciting the reader’s subjectivity as a “Mitleiden” because of the deeply personal aspect of his and Celan’s friendship. Yet “in the extreme, in the last border, the erasure of all aesthetic distance goes hand in hand with absolute distance.”²²⁹ The critic does not only completely surrender his or her separate position as reader, but in that very surrender also leaves behind his own subjectivity, his ability to identify himself as separate, as subject vis-à-vis the text object. “Yet in this ultimate distancing of the critic from himself, a kind of wound of a very personal nature opens up.”²³⁰ When Szondi, in the act of reading, completely loses himself and his stable outside the

²²⁷ Martin Schäfer offers an additional reading of “Mitleiden” that Celan’s poetry elicits, but in the form of a “Schmerz zum Mitsein”: Martin-Jörg Schäfer, *Schmerz zum Mitsein: Zur Relektüre Celans und Heideggers durch Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe und Jean-Luc Nancy*. (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2003). His understanding of this pain is derived from Heidegger’s notion of “Schmerz der Vereinzelung,” which understands the subject suffering pain because it is severed from a community that cannot bind meaning any longer in the modern context. The exposure of its pain then allows for a response by others who experience the same pain and can thereby find a new way of generating the experience of human community. For a full discussion of Schäfer’s reading see Chapter 1. Nägele’s reading of “Mitleiden” remains fully inscribed into a “praxis of reading,” in which the larger ontological horizon of the all-encompassing experience of disintegration is not the focus. Rather it remains tied to a subjectivity, an encounter between subjectivities, and their specific suffering and specific history.

²²⁸ Nägele, “Peter Szondi: Positions of a Literary Critic (at the Border).”

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Ibid.

text's subject position, he at the same time finds his own suffering, a suffering that he knows and has experienced. In Celan's poetry and poetics, this suffering is not metaphysical or shared by all humanity, but is encoded as being Jewish after the Shoah. Szondi's reading act as a way of both identifying with and becoming one with the text is at the same time being exposed to his Jewish experience and identity, which through the instantiation of a writing and reading subject becomes the "misplaced subjectivity," both in the poem and the reading.

The Most Personal Exposed: Szondi's Response to Celan's 'Gespräch im Gebirg'

Such exposure of his Jewishness and himself as subject is a subtext of Szondi's writerly engagement with Celan. In the first year of their friendship and epistolary exchange, Celan sends a copy of the special edition of *Die Neue Rundschau* to Szondi that includes the prose piece "Gespräch im Gebirg," with the handwritten dedication: "Für Peter Szondi, /herzlich und krummnasig, krummnasig und / herzlich / Paul Celan / Im September."²³¹ This dedication exposes Szondi's as well as Celan's own Jewishness through the antisemitic caricature word "krummnasig."²³² "Herzlich" is, Nägele writes, the "interiority of the heart" that lies at the outer borders of the dedication, containing and keeping in its middle the "krummnasige" Jew, yet what unfolds and is exposed to the outside is the soft

²³¹ Paul Celan and Szondi, *Briefwechsel*, p. 18. Szondi had read the prose text in 1959 before it appeared in print, and again together with Theodor and Gretel Adorno, and Wibke v. Bornim in Sils-Maria. Celan sent him a separate signed copy.

²³² Celan refers to "Gespräch im Gebirg" in his Meridian notes: "mein 'jüdelndes' Gespräch im Gebirg. Etwas Krummnasiges." Paul Celan, *Der Meridian: Endfassung, Vorstufen, Materialien* (Frankfurt am Main: Tübinger Ausgabe, Suhrkamp, 1999), p. 129. "Krummnasiges" here describes a purported Jewish way of speaking, "jüdelndes."

vulnerable interior of the heart, nothing solid or impenetrable that protects the Jewish bodies in the middle. The heart and the “krummnasige” Jew are also merged together in a doubling, drawing Szondi into this completely shared position, an inversion of the same structure, the same Jew with the same heart. Szondi does not send an elaborate response, but only a postcard from Sils. He had however written earlier in a note to Rudolf Hirsch, the editor of *Neue Rundschau*, that he had been very grateful to have been granted the privilege to read the prose text before it appeared in print, and was thinking about it a lot. The short letter to Hirsch is a first moment where Szondi admits to his difficulty writing about Celan and can be read as exemplary of his approach as a writer to Celan’s work:

Im Augenblick fällt es mir schwer, etwas darüber zu sagen, was übers Persönlichste (mein Judentum und die Erinnerung an die Spaziergänge mit Celan in Sils...) hinausginge.²³³

Szondi identifies his feelings about and response to the text as the most personal, as too personal for writing. It at least momentarily makes him withhold all commentary and writing about Celan. Szondi only allows himself to mention, somewhat elliptically and without complete syntax, in parentheses what this “most personal” includes: “(mein Judentum und die Erinnerungen an die Spaziergänge mit Celan in Sils, das Schweigen vor der fremden Natur).” His Jewishness, which here is bound up in the encounter with Celan, their shared silence, is what is most personal and not easily shared.

²³³ Szondi, *Briefe*, p. 97.

The prose piece “Gespräch im Gebirg” indeed offers one of Celan’s most immediate literary engagements with Jewishness and antisemitism. Celan’s prose text records the walk (“Spaziergang”) and conversation of two men who Celan identifies as ‘Jews,’ “Jude Groß und Jude Klein,” who are apart in age but nevertheless close. The story also labels their conversation as that of two “Geschwätzigern,” whose chattering is described as characteristic of the Jew who cannot keep silent for long, even when in nature. The story achieves a satirical portrayal of these two Jews by making frequent use of antisemitic clichés. This happens also on the level of language, which mimics the racist stereotypes of a kind of Jewish “incorrect” use of German, and is also designated as irrelevant and incongruous to the setting and location in the mountains. The mechanisms of satire function to expose the Jew in the same way that the language of antisemitic ridicule operates. It over-displays and exaggerates features to the point of distortion, rendering the ridiculed completely visible. Yet Celan’s use of satire does not serve to simply oppose and reject these negative representations through exposure. Amir Eshel writes: “Gespräch im Gebirg was supposed to give voice to some kind of “Jewish jabbering” (*jüdelndes*), the voices of the crooked-nosed (*Krummnasiges*).”²³⁴ The Jew is marked “through bodily distortions and presumably incorrect usage of language,” which become a form of “poetic irritation or opposing word (Gegenwort), a poetics that incorporates the lyric questioning of monolingualism.” Celan posits a resisting, disrupting poetic language against any

²³⁴ Amir Eshel, “Paul Celan’s Other: History, Poetics, and Ethics,” *New German Critique*, no. 91, 2017.

language systems that are understood to be pure, homogenous, monolingual. Celan's *Gegenwort* is a Jewish form of speaking, which is a speaking in the body rendered 'Other' that deviates from a physical or linguistic norm. Yet these "jüdelnde" expressions according to Eshel "do not point to a fixed Jewish identity, they are not ornaments to a stable German language" nor do they reveal a "deconstructive intention toward language." Rather they are the "poetic disruption of the lexically 'correct' in a specific manner that Celan calls Jewification."²³⁵ Celan proposes that his language, and all language can undergo this "Jewification" ("Verjuden"), and begin to speak a German that disrupts and deviates from a stable monolingual linguistic system used by speakers who do not ethnically exhibit other physical features. Yet this exposing is not simply a spiteful or victorious act, but one of the most vulnerable kinds because this 'other language' has hitherto only been received as the language of the abject and marginalized Other. The satirical mocking of stereotypes at once affirms the distorted as the desired poetic language, and also renders the characters and their language utterly exposed and vulnerable. This vulnerable exposure, from all sides encircled by antisemitic caricature and cruel Othering, at the same time becomes the only available framework in which the "I" can encounter itself and a subject can be instated, which is the other objective of "Gespräch im Gebirg." "I am there, I am here..." The claiming of subjecthood is rendered a precarious and risky undertaking, constantly ensnared by attempts at belittlement and ridicule, attempts at minimizing and erasing the worth

²³⁵ Eshel finds this oft-quoted exclamation in Celan's preliminary notes to the Meridian speech: "Man kann zum Juden werden, wie man zum Menschen werden kann; man kann verjuden" in Paul Celan, *Der Meridian: Endfassung, Vorstufen, Materialien*, p. 130.

and status of this “I.” At the same time, the story has to be the one place where a subject, an “I” which is fully human and not distorted or abject, can be claimed from this ensnarement.

When Szondi reacts to “Gespräch im Gebirg” also as a Jew and as one of “zwei Juden,” seeing the blatant exposure of the ridiculed Jew, which for Celan becomes the field which his poetic language cultivates, his impulse is to retreat, to render his Jewishness the most personal, the most private, and hidden within parentheses. In these parentheses, he refers to his and Celan’s own walks through the mountains in Sils, and their conversation, or rather non-conversation and silence before nature. Szondi appears to want to redeem the stereotyped split between the chattering Jew and nature, when he offers two Jews who can be silent in nature. Yet Szondi’s nature also remains a foreign one (“fremde Natur”). The designation of this nature as foreign on the one hand brings to mind again the antisemitic stereotype of the Jew who is alienated from nature, and at the same time is Szondi’s acknowledgement of his experience of being displaced and a visitor of a foreign land, “self displaced person” as Szondi refers to himself in a letter to Gershom Sholem.²³⁶

Furthermore, it also moves the experience of the most personal, the experience of the “I” of the critic, which suddenly becomes relevant and is asked to make an appearance, onto a third plane, learned from reading Hölderlin. “Schweigen in der Fremden Natur” becomes the plane outside materially-bound

²³⁶ Szondi, *Briefe*, p. 267.

historical reality, the excentric plane of a third agency. This place is the place of Mitvollzug, and of Mitleiden.

Celan was more willing to expose his wound, expose where he was struck in the most personal way, and willing to pronounce an indictment of those whose attack was of the most profoundly and original antisemitic kind: an attempt to deny him the status of subject, to deny that he is a person. This exposure of himself is something he also does to Szondi. Szondi must heed this call to self-expose, to reveal himself as a Jew, and go to that vulnerable border in his writing which becomes writing about being a Jew, in a new language that, at this border, becomes more exposed.

This requires the spatial order of *écriture*, which is a more exposed area, not dialectical, without an exit or possibility to retreat into the other side of the dialectical set-up, to a place of the critic, to an exterior of the text. And it is *écriture* that also makes Szondi give himself up, lose himself. He says: “Yes, I see that there is a certain Style, half Szondi, half Derrida, whom I find more and more interesting and at the same time dangerous.”²³⁷ He is already losing himself, his critical position, in this new style (which is not a style, but really a new way of writing altogether), and becoming a new double, sharing half of himself and half with Derrida.

Here we have a new vulnerable and critical position. Within the space of *écriture*, a collapsed order of interior and exterior, history forces itself into the writing again, this time not as an external force, but within the pact of Mitvollzug as the deeply personal, subjective position of the critic in that he is also a Jew like

²³⁷ Szondi, *Briefe*, p. 326. Original letter is in French.

Celan, and like Celan suffers as someone who knows this suffering from his own experience.

Reorienting the Reader: Szondi's Inaugural Lecture 'Hoffnung im Vergangenen'

Szondi's later writings, from the 1960s and early 1970s, most of them completed in the context of the founding and development of the AVL Institute, exhibit a new way of orienting themselves vis-à-vis the source text, and orienting their reader within their own text. The reader can experience these texts as landscapes, as textual surfaces on and in which the reader must orient themselves. In many ways, Szondi's later writings, especially the *Celan-Studien*, are highly conscious in their rhetorical registers and their use of formal features to create a specific reading experience. Yet the texts' own way of orienting themselves in and vis-à-vis the literary text interpreted does not always appear confident and authoritative. One can almost perceive a certain sense of disorientation, which becomes especially noticeable in the transitions and beginnings—both of individual paragraphs and of the essays themselves.

Szondi's inaugural lecture, "Antrittsvorlesung," held at the Freie Universität Berlin on 22 February 1961 remains highly relevant for a study of Szondi as a member of the academy and chair of a university department.²³⁸ The lecture in many ways is a public demonstration or indeed an enactment of Szondi's practice as a literary scholar and as a member of the University. The lecture, titled

²³⁸ The lecture first appeared in print as an article: Peter Szondi, "Walter Benjamin und die Suche nach der Verlorenen Zeit," literary supplement of the *Neue Züricher Zeitung*, 1961.

“Hoffnung im Vergangenen,” introduces the thought of Walter Benjamin to the audience in Berlin at a time when Benjamin’s writings were only in the process of being published in a comprehensive fashion and had hitherto received scant critical reception. Szondi was one scholar who was instrumental to this new reception, his inaugural lecture marking the “precise moment, institutional setting and addressees”²³⁹ of the beginning of Benjamin’s reception.²⁴⁰ When deciding to use the lecture as a platform to advocate for an excluded and not yet canonized author, Szondi presents himself as a new faculty member who does not bow to the academy and its etiquettes, who does not seek to fit in and integrate readily, but takes a leading role in shaping reception and a canon.

The lecture’s most striking feature is its distinctive use of quotation, and its way of formatting Szondi’s own voice around these quotations. Forty percent of the lecture consists of quotations, with many of the quotations exceeding one paragraph in length. Szondi himself had, in a letter to his publisher Siegfried Unseld, called the use of quotation “problematisch.”²⁴¹ In addition to their length, they often stand in the text without introduction, explanation or analysis, thereby creating a “polyphony” of voices in which no voice is privileged over another, and

²³⁹ Sonja Boos, *Speaking the Unspeakable in Postwar Germany: Toward a Public Discourse on the Holocaust* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), p. 140 . Gretel and Theodor Adorno had published a first compilation of Benjamin’s writings in 1955, but at the moment of Szondi’s lecture, very few were familiar with his thought. See also: Walter Benjamin, *Schriften*, edited by T. W. and Gretel Adorno, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1955).

²⁴⁰ Suhrkamp publisher Siegfried Unseld consulted with Szondi when the publishing house was preparing the first selection of Benjamin’s writings *Illuminationen*. Szondi sent him a list of texts by Benjamin that he deemed to be essential in a letter to Unseld from December 1960.

²⁴¹ Peter Szondi, “Letter to Unseld,” 21 November 1964, *Briefe*, p. 175.

in which the voices merge into one text.²⁴² Sonja Boos has called the formal structure of the speech, marked by its use of “fragmentary and heterogenous citations” as being how Szondi “articulates a critique of the university as an institution.”²⁴³ According to Boos, the ample use of quotations, and the underrepresented names that are quoted, “breaks with the privileged contents and the rhetorical and methodological conventions of the academy.” In particular, it loosens up the hierarchies between texts and authors, critical voice and literary text. The boundaries between authors become less pronounced and the voice of the individual authors begin to merge into each other. In a passage on Benjamin’s reading of Proust, Szondi asks: “Spricht hier Benjamin von Proust oder von sich selber?”²⁴⁴ In addition, the lack of complete introductions and typographical markers, which would help separate citations from the main text, create a textual landscape in which the reader finds it more difficult to orient themselves.²⁴⁵ The quotes let the reader go astray in the text, just as how in the essay the voice of the reader, the critic Szondi, gets lost in his source texts, rather than remaining distant and outside of them. The lecture begins with a nearly whole-page quotation from Benjamin’s *Berliner Kindheit um 1900*, and in fact from the first pages of the book, its “Eingang,”²⁴⁶ which describe the experience of orienting oneself and getting lost

²⁴² Boos, *Speaking the Unspeakable in Postwar Germany*, p. 143.

²⁴³ Ibid, p. 140.

²⁴⁴ Peter Szondi, *Schriften II* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2011), p. 286.

²⁴⁵ The lecture was written both for the lecture contest, and for a print publication. Szondi made changes to the lecture version, therefore also composing a text that was specifically designed to also be read as text.

²⁴⁶ Szondi, *Schriften II*, p. 275.

in a city, in this case Berlin: “sich in einer Stadt zurechtzufinden heißt nicht viel. In einer Stadt sich aber zu verirren, wie man in einem Wald sich verirrt, braucht Schulung.”²⁴⁷ Benjamin then relates his own memory of getting lost in Berlin, and by tracing the steps and sights of his tour, draws the reader into the textual landscape that is created through this retelling. When he is citing this passage, Szondi therefore follows after him and in turn relates his experience of getting lost in Benjamin’s text of getting lost, and we as listeners and readers do the same. After the quotation, Szondi does not interpret the text at all, but immediately offers an editorial history of the book, which is then supplemented by a reception history of Marcel Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time*, the book that *Berliner Kindheit* is in conversation with. Afterwards, the first actual interpretation and discussion of a source text by a literary scholar in the speech is not one by Szondi about the texts by Benjamin or Proust (the only two books referenced), but one by Szondi’s contemporary literary scholar Kurt Wais. Szondi quotes Wais’ hateful reading of Proust from 1939 which spans half a page. The lecture then becomes a public platform upon which to expose the hateful rhetoric of the literary scholarship of the Nazi era, and to expose at the same time the continued influence of its authors in postwar Germany. In fact, Kurt Wais at that moment was the chair of comparative literature at the University of Tübingen, and became one example of the “integration”²⁴⁸ of former Nazi party members and Nazi scholars into the postwar

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ This is the polemic that Max Czollek employs to convincingly describe the accommodating treatment of faculty that had been affiliated with the NSDAP, at a time when a different migrant demographic would have been the proper beneficiary of integration efforts in Germany. Max Czollek, *Desintegriert Euch!* (Munich: Carl Hanser, 2018).

university. Kurt Wais might have been in the audience as well, though Szondi took pains to separate his own institute from Wais' equivalent in Tübingen.²⁴⁹ Yet the lecture does not simply address the presence of scholars who had previously been members of the Nazi party in Germany. It becomes a platform for its language of literary scholarship to become audible. Szondi quotes a long paragraph from Wais in its entirety, which describes Proust as a "Nicht-Franzose" and "Halb-Jude," and his novel *In Search of Lost Time* as a "Nerven-Monolog": "die neugierige Mikroskopie der Pubertätsprobleme und des Sumpfes lustfrevelerischer Sexualverirrungen, welche Proust mit vielen jüdischen Belletristen Europas gemein hat, all dies dürfte den heutigen Leser, der nicht Neurologe ist, von diesem Werk fernhalten."²⁵⁰ Szondi neither offers a critique nor a counter-appraisal of Proust in his lecture, but lets this voice stand for itself, uncensored. The lecture therefore does not construct a critical or historical distance from this voice in order to situate this kind of speech and scholarship safely in a Nazi past that has been overcome. Szondi empathically ends his lecture with a quote from Benjamin: "Auch die Toten werden vor dem Feind, wenn er siegt, nicht sicher sein. Und dieser Feind hat zu siegen nicht aufgehört," which underscores how the lecture rejects a version of German academic history that understands postwar literary scholarship to now be cleansed of Nazi ideology.²⁵¹ It more broadly rejects the false caesura between Nazi and

²⁴⁹ Szondi was disheartened by the influence of Kurt Wais on comparative literature in Germany and on the new comparative literature journal *Arcadia*, which had included Wais in its first issue. See: Szondi, "Letter 81 to René Wellek," *Briefe*, p. 200.

²⁵⁰ Szondi, *Schriften II*, p. 277. Quoted from Kurt Wais, "Französisch und Französisch-Belgische Dichtung," *Die Gegenwartsdichtung der Europäischen Völker*, edited by Kurt Wais (Berlin: Junker & Dünhaupt, 1939).

²⁵¹ Szondi, *Schriften II*, p. 294.

postwar Germany, with the latter as a nation that has sobered up, that has acknowledged its guilt and has moved on to reveal its true, non-Nazi and democratic self.²⁵² The format of quotation without comprehensive commentary and explanation works to erase historical and critical distance to the text quoted. This renders Kurt Wais' criticism as a voice of the present, exposing its continued toxic influence. More than that, for a contrary purpose, it achieves the same for Benjamin's writings, which are now also made present, as a belated fulfillment of their hope to be the arc that carries their contents, their experiences of a lost and eliminated Berlin childhood into the future, into the presence of Szondi's lecture. Textuality, a linguistic topography that is an assemblage of multiple voices and texts, becomes the lecture's strategy to overcome historical distance, and not so that history is rendered irrelevant, but in order to intervene into the present historical moment and its institutional frameworks for studying literature and texts. This intervention on the one hand is the exposing of Nazi voices of literary scholarship as still being present and influential, and on the other hand is the inclusion of an excluded, indeed murdered, and then-still neglected voice of a Jewish minority: here of Walter Benjamin, who remained academically excluded and neglected in the 1960s in spite of the relevance and quality of his works.

Szondi's "I" in 'Celan-Studien'

²⁵² For a discussion of this false self-image and self-fashioning of postwar Germany see for example: Czollek, *Desintegriert Euch!*; Moishe Postone, "Anti-Semitism and National Socialism: Notes on the German Reaction to 'Holocaust'," *New German Critique*, vol. 19, no. 1, 1980.

The *Celan-Studien* are the next ambitious attempt at this new kind of interpretive writing. As I will discuss in much more detail in the following chapter, they present the fulfillment of Szondi's commitment to Celan to write about his poetry, and write also as an advocate for him as a Jewish poet in postwar Germany. The content and form of his advocacy and its role for literary interpretation will be the main focus of the following chapter. For a discussion of the *Celan-Studien* in the context of the AVL Institute, I will provide a preliminary analysis of their formal set-up, their attention to textuality, and the entering of Szondi's "I," pointing to his embodied presence. Szondi wrote the three essays of the *Celan-Studien* in the year after Celan's death, which also marked the last year of his own life. The essays were written and published separately, and published as one book only posthumously. The first essay concerns itself with Celan's Shakespeare translations and Celan's poetics of translation, the second is a line-by-line reading of the poem "Engführung," and the final essay is a fragment, which includes an interpretation of the poem "Du liegst im großen Gelausche," as well as a report of the real-life circumstances that are the basis of the poem and that Szondi was familiar with.

All three have in common that they have to be encountered as textual planes and topographies, which open up before and pull the reader into the text's presence, which in itself stages its own being present with the reading of Celan's poem. The second of the essays, "Engführung," transports the reader right from its first line into a textual landscape. The "Eingang" of Szondi's text, when it quotes the first line of Celan's poem of the same title, is also the "Eingang" of Celan's poem, which again relates an experience of getting lost: "Verbracht ins Gelände / mit der

untrüglichen Spur.”²⁵³ The following paragraph admits to its author’s difficulty with understanding, his questions and failure to grasp the meaning of this “Gelände.” The essay then offers a reading of the individual lines and verses of the poem by adhering to the original stanza and line order of the poem. In this way, the essay stages a reading experience that wants to follow the trace that the first stanza of the poem has brought into view. By refraining from superimposing an alternative structure and narrative arc on the poem and instead adhering to the poem’s own sequence, the essay makes tangible an experience of getting lost in the poem, being exposed on its “Gelände,” the textual plane of the poem. The reader of Szondi’s essay therefore is also brought into the textual plane of the essay, which itself is not removed from the textual plane of the poem, but is already in this territory, in this landscape, itself utterly present.

The first paragraph of “Eden,” the final essay of the *Celan-Studien*, equally confronts itself and its reader with Celan’s poetic language, in this case with the entire poem at once. It quotes the poem, “Du liegst im großen Gelausche” right at the beginning of the essay, and introduces it in this way: “In dem Gedichtband *Schneepart*, dessen abgeschlossene Reinschrift Celan hinterließ und der Gedichte aus seinem letzten Lebensjahr enthält, steht dieses”²⁵⁴ The poem seems to have been located: it stands, it has been seen, found, and encountered in the book *Schneepart*. As the interpretive focus then reveals, it has not been found as a concrete, material object, but rather as a text, a textual surface. The editorial history

²⁵³ Szondi, *Schriften II*, p. 354

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 389.

of *Schneepart* draws attention to the book as a text, a *Schrift*, which Celan left behind as if he had actively placed it somewhere, so that it is now standing somewhere just as the poem stands in the book. Quoting the entire poem achieves something similar in the reader of Szondi's essay who now encounters the poem, which also "stands" in the essay, halting the essay, interrupting its narrative flow, taking space.

The essay seems to steer into a contradicting direction, however, when it decides to leave the plane of textuality behind, and writes about the material events and sights that the poem references. It becomes a "biographischer Bericht"²⁵⁵ of the days in Celan's life, which are three days in December 1967 that Celan spent in Berlin in the company of Szondi and others, and that led to the writing of the poem. Szondi here is compelled to insert himself as author, as person, when he relates his own witnessing of Celan's visit in Berlin. His "I" makes its way into the essay, yet remains highly subdued, and only appears twice, in a scene that relates an act of giving:

An einem der ersten Abende seines Berlinaufenthalts bat mich Celan um ein Buch, er habe nichts zum Lesen bei sich. Ich gab ihm den kurz zuvor erschienen Band *Der Mord an Rosa Luxemburg und Karl Liebknecht. Dokumentation eines politischen Verbrechens*. Auf einer der Fahrten zwischen meiner Wohnung und der Akademie der Künste zeigte ich ihm das Apartmenthaus 'Eden.'²⁵⁶

These remain the only instances in which Szondi's "I" makes an appearance, as an "I" who is an actor of the scene, giving Celan a book, showing him the hotel. The

²⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 395.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 393.

“I” never claims a leading role in the narrative; the report is by no means about him, and any appearance is tied up in an act of reciprocity, in an act of service and indeed gift-giving, honoring the friend.²⁵⁷

The entrance of the “I” of the author marks the full presence of the embodied Szondi. It is not a rhetorical gesture, it is not the “I” of the critic, the writer, that functions only within the text. It is the introduction of the author who lives outside his text, who is walking and driving. Derrida writes about Szondi’s essay, his encounter with Celan and the poem, so that it reveals the presence of the embodied Celan, the “Er als ein Ich,” which is how Celan names Büchner’s Lenz in his *Meridian* speech.²⁵⁸ Celan writes about Lenz: “Lenz, der den 20. Jänner durchs Gebirg ging, er, nicht der Künstler und mit Fragen der Kunst beschäftigte, er als ein Ich.” Derrida applies this “I” to “Eden,” where it is also the poet himself, not the artist or the craftsman of the poem, but rather Celan the person who is experiencing what he will then write about. Szondi’s “I” in the essay in the same way reveals Szondi as a person who in the scene he relates is not yet the author and critic, but at that moment in time is the witness only to the events, before any written description of these events.²⁵⁹ This “I” is therefore not the subjective voice of the

²⁵⁷ For a meditation on gift-giving in the essay see Peter Brandes, “Die Gewalt der Gaben: Celans Eden,” *Die Zeitlichkeit des Ethos: Poetologische Aspekte im Schreiben Paul Celans*, edited by Martin-Jörg Schäfer and Ulrich Wergin (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2003).

²⁵⁸ “Er als ein Ich” appears in Celan’s speech “Der Meridian“ in Paul Celan, *Gesammelte Werke III*, p. 194. Derrida writes about this “Er als ein Ich” as the presence of an “einzelner” whose singular presence is connected to the singularity of the date. This singular presence on a date is repeated in “Eden,” where Szondi is present with Celan on the specific date of December 22nd. Jacques Derrida, *Schibboleth: Für Paul Celan* (Vienna: Passagen Verlag, 2012).

²⁵⁹ Derrida does not present Szondi as that same “Er als ein Ich,” but at first as the one who in his writing makes Celan’s “I” tangible. In Derrida’s account of Szondi’s encounter with Celan, however, concepts and words of his discussion of this “Er als ein Ich” resurface: “Szondi was the only one to bequeath to us the irreplaceable passwords of access to the poem.” Szondi emerges as “the only one” (Einzig) because of his

author, is not the author disclosing his subjective response to the poem. The essay relates the “I” of Szondi unaffected by the written poem, as of yet unrelated to the actualized poem, which in the moment in time when the “I” appears in the narrative has in fact not yet been written. Szondi’s use of the “I” therefore does not introduce a new subjective, or even empathetic (in the sense of *Einfühlung*) response to Celan’s poetry, but rather serves to reveal Szondi as someone who is witnessing and with Celan experiencing the events that the poem relates. It positions Szondi within the same historical plane and the same date in time as Celan, someone who knows what this history has felt like from his own experience. Someone who has shared this historical experience, which here is still the events of 22 December 1967. This self-disclosure is Szondi’s gesture of admitting to his intimacy with what Celan has experienced and gone through, predating any poem he wrote. It positions him before the writing of all Celan’s poems, into that before which is the history lived through and suffered, which in the essay is also the experience of being alienated from the Christmas scenery on display in Berlin when Celan visits.

Here the essay opens up to what Celan and Szondi share when they are in Berlin together in the days before Christmas: They are both Jewish and do not relate to Christmas in the same way as the “common” German pedestrian who has grown up with this tradition. Szondi begins to speculate on Celan’s feelings about Christmas as a Jew:

Celan . . . registrierte die alles beherrschende Vorweihnachtsstimmung mit der verwunderten Empfänglichkeit dessen, der einem Volk angehört, das

presence on the singular date of “Eden,” December 22nd, which makes apparent his own embodied form, experiencing that date.

dieses Fest nicht kennt, und der seit Jahrzehnten in einem Land lebt, in dem es von keiner “Stimmung” begleitet wird – dem dies aber (vielleicht) aus seiner weit zurückliegenden Kindheit, seiner weit weg liegenden Heimat dennoch vertraut war.²⁶⁰

Childhood and home became the distant and lost vantage points of this receptivity to a holiday atmosphere, relating the painful experience of exile marked by loss. Atmosphere in this experience of the exiled only comes in quotation marks: “‘Stimmung’,” slightly distancing itself from and discrediting the validity of the concept. The reader of Szondi’s essay cannot help but doubt whether Szondi here is speaking of himself, and if not, where else this very intimate knowledge of the emotional landscape of Celan as a Jew, which encompasses his childhood memories, can come from. Szondi’s “I” in the essay predates the poem, is not narrated as the subjective response to the poem, but narrated as an “I” that, with Celan, predates the poem. This predating here begins to widen and deepen its reach in time, when it reaches for Celan’s childhood, which is not only distant in time, but also in place. Szondi knows this home far away in space and time, and shares the loss of this home as someone who was also displaced by the Shoah.

The appearance of a subjectivity in “Eden” here takes place as the appearance of the “I” of Szondi, which is not the author of the essay, not the critic responding to Celan’s poem with a personal, subjective, or even psychological perspective. Rather it is Szondi the person whose presence predates the poem, and who is with Celan long before the poem, as a Jew who is in Berlin after being exiled from his home by the Nazis. It therefore seems that subjectivity in Szondi’s writing

²⁶⁰ Szondi, *Schriften II*, p. 392.

about Celan is tied to his shared experience, his shared suffering, which is their experience as Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe and further in the postwar Germany they inhabit and visit. What Szondi exposes, cautiously, is his identity.

Other criticism of the essay “Eden” has read it as a withdrawal from the experiment in textuality that the preceding essay “Engführung” seems to have been, indeed as a reinstating of the historical and material, the actual lived experience unrelated to the written, unrelated to Celan’s poem or the essay text. Nevertheless, the essay requires that it can be identified as text with certainty, precisely so it can still remain valid as an interpretation of a poem, and be more than a biographical report. It refuses to simply exploit the biographical details it is familiar with to support its interpretive claims, to ‘prove’ them in any way. It also refuses to narrate the encounter as an anecdote that never becomes an interpretation of the poem text. The essay wrestles with its own premise, its perhaps indiscreet disclosure of biographical information embedded in the poem. Its final paragraph, after which the essay breaks off, lets the poem turn back onto material reality, taking its cue from Roman Jakobson. Szondi reads the rhyming couplets “Äppelstaken” and “Fleischerhaken” as the place where language reveals the true relationship between the advent atmosphere in Berlin, symbolized by the Swedish “Äppelstaken,” and “Fleischerhaken,” pointing to the murder of anti-Hitler conspirators at the Plötzensee. The rhyme form reveals this relation, and: “Dieser Zusammenhang wird von der Sprache auch dadurch verraten, daß Staken von stechen abgeleitet ist und auch Pfahl Pranger

bedeuten kann.”²⁶¹ The realia that Szondi had given account of now, in the textual plane of the poem, reveal their true identity as seeming opposites that are in fact related, indeed are actually two sides of the same coin. The true nature of reality is not revealed through naming and processes of signification, but rather within language, within its own motor of generating derivatives, generating difference and indifference. The rhyme and the etymological deposits in words are the places where reality is not simply interpreted and explained, but rather where reality is now taking place, revealing and coming fully to itself in its multivalence, in its indifference.

To Conclude

Werner Hamacher uses the word “stocken” when he attempts to write a history of the AVL Institute. He, and maybe literary scholars after him, are now meant to write history as “stockend”, they don’t write effortlessly anymore, they might not write as straightforwardly, self-confidently striving towards an ambitious argument. Yet the word “stocken” does not function to describe this dynamic. In this word is deposited the memory of Rosa Luxemburg as well as those murdered for the 20 July plot. Also embedded within it is its phonemic relative, “staken,” which is a derivative of “stechen,” and then Celan’s Berlin visit, his encounter with Hamacher’s teacher Peter Szondi, and Szondi’s interpretation of the phoneme family staken-stechen-stocken. The textual play, multivalence, and rhyme derivative remain active in a word which Hamacher uses to signal a posture, even

²⁶¹ Ibid., p. 398.

a form for writing history. But if “stocken” is the name of this new form, then this form of writing itself, the doing, the method, is reverberating with the memory of Celan and Szondi, and is reverberating with Celan’s poetic language. Once it begins to reverberate itself, it reveals itself to be not all that different from literary language. The following chapter will pursue these reverberations in Szondi’s essay *Eden*, its rhetorical status and its self-awareness as text and writing. I argue that it was Paul Celan who encouraged Szondi to make an appearance as the I, as the writer of his text, and Szondi in his writing practice in the early years of the AVL institute knew that he had to dare to show himself. In the next chapter I argue that *Eden* is the text where Szondi shows himself, and shows himself as a writer. Peter Szondi worked to make this step possible, to have an institution devoted to the study of literature evolve to become a place where his writing can become a writing that writes alongside Celan, with literature, and thereby think and know like literature does.

CHAPTER III: Intuiting the Poem from Posterity: Szondi's Essay "Eden" and the
Celan-Studien

A posthumous writing project, written by a contemporary

The unfinished draft of the essay "Eden," the last of three essays Szondi wrote about Paul Celan, was what his doctoral student, upon entering his apartment, found lying on his desk after having been informed of Szondi's death.²⁶² The renowned Hungarian-born German-Jewish philologist took his life by drowning himself in Halensee, a lake in West Berlin, in late October 1971, less than two years after Paul Celan had drowned himself in the River Seine in Paris in April 1970. These two dates frame the *Celan-Studien*. Szondi wrote and published all three essays after Celan's passing, and took his own life before he had finished the last essay, and before the essays were published in the single volume that we have today. Szondi writes as Celan's contemporary, yet the essays in the *Celan-Studien* are still written in the period following Celan's death, a period that had barely begun.

Plans for one of the essays were already underway before Celan's passing. Szondi had promised him in 1970, one month before Celan's death, to publish an essay about his poetry in a planned issue of *Critique*. Celan had proposed Szondi as a potential contributor to the editor of the issue, Jacques Derrida. Szondi's

²⁶² Anecdotal source from a conversation I had with student in Szondi's former office in Kiebitzweg, Berlin during the exhibition *Ethos des Lesens* organized by Irene Albers at the Freie University in Berlin that opened on December 16, 2015.

agreeing to writing this was however motivated not only by an interest in the task itself, but also by Celan's psychological constitution. To Claude David he writes: "Er war an diesem Tag so traurig, daß ich den Mut nicht aufbrachte zu zögern, und sofort zusagte."²⁶³ Szondi's immediate pledge of commitment is triggered by Celan's state of mind.

Once he does come to writing the essays, after Celan's death, he confesses to Celan's wife Gisèle Lestrangé that he had not had the courage to write about Celan's poetry earlier: "Als ich im Laufe der letzten Tage schrieb, wurde mir bewusst, daß in mir seit langem eine Art von Schweigen gab, ein Gemisch von Angst und Verehrung, daß mich jahrelang davon abgehalten hat, etwas über seine Dichtung zu schreiben."²⁶⁴ Szondi admits that his admiration for Celan the poet had made him shy away from the task. He had also been a firsthand witness to how Celan responded to written critiques about his poetry: how carefully, critically, and sometimes disapprovingly he read them.²⁶⁵

It is noteworthy that his and Celan's emotional states circumscribe the writing project from the planning stage to its execution. Szondi's writing makes itself vulnerable to these states, and has little barrier or distance to the emotional registers of their personal relationship. These emotional registers that affect the writing task become more dramatic when Szondi actually sits down to write the

²⁶³ Peter Szondi, letter to Claude David, 6 June 1970, *Briefe*, ed. Christoph König (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1994), p. 313.

²⁶⁴ Paul Celan and Peter Szondi, *Briefwechsel* (Frankfurt a. Main: Suhrkamp, 2005), p. 241.

²⁶⁵ Examples of Celan's critical eye regarding writings about his poetry, such as in Celan's work with Walter Jens, are detailed in Chapter 1 of *Paul Celan Conjures Hölderlin: Literary Criticism, Literary History and the Other*.

essays, while still in shock and mourning Celan's sudden death. He writes to Lestrangle:

Ich breche ein langes und nicht zu entschuldigendes Schweigen. . . . Ich möchte Ihnen nur sagen, dass ich nur deswegen seit Pauls Tod geschwiegen habe, weil ich keine Worte fand . . . Ich breche dieses Schweigen jetzt endlich, indem ich die Gelegenheit der ersten Niederschrift eines Aufsatzes über Paul für CRITIQUE benutze. Er selbst hatte mich bei unserem letzten Treffen im März 1970 darum gebeten.²⁶⁶

Szondi's first published essay about Celan is here presented as his way to break the silence that had overcome him after his friend's death. When he was not able to find words in response to Celan's passing and write his words of condolence to Lestrangle, the essay now serves as a token to make up for the missed opportunity. Szondi in the same way also presents the essay in question, "Durch die Enge geführt," as his way to process his own shock and mourning. The essays of the *Celan-Studien*, all written in the year or so between Celan's and Szondi's deaths, are examples of literary scholarship, and at the same time always have to be understood as documents of Szondi's mental and emotional state in his final years, a state that also extends from and thereby reverberates with the mental illness that led to Celan's death.

The essays cannot maintain an objective distance from their object of study: Celan's poems. Such lack of distance or of emotional sobriety is out of the ordinary for a literary scholar of Szondi's time.

Yet it is also the lack of temporal distance—the fact that Szondi writes contemporaneously—that stands out. Literary scholarship is often understood to

²⁶⁶ Paul Celan and Peter Szondi, *Briefwechsel*, p. 241.

require temporal distance from the source text. In 1960, Hans-Georg Gadamer writes in his hermeneutics *Wahrheit und Methode* that, for hermeneutic processes of understanding, historical distance is needed to be able to properly discern and gain knowledge over the object of study:

Erst das Absterben aller aktuellen Bezüge lässt ihre eigene Gestalt sichtbar werden und ermöglicht damit ein Verständnis des in ihnen gesagten, das verbindliche Allgemeinheit beanspruchen kann. . . . Die Überschaubarkeit, die relative Abgeschlossenheit eines geschichtlichen Vorgangs, seine Ferne von den die Gegenwart erfüllenden Sachmeinungen – das sind im gewissen Sinne wirklich positive Bedingungen des geschichtlichen Verstehens.²⁶⁷

Temporal distance is what allows the manifold opinions and surrounding issues of the contemporary moment to dissipate and allow a historical event, development, or even epoch to reveal its contours and become manifest. Gadamer posits hermeneutic modes of understanding and knowledge in opposition to historicism, which rather seeks to close the temporal gap between the past epoch and the present moment of research, and to see the object of study with the eyes of someone of its time. Gadamer seeks to emancipate hermeneutics from the historicist relationship to time as being what stands in the way of knowledge. For hermeneutic understanding, temporal distance does not make understanding more difficult, but rather is a productive force and aids in reading in the pattern of the hermeneutic circle: perceiving the general, the overarching meaning of a work, in the particular, in each word and sentence that comprise a work.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁷ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode: Grundzüge einer Philosophischen Hermeneutik*, (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1960/2010), p. 303.

²⁶⁸ Gadamer, after Heidegger, grounds the hermeneutic circle ontologically: what is active in our reaching towards the overarching meaning of a work (for its “Sinnzusammenhang”) when reading through its

Hermeneutics thrives when one is not in a hurry, quite unlike the approach of literary critics to writing reviews. The passage of time is the vehicle for processes of understanding, rather than for merely collecting and evaluating information. The belated position of the literary scholar who engages in a hermeneutic process of understanding is a role dutifully served by another close friend of Celan's. The classics scholar and philologist Jean Bollack confessed that, with regard to the task of writing about Celan's poetry: "At the time I was not capable of understanding what Celan gave me to read. It was necessary for a certain amount of time to pass. What happened was a delay, something belated."²⁶⁹ Even though Bollack writes about Celan as his contemporary, understanding the poem does not come as quickly as one might expect of a critic who had been in such close contact with Celan's thought and writing activity. That his understanding has a temporal dimension, that it does not come easily but requires a lengthier engagement with the object of study, posits his reading of Celan as a consciously hermeneutic engagement.

Szondi's own hermeneutics does not emphasize temporal distance, but instead examines the unique temporality of literature and literary interpretation. The immersion into literary works of art collapses temporal distance between the time of the work, and the time of reading. Because the object of study for a literary critic is the literary work, which is not studied as an exemplum for what can be

particulars is what Heidegger terms "Vorverständnis", when understanding we project from what we already know as having been shaped and conditioned by culture and tradition, through "Überlieferung". Ibid., p. 298.

²⁶⁹ Jean Bollack, *Sinn wider Sinn: Wie liest man? Gespräche mit Patrick Llored*, transl. Renate Schlesier (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2003), p. 177. Bollack's statement is translated into English by Christoph König in: Christoph König, "Reflections of Reading: On Paul Celan and Peter Szondi," *Telos: A Quarterly Journal of Radical Social Theory*, vol. 140, fall edition, 2007.

known, it must be studied as itself being engaged in the process of reaching knowledge (*Erkenntnis*). This process towards attaining knowledge shows that the literary work itself is lodged in time, and can continue to exist in time, because the reader encounters the work as a process rather than a product of understanding, time and again. The literary work is therefore never fully locatable in the past, which in a way renders the requirement for temporal distance obsolete. If the literary work itself continues to exist in time, in itself always remaining within structures of passing, changing, and therefore present time, the moment when the reader will be removed enough from the work and its historical moment will never arrive. In this way, interpreting a literary work is always done as a contemporary, as someone who meets the work on the same temporal plane.

Keeping in mind the hermeneutic decorum of temporal distance and Szondi's critical understanding of the temporality of literary works, one can observe that Szondi's literary interpretations in the *Celan-Studien* fold together multiple temporal positionalities. Szondi essentially writes from the same historical moment as Celan—the few years that stand between Celan's poems and Szondi's *Celan-Studien* are too few to count towards the hermeneutic prerequisite of temporal distance. But at the same time they are written posthumously, after Celan's death. This preserves, and even in a way intensifies the hermeneutic posture of belatedness. Then again, Szondi's admission that he had to wait a certain amount of time before he was able to write is not hermeneutically or critically motivated, but rather motivated by personal feelings towards Celan, and by the grieving process. And as Szondi confesses to Lestranger, his writing while in the grips of

mourning comes too late (Szondi apologizes for the delay), and at the same time comes too soon, as Szondi admits that he is not prepared and that it was Celan's sudden death that made the task an urgent one. This, however, also means that as much as Szondi's writings want to be in the time and with the time of Celan's poems, and assume the perspective that these poems continue to participate in later moments of the present, they can never free themselves of a certain painful belatedness, the pain of ceasing to be a contemporary and instead having one's writing temporally separated by the other's death.

The circumstances of the essay project transgress hermeneutic conventions of emotional and temporal distance. The last essay of the *Celan-Studien* goes further and breaches hermeneutic and critical decorum in an additional significant area. In "Eden" Szondi draws on detailed biographical information to annotate the images and references that Szondi interprets in the poem "Du liegst im großen Gelausche." Celan wrote the poem after a December 1967 visit to Berlin, a visit in which he and Szondi spent time together. Szondi therefore has privileged access to the real-life experiences and places that the poem references, and essentially writes an essay that in part reads like a glossary of these references. The rhetorical register of the essay therefore also differs from conventional literary analysis as well as literary history. The glossary of these biographical references is also the writing of biography in the overarching sense, of Celan's but also Szondi's own biography and the moments where they overlap in Berlin on 22–23 December 1967. At the same time, the essay remains an interpretation of the poem, at least in fragment, as Szondi did not complete the essay.

The fact that Szondi witnessed the essay being conceptualized, that he shared the experiences that would become material for the poem, means that Szondi as reader knows about, ‘reads’ the poem before it is written, yet also then reads the poem once it is written. The interpretation of “Du liegst” is written after the poem was written, and interprets the existing poem, but the essay at the same time writes as if it can intuit the poem. The merging of these two planes in the essay—the interpretation of the poem, temporally situated after the poem has begun to exist, and the biographical narration of the historical events that will become the poem—create a time fold in the essay. The reader, present in history and before the poem exists, can intuit the poem to come, because the poem must necessarily emerge from the event. This ability to foreshadow and intuit the poem as a necessary outcome of these events is made possible also because of the interpretation, which recognizes and thereby validates the autonomous and necessary form of the poem.

Peter Szondi’s Hermeneutics and Literary Scholarship

Peter Szondi situates his practice as a theorist and literary scholar very much in the academic context, within the framework of the discipline *Literaturwissenschaft* and its institutional belonging. His writings never become uncoupled from this framework; Szondi remains a literary scholar first and foremost. His intensive engagement with the university and his establishment of a new discipline within the *Institut für Allgemeine und Vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft* demonstrate how important the context of this new discipline was for Szondi, how all his writing was determinately *Literaturwissenschaft* that desired and even required an

environment suited to this academic context and discipline in order to accomplish its aims. At the same time, his writings and lectures also, from the beginning, go beyond the requirements of Literaturwissenschaft as a discipline to pose more general theoretical questions. These questions concern themselves with the foundation of his discipline, with the specific nature of literary scholarship and its rootedness in the tradition of hermeneutics and criticism. Szondi's move beyond literary scholarship, beyond the immediate task of interpreting literary texts and literary genres, is in fact a move deeper into Literaturwissenschaft, specifically its epistemological mode, its *Erkenntnisweise*, though in this case as a critically determined inquiry.

His writings formulate the principles of his critical method as a principal theoretical question. Szondi considers this specific 'philological knowledge' (*philologisches Wissen*) in terms of hermeneutics, which calls for the articulation of the nature of *Verstehen*, the vehicle and human disposition by which knowledge is gained. This inquiry into the nature of understanding distinguishes the hermeneutic undertaking, which Szondi posits as the foundation of literary science, from that of the natural sciences, whose focus is upon the content of the *Wissen* they seek to generate, rather than the human disposition of finding a path to knowledge through seeking and understanding. As Szondi defines the central problem of the literary scholarship of his time in his "Traktat über philologische Erkenntnis," the introduction to his *Hölderlin-Studien*, literary sciences have failed to examine the theoretical basis from which they operate. He poses the question: "Warum ... die Literaturwissenschaft, die im vollkommenen Verstehen einer

Schrift ihre Aufgabe sehen muss, sich den Problemen der Hermeneutik so gut wie ganz verschließt.”²⁷⁰ It appears to take its methods and status as a discipline for granted. Literaturwissenschaft of the time overemphasizes empiricist methods, which it adapts from the historical sciences, or follows the logic of deductive reasoning that governs research in the natural sciences. Employing methods that are tailored to the needs of other disciplines, as Szondi does, might allow literary sciences to appear more like a ‘proper’ science, but in the end this has the opposite effect, undermining its credibility as science because of the failure to make transparent its principles of obtaining knowledge.²⁷¹ Szondi insists that literary criticism is a *Kunstwissenschaft* that establishes its methods not from an external logic of scientific reasoning, but from an awareness of how it understands its object of study: the literary work. His project harks back to Schleiermacher’s first attempt at providing a general theory of understanding that pertains to the study of literary works still in a narrower sense. Following Schleiermacher, literary hermeneutics has to articulate its modes of inquiry as a *Kunstlehre* that both develops certain techniques and methods of practice, and at the same time conceives itself as an *Erkenntnislehre*, accessing the knowledge that literary and artistic works convey

²⁷⁰ Schleiermacher’s hermeneutic dictum remains paradigmatic for Szondi’s undertakings: “Das vollkommene Verstehen einer Rede oder Schrift ist eine Kunstleistung und erheischt eine Kunstlehre oder Technik, welche wir durch den Ausdruck Hermeneutik bezeichnen.” See F.D.E. Schleiermacher, “Schriften I,” *Hermeneutik und Kritik* (Heidelberg: Kummerle, 1959), p. 263.

²⁷¹ The establishment of Literaturwissenschaft as a science has its roots in nineteenth century *Germanistik* and *Geisteswissenschaft* and the reforms that grew out of a positivist valorization of the natural sciences over the traditional focus on the humanist fields, a development that Szondi does not want to dismiss entirely either. For one, it helped Germanistik gain its status as a discipline. In addition, this development was critically motivated. Especially Dilthey’s school of criticism was a response to the speculative systems of German idealism (of the Romantics and Hegel in particular): “spekulatives Erkenntnis [musste] der Tatsachenforschung geopfert werden” (Szondi, *Schriften*, vol. 1, p. 267).

and becoming aware of the nature of understanding that guides this process. Szondi forgoes an inquiry into the nature of *Verstehen* in the ontological sense, situating his work within an alternative narrative of the hermeneutic tradition, in which Schleiermacher's hermeneutics, rather than the further developments of philosophical hermeneutics, connect to the critical theories of the twentieth century.²⁷²

According to Szondi, the foundation of this *Erkenntnisweise* is a particular way of treating and conceptualizing its object of knowledge: the literary work, which to him is an object altogether different from the items that a natural scientist or historian would study. It demands to be treated in its immediacy, as he writes in *Traktat über Philologische Erkenntnis* (1962):

Während die Geschichtswissenschaft ihren Gegenstand, das vergangene Geschehene, aus der Ferne der Zeiten in die Gegenwart des Wissens, außerhalb dessen es nicht gegenwärtig ist, hereinholen muss und kann, ist dem philologischen Wissen immer schon die Gegenwart des Kunstwerks vorgegeben, an dem es sich stets von neuem zu bewähren hat. Diese Bewährung ist nicht zu verwechseln mit jener Überprüfung des Gewußten, auf die keine Wissenschaft, auch die Naturwissenschaft, verzichten kann. Dem philologischen Wissen ist ein dynamisches Moment

²⁷² In "Bemerkungen zur Forschungslage der literarischen Hermeneutik," Szondi critiques the marginal position of literary scholarship in the hermeneutic debates of his time. The literary scholars that interrogate the principles of *Verstehen* at all, prominently Szondi's own doctoral advisor Emil Staiger, to Szondi's regret do so from the perspective of Heidegger's *Seinsphilosophie*, where *Verstehen* is treated as existential, rather than specific to its object. Szondi critiques: "Wenn *Verstehen* Da-Sein ist, sind die Bedingungen der Möglichkeit von *Verstehen* Sachen der Fundamentalontologie; eine Kritik der literarischen Vernunft wurde weniger denn je zum Desiderat" (*Einführung in die literarische Hermeneutik*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2012, p. 404). Understanding as an ontological category also subsumes all historical contexts of the process of understanding under the existential premise, diffusing and inhibiting a critical reading.

eigen, nicht bloß weil es sich durch Gesichtspunkte und neue Erkenntnisse ständig verändert, sondern weil es nur in der fortwährenden Konfrontation mit dem Text bestehen kann, nur in der ununterbrochenen Zurückführung des Wissens auf Erkenntnis, auf das Verstehen des dichterischen Wortes²⁷³

The historian on the basis of new information or the chemist through repeated experimentation do change their interpretations of the object of study and therefore also do not produce static knowledge. Their object of study nevertheless does not change with the new context of inquiry that it is studied in, and its ultimate goal is to arrive at a fixed and therefore valid representation of the object of study. The interpretation might change, yet the object of study remains in its place, and in the case of the historical sciences, in the past. In the literary sciences, the object of knowledge cannot be completely detached from the context it is studied in: The effect of its presence rests on the scholars' or readers' conscious effort to make the text present and immediate, because what is ultimately at stake is not the production of knowledge of the object via representation. Rather, it is to know and access the Erkenntnis that is present in the work of art, as to Szondi Erkenntnis is what the "dichterisches Wort" contains and what we are eager to gain access to. This demands a continuing willingness to reach Erkenntnis. Because the work of art does not simply lay out the Erkenntnis it contains, but rather is the place where Erkenntnis happens and is gained, Erkenntnis can only be obtained by dealing directly with the work, a task that begins anew every time a reader confronts it. Philological knowledge to Szondi therefore is "perpetuierte Erkenntnis," and any

²⁷³ Peter Szondi, *Schriften*, vol. 1 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2011), p. 265.

description of a work of art will only be valid if it can ultimately dissolve again into the Erkenntnis that is already present in the work, in the “dichterisches Wort.”²⁷⁴ Interpretation becomes a continuous activity (“Tätigkeit”), a form of “Forschen” that is equally a “Suchen” and a “Fragen” that does not end once the search has yielded results. It is a task that cannot be completed by finding what one has been looking for.²⁷⁵

Hermeneutics as Critique: Modern Hermeneutics and the Singularity of Authorial Intent

Szondi's lecture series *Einführung in die literarische Hermeneutik*, which he held in the winter semester of 1967/1968 at the AVL institute, traces a history of hermeneutics that diverges from contemporary accounts or those of his own teachers, centrally Szondi's doctoral advisor, the Heideggerian literary scholar Emil Staiger. Szondi's history of hermeneutics is not organized according to what Dilthey has called the “gesetzmässiger Gang der Hermeneutik,” from a *Methodenlehre* all the way to a philosophical inquiry into the nature of Verstehen, which Heidegger in the end uncoupled from any implication of an academic discipline to become the ontological foundation of *Dasein*.²⁷⁶ Szondi's narrative

²⁷⁴ “Das philologische Wissen hat seinen Ursprung, die Erkenntnis, nie verlassen, Wissen ist hier perpetuierende Erkenntnis.” Szondi, *Schriften* I, p. 265.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 267. “bedeutete ‘Forschen’ einst Fragen und Suchen. Aber der Moment des Fragens, mithin auch der Erkenntnis, ist dem Wortinhalt immer mehr abhanden gekommen, das Forschen ist zum bloßen Suchen geworden. Indem der Literaturwissenschaftler von seinen Forschungen spricht, gibt er zu, daß er seine Tätigkeit mehr als eine Suche nach etwas versteht, das es gibt und nur noch aufzufinden gilt, denn als Erkennen und Verstehen.”

²⁷⁶ Wilhelm Dilthey, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 19 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982), p. 320.

instead focuses on the nineteenth-century hermeneutics of Schleiermacher as well as on the early developments of modern literary hermeneutics. Szondi's scant coverage of post-Schleiermacherian hermeneutics, including Wilhelm Dilthey, and the fact that he leaves out the entire tradition of philosophical hermeneutics, is a provocation to the significant representatives of postwar thought and literary studies of his time. Szondi thereby maintains Schleiermacher's hermeneutics as the place which his own critical undertaking seeks to pick up from. Schleiermacher's models of grammatical and technical interpretation, in Szondi's narrative, harbor the critical momentum of the hermeneutic undertaking, before it uncouples from the concerns of method, to become a philosophical set of questions.²⁷⁷

Szondi's *Einführung in die Literarische Hermeneutik* presents an emancipatory history of modern hermeneutics, as well as its development away from the principles and worldview of pre-modern theological, legal, and philological hermeneutics.²⁷⁸

Chladenius's Stellenhermeneutik

²⁷⁷ The university lecture series was published as Peter Szondi, *Einführung in die literarische Hermeneutik: Studienausgabe der Vorlesungen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2012). It offers the most comprehensive argument about Schleiermacher and also lays out Szondi's own narrative of the hermeneutic tradition with its decided emphasis on Romantic hermeneutics. Another important text on Schleiermacher is "Schleiermachers Hermeneutik heute" in Szondi, *Schriften*, vol. 2. Written in 1970 as a radio feature, it was first published in French as "L'herméneutique de Schleiermacher" in *Poétique 2* (1970). Curiously, Szondi dedicates this essay to Paul Celan.

²⁷⁸ Peter Szondi, *Einführung in die Literarische Hermeneutik*.

Szondi's account of modern hermeneutics begins with Johann Martin Chladenius's *Einleitung zur richtigen Auslegung vernünftiger Reden und Schriften*. The *Einleitung* exhibits a new interest in authorial intent, yet without a conception of the artistic *Werk* as a complex and unified creation. Intent emerges from the rational mind, rather than from artistic creativity. Chladenius's hermeneutics, in line with the Lutheran approach to the Bible of the time, makes texts unavailable to the multiple, arbitrary, and dogmatic assignments of meaning of the theological reading methods of the day. His *Stellenhermeneutik* devised a technical instrumentarium to help clarify that which is isolated and obscure ("*dunkle Stellen*") in a text. Underlying this approach was the assumption that the text would have been composed by a rational mind and therefore had to be comprehensible, as Chladenius puts it in the title of his 1742 treatise *Einleitung zur richtigen Auslegung vernünftiger Reden und Schriften*. The interpreter of texts was mainly concerned with providing information that the reader was missing, to help them to access the rationally constructed text, such as the translation of foreign words, or etymological sources. A more comprehensive, general understanding of the text in its entirety, as a literary work, and of its meaning, was not yet the aim.²⁷⁹ The aim was rather for the overcoming of historical distance to the original classical work, such as to the Bible, in order to secure an interpretation that was true to the intentions of its author and to the historical context, and thereby protect it from the authoritative and unchecked imposition of interpretations based on the dogma of the time.

²⁷⁹ Chladenius's hermeneutics, though, cannot altogether be understood as entirely irreconcilable with the later general hermeneutics, as a discussion of his theory of the "Sehe-punct" would reveal.

Chladenius's break with the specialized hermeneutic systems of pre-modern dogmatism helped him construct his rational technical approach, which however did not yet serve the interpretation of literary works. Chladenius's *Einleitung* covers only the interpretation of works of history and biblical compendia (dogma), but was originally conceived as a theory that would pertain to literary works as well, even though these would require an attunement to the specific thinking and rationality of literary writing:

Es ist auch noch eine andere Art von Büchern in der Auslege-Kunst in genauere Betrachtung zu ziehen, welche sinnreiche genennet werden, worunter die Poetischen die vornehmsten sind. Denn wie hierinne eine besondere Art zu gedencken herrschet, so daß sie eine besondere Vernunft-Lehre in sich zu halten scheinen, also ist ihre Auslegung auch ganz anders eingerichtet²⁸⁰

Chladenius did not complete the planned sections of literary interpretation, but the notion that literary works had their unique logic and thinking that would require a new set of interpretative techniques became a prevalent concern for the Romantics, and for Schleiermacher's hermeneutics.

Schleiermacher's Quest for the General Principles of Understanding

Szondi follows Wilhelm Dilthey who pronounces Schleiermacher to be the founder of modern hermeneutics. Schleiermacher animated the hermeneutic undertaking,

²⁸⁰ Quoted from Szondi, *Einführung in die Literarische Hermeneutik*, p. 35. Szondi's argument for the relevance of Chladenius's hermeneutics for literary hermeneutics is not a canonical one. In fact, Chladenius's *Einleitung zur richtigen Auslegung vernünftiger Reden und Schriften* was a nearly forgotten work, and Szondi is one of the first who considers its central role in the development of modern hermeneutics. He argues that the *Einleitung* prepares the way for a literary hermeneutics, a section that Chladenius indeed planned but did not complete. Chladenius's proposal for the existence of a specifically poetic way of thinking ("dichterische Logik," Szondi, *Hermeneutik*, p. 35) was a previously unarticulated realization.

which had become a formalized system of rules and techniques for the set disciplines of law, theology, and philology. He at the same time insisted that his project was not to reinvent hermeneutics, but rather to discover what theoretical principles underlay its existing rules of interpretation, and to discern what intellectual process guided the interpretative effort. Schleiermacher is pursued after the general principles of understanding, which he thinks should underlie any rule or method. He criticizes the absence of such principles: “viele darin aufgestellte Regeln zeigten sich sehr brauchbar, aber es fehlte ihnen selbst die rechte Begründung weil die allgemeinen Principien nirgends aufgestellt waren.”²⁸¹

This also meant that Schleiermacher now included different forms of writing and acts of language, including speech, to become part of his interpretative focus. The general principles of understanding had to be applicable to all kinds of speech and writing acts. Schleiermacher became especially interested in the literary text and artistic expression, fueled also by the Romantic intellectual literary activity and aesthetic programs of the time. Departing from earlier Stellenhermeneutik, Schleiermacher was now concerned not only with the meaning of an individual section or word in the text, but how the “Stelle” came to be as part of the literary work as a whole, and what motivation guided both the Stelle and the work.

Even though Schleiermacher’s focus now lies on the entire literary work, the coming into being both of Stelle and work, of part and whole, does not occur only within the form of a written document. The work and everything contained

²⁸¹ Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutik*, edited by Heinz Kimmerle (Heidelberg: Winter, 1959), p. 123.

therein emerges from the motivations of the author, from the aliveness of his speaking and using language. Schleiermacher explains:

Denn die unmittelbare Gegenwart des Redenden, der lebendige Ausdruck, welcher die Theilnahme seines ganzen geistigen Wesens verkündigt, die Art, wie sich hier die Gedanken aus dem gemeinsamen Leben entwickeln, dies alles reizt weit mehr als die einsame Betrachtung einer ganz isolierten Schrift dazu, eine Reihe von Gedanken zugleich als einen hervorbrechenden Lebensmoment, als seine mit vielen anderen auch anderer Art zusammenhängenden Tat zu verstehen²⁸²

The written document that is the focus of interpretation is encountered as the expression of a thinking being, actively using language from his immediate lived experience. Written works are not treated as isolated textual documents, but as the extension of an active, animated use of language, as pointing to the original speech act. Written text becomes the secondary expression of speech, which is understood also not in rhetorical or performative categories, but as the act of a thinking being who, when their aliveness finds expression, also gives meaning to this lived experience and does so through using and giving purpose to their intent, the system of language. As Szondi puts it: “Nicht um die Auslegung einzelner Stellen geht es, sondern um die Auffassung des Gesprochenen und Geschriebenen in seinem Ursprung aus dem individuellen Leben seines Autors.”²⁸³ In his declaration of the author as a thinking being, Schleiermacher emphasizes the intentionality of the language and speech act, a deliberate intervention into the preexisting language system so that it can serve the expression of highly individual experience:

²⁸² Ibid., p. 131.

²⁸³ Szondi, “Schleiermachers Hermeneutik heute,” *Schriften*, vol. 2 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005), p. 112.

Jeder Mensch ist auf der einen Seite ein Ort, in welchem sich eine gegebene Sprache auf eine eigentümliche Weise gestaltet, und seine Rede ist nur zu verstehen aus der Totalität der Sprache. Dann aber auch ist er ein sich stetig entwickelnder Geist, und seine Rede ist nur als seine Tatsache von diesem, in Zusammenhang mit den übrigen. Die Rede ist als Tatsache des Geistes nicht verstanden, wenn sie nicht in ihrer Sprachbeziehung verstanden ist . . . sie ist aber auch als Modifikation der Sprache nicht verstanden, wenn sie nicht als Tatsachen des Geistes verstanden ist²⁸⁴

The use of language as the conscious act of a thinking mind can only be understood in its consciousness and individuality if it is recognized in relation to the agreed-upon system of language. The speaker at once consciously operates within a given system of language, and always emancipates themselves from it through making use of it in their own unique, individual way, in order to give expression to their engaged thinking experience of life. The author in this act of expression is not a passive actor through whom a shared historical experience simply emerges without conscious filtering.

Schleiermacher devises two forms of interpretation to address these individual and socially or linguistically shared registers of language use, and to then be able to understand their interdependence, their “*Ineinander*.” Grammatical interpretation understands speech (*Rede*) in relation to the general system of language. Psychological or technical interpretation understands *Rede* in relation to the thought process of its author. This individual aspect of the utterance is not merely the expression of its psychological or interior dimension, but, in Schleiermacher’s system: “ein hervorbrechendes Lebensmoment.” Szondi

²⁸⁴ Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutik*, 1959, p. 81.

understands this “Lebensmoment” in Schleiermacher to be a historically particular experience, experienced by the individual who then seeks to bring it into the appropriate language form, a form that also partakes in an already preexisting system of language, which then is the focus of grammatical interpretation. As Szondi explains: “Es ist hier der Grund gelegt für eine Stilkritik und Formanalyse, die sowohl die Individualität als auch die Geschichtlichkeit der literarischen Phänomene erkennen will.”²⁸⁵ The two pillars of grammatical and psychological interpretation bring about an analysis that considers literary form and style always in relation to lived experience, which Szondi then understands as historically situated.²⁸⁶

Authorial Intent

Even if Szondi emphasizes the historical rootedness of expression and language, the hermeneutic effort that he picks up from Schleiermacher concerns itself centrally with authorial intent, which is the product of authorial subjectivity. The singularity of intent is what hermeneutics orients itself towards, when it engages with the dynamic complexities of expression and multivalent shadings that the literary work exhibits. It polemically distinguishes itself from premodern hermeneutics, where religious and classical texts were vulnerable to an arbitrary assigning of meaning, and decoding of symbols, at the hands of religious

²⁸⁵ Szondi, *Schriften*, vol. 2, p. 117.

²⁸⁶ He voices regret over what he perceives as an increasing disinterest in grammatical interpretation, and a philosophical interest in a “hervorbrechender Lebensmoment” that, beginning with Wilhelm Dilthey, increasingly stresses the interior and metaphysical dimension of lived experience.

authorities. Schleiermacher opposes the formation of multiple meanings: “Die absolute Lösung der Aufgabe ist die, wenn jede Seite für sich, [i.e., die grammatische und technische] so behandelt wird, daß die Behandlung der anderen keine Änderung im Resultat hervorbringt, oder, wenn jede Seite für sich die andere völlig ersetzt.”²⁸⁷

The underlying principles of *Verstehen* and its always operative, two-tiered, and firmly interdependent forms of technical and grammatical interpretation limit how many interpretations can become valid. Rather than a constant negotiation over individual *Stellen* in a text, and therefore fluctuations in how their meaning is assigned, each interpretation has to affirm the work’s overarching intent, its particular and unique way of using language to express lived experience.

What have to be adaptable however are interpretative methods and systems of rules. They now have to be the places where negotiation takes place, in order to serve the singularity of their object. Because of its renunciation of existing technical and rule-oriented systems of grammar and composition, Szondi summarizes Schleiermacher’s hermeneutics as a critical practice. Interpretation responds to the immediate language expression of an individual’s lived experience rather than to preexisting systems of philology:

Schleiermacher hat *Verstehen* als die Umkehrung des Redens aufgefaßt und dementsprechend Hermeneutik definiert als umgekehrte Grammatik und umgekehrte Komposition. . . . In der Umkehrung wird hinter das erstarrte Regelsystem der beiden Disziplinen wie auch hinter ihre Hypostasierung des Gegebenen zurückgegangen und sowohl nach den Voraussetzungen und Bedingtheiten als auch nach der Interdependenz der Fakten, nach ihrer

²⁸⁷ Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutik*, p. 81.

Dialektik gefragt. Dem aber verdankt sich die Überwindung des Positivismus. Hermeneutik ist, so verstanden, ein Instrument der Kritik.²⁸⁸ Hermeneutics is not merely presented as the procedure of decoding a text, of deciphering writing, but it always mirrors and therefore also participates in—and dissolves into the living expression of—the intentional and authored speaking of a subjectivity. Hermeneutics therefore, as the inversion of expression, aligns with the “Lebensmoment” of the speaker whose utterings it seeks to approximate in their identity and individuality. Szondi understands this as placing hermeneutics into an immediate relationship with the dialectics inherent in the “Lebensmoment,” which interacts with a preexisting system of language to express a historically particular experience. As the inversion of this process of abstracting from lived life, the interpretation therefore also dissolves the expression into these actual experiences. The inverted alignment of hermeneutics with individual lived experience—that finds expression in the speech act—is the place in which his notion of hermeneutics is situated as critique. His critical hermeneutics is therefore always attached to concrete reality as experience, and as linguistically expressed by an individual. The hermeneutic intervention becomes a recuperation of the expression’s dialectics, its attempt to express historical experience in literary form.

The critical momentum that Szondi perceives in Schleiermacher’s hermeneutics, and that which he bases his own critical practice on, depends on the individuality of literary expression, and on the unique and singular attempt at giving form to experience. This authorial subjectivity is to Schleiermacher decidedly one of presence, and authorial expression is also one marked by presence in lived

²⁸⁸ Szondi, *Schriften*, vol. 2, p. 130.

reality, a presence that marks it as “Rede,” an embodied and alive use of language, rather than textual document. Szondi is well aware that this constellation of subjectivity and oral speech is being scrutinized at the time. He writes:

Seltsamerweise steht heute der entscheidende Schritt Schleiermachers, von der Schrift zurück zur Rede, zu dem ihn das Ungenügen mit der einsamen Betrachtung einer ganz isolierten Schrift veranlasst hatte, besonders in Frankreich im Mittelpunkt der Diskussion, freilich ohne Bezugnahme auf Schleiermacher. . . . eine von Mallarmé sich hergeleitete Literaturtheorie, deren zentraler Begriff der der ‘écriture’, der Schrift, ist²⁸⁹

Szondi does not conclusively evaluate this tendency. His intellectual pursuits were highly responsive and open, especially to Derrida’s writings. The essay “Durch die Enge geführt” in the *Celan-Studien*, as I will discuss in the following section, both experiments and wrestles with a different mode of interpretation, that remains on the textual plane, and no longer comes back to lived reality. Yet the dependency of his critical posture on authorial intent, on authorial subjectivity and presence, also means that this writing experiment is a deeply challenging one.

“Versenkung”: History and Form

In his own thought, Szondi develops his critical hermeneutics not only from Schleiermacher’s general hermeneutics, but also from his theories and readings of dramatic works. His 1956 work *Theorie der Modernen Dramas* lays the foundations for a theory that seeks to articulate his concept of “Versenkung” as an approach to the literary text that digresses from but also in a sense integrates two then-influential schools of literary criticism: neo-Marxist criticism with its

²⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 113.

emphasis on the historical conditions for the production of the work of art and its demands for a political art practice, and more traditional *Gattungsgeschichte* with its emphasis on the historical continuity of genre. A critical investigation of a work of art's modes of and conditions for production, as for example Theodor Adorno's criticism has foregrounded, is highly relevant for Szondi's practice, yet in his eyes does not put enough emphasis on the internal formal specificity of the work of art. Szondi, however, wants to at least in part read these formal features in historical terms as well. As Szondi articulates in his lecture, published as *Das lyrische Drama des Fin de Siècle* (1965/66): "Die Historizität liegt in dem Spannungsverhältnis zu den Gesetzen der dramatischen Form, einer Form, die noch das lyrische Drama intendiert, obwohl es sich ihrem Scheitern verdankt."²⁹⁰ The historical specificity of the work emerges in its internal dialogue with dramatic form as a historical continuum, a form that remains operative in the work's inner dialectics of overcoming this form in response to changed historical contexts. The place to find history is therefore in the work of art, not merely in terms of its content, but also in its form. The work of art, which for Szondi demands one's full attention as being one-of-a-kind, is unique not because it transcends the material historical world, but because of its own historicity: "Vielmehr gehört gerade die Historizität zu seiner Besonderheit, so dass einzig die Betrachtungsweise dem Kunstwerk ganz gerecht wird, welche die Geschichte im Kunstwerk, nicht aber das Kunstwerk in der Geschichte zu sehen."²⁹¹

²⁹⁰ Peter Szondi, *Das Lyrische Drama des Fin de Siècle: Studienausgabe der Vorlesungen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1975), p. 19.

²⁹¹ Szondi, *Schriften*, vol. 1, p. 275.

Szondi's critical hermeneutics therefore seeks an immersion, or "Versenkung" into the work of art that does not try to reveal what is hidden behind the text in aesthetically-transcendent categories, but seeks to reveal the work's historicity as what constitutes the work from within. Hermeneutics thereby regains its critical momentum, interpretation becomes a task that is specific to its object of study and therefore specific to its form-content dialectics.

"Versenkung" is an image that invokes the interpretive act not as one of decoding the work's form-content logic, but as one that drastically reduces distance to the object. While the task of the philologist is often seen as being to study its object objectively, from an appropriate distance, here the task is to look at it up close:

Denn nicht selten erwecken historische Arbeiten den Anschein, als wolle ihr Verfasser der intensiven Versenkung in das einzelne Kunstwerk aus dem Wege gehen, als scheue er diese Intimität und als wäre der Grund dieser Scheu die Angst, in der Nähe zum künstlerischen Vorgang jene Distanz einzubüßen, die ein Attribut der Wissenschaft sein soll. Aber es scheint das Dilemma der Literaturwissenschaft zu sein, dass sie nur in solcher Versenkung das Kunstwerk als Kunstwerk zu begreifen vermag, und also gerade um ihrer Wissenschaftlichkeit, dass heißt ihrer Gegenstandsangemessenheit willen, auf Kriterien wie des Abstands und des "einmal ist keinmal" verzichten muss²⁹²

According to Szondi, the historian often maintains objective distance to the object of study. Szondi encourages the literary scholar to trade in this detached and objective gaze and instead fully immerse themselves into the work of art. Szondi does not call this intimacy subjectivity, as in the opposite of objectivity. The

²⁹² Szondi, *Schriften*, vol. 1, p. 267.

reader's or scholar's subjectivity is not what truly figures in this constellation of reader and work. What figures is the work of art, that the scholar will immerse themselves to a degree that their subjectivity becomes irrelevant, and what counts is their very intimate experience of the tensions and dynamics within the work of art. For Szondi's reading of Celan's poems, the concept of "Versenkung" is the incentive. When Szondi reads Celan, where certain measures of distance are not obtainable because Szondi was too close to Celan to read his poems objectively, he practices this sharp drop in objectivity without ever insisting on the presence of his subjectivity, which we expect to be the obvious consequence. As will be discussed later, the intimacy of "Versenkung" in which subjectivity, though not absent, does not markedly figure, rather involves rearrangements of temporal and spatial parameters of the relationship between reader and work, between the work's interior and exterior. In order to realize these forms of intimacy that do not manifest through any subjectivity, Szondi in the *Celan-Studien*, where objectivity becomes close to impossible because of Szondi's personal connection to Celan as well as to the poems he interprets, takes recourse to new models and techniques of reading and writing, which approach the poem as a text, a plane with spatial and temporal variables.

Hermeneutics and Rhetoric

Szondi's practice as a literary scholar is, on one level, one of writing and reading. Yet on another level it is the practice of a scholar in the public setting of a

university, who engages in literary scholarship in group situations: in lectures, seminars, and discussions. The performative and rhetorical registers of such spaces for literary scholarship, which Szondi in part specifically created to realize a critical hermeneutics, in many ways sits uneasily with a Schleiermacherian hermeneutic tradition.²⁹³ In line with developments of the time, Szondi proposes different rhetorical formats for studying literature at university: the seminar and the colloquium. These are decentered and discussion-based and therefore risk that interpretation breaks down into a cacophony of voices and blurs the focus on the singularity of the work of art.

Szondi's *Einführung in die literarische Hermeneutik*, which contains transcriptions of lectures he held at the Freie Universität, includes a proposal for alternative classroom formats for studying literature that replace the traditional lecture format and its hierarchical, non-democratic set-up:

wenn in unseren Tagen die Kritik an traditionellen Form der Vorlesung immer lauter wird . . . wird man . . . möglicherweise an die Stelle der überlieferten "großen Vorlesung" einerseits das Forschungskolleg, andererseits das Kolloquium setzen, in dem ein vorgegebener Text nicht mehr monologisch, sondern im Gespräch erhellt und diskutiert wird.²⁹⁴

Szondi's introductory lecture for his "Literaturwissenschaftliches Colloquium" held on the first session of the summer semester of 1969 makes the planning of the

²⁹³ See previous chapter "Writing for and as a Jewish Minority in Postwar Germany: The Peter Szondi Institute for Comparative and General Literature at the Freie Universität Berlin (1965–1972)" for a review of Szondi's founding of an academic program for literary studies at the Freie Universität Berlin.

²⁹⁴ Szondi, *Einführung in die literarische Hermeneutik*, p. 99.

colloquium format for the class transparent to the students he addresses.²⁹⁵ He explains:

Was man in den geisteswissenschaftlichen Fächern Studium nennt, besteht . . . aus der Verbindung von vier Tätigkeiten: Lesen, Reflexion, Diskussion, Schreiben. . . In der Vorlesung sitzt man passiv, schreibt was der Professor liest, das Nachschreiben erlaubt einem kein Nachdenken. . . Was nun das Schreiben betrifft, das Ausarbeiten von Thesen, Referaten, so ist es dem Vorlesungsbetrieb ebenfalls fremd und vielleicht kann man die Behauptung wagen, dass Dissertationen viel eher aus Seminaren als aus Vorlesungen hervorgegangen sind, weil nämlich der Student und zukünftige Doktorand im Seminar bereits aktiv mitarbeitet²⁹⁶

In Szondi's view, the podium lecture as a means of conveying information and knowledge does not well serve the discipline of Literaturwissenschaft. The primary activities of literary studies—reading, reflection, discussion, and writing—come to fruition in a class that does not center around the professor's own pursuit of these activities: the professor's own writings, readings, and reflections. Szondi's emphasis on the *activities* of literary studies, rather than on knowledge of content, or the correct use of methods, also uncouples it from the traditional focus of the discipline and makes literary studies a less controlled and less circumscribed process where the goal is not prefigured. Literary studies as a set of activities and practices has a performative dimension, an engaged 'doing,' a doing that is on display either through speaking in a seminar, or on the page through the act of writing. As Szondi portrays it in this description, writing also becomes an extension

²⁹⁵ Szondi also mentions the discussions he had with students about possible formats, and that the colloquium format was decided upon democratically together with the students.

²⁹⁶ Peter Szondi, "Einführung zum 'Literaturwissenschaftlichen Colloquium' vom 28. April 1969," *Nach Szondi*, ed. Irene Albers (Berlin: Kadmos, 2015), p. 70.

of the rhetorical situation of class discussion. The immediacy of the writing act as it relates to the reading act, the seamless and interconnected transformation of reading into thinking, and then speaking and writing, thrives in the rhetorical space of the colloquium and gains its own decidedly rhetorical dimension. This rhetorical space is here a decentered one. Writing and interpretation spring forth in multiple different directions, rather than in a straight line from truth, to author, to reader. Hermeneutic activity, lodged within a rhetorical configuration, does not organize around a stable presence of the artwork or of truth. Speaking or writing about the literary work is always shifting and diverging from the moment of encounter and the relationship to the literary work, to its pastness as well as presence, is constantly shifting. Interpretation, including interpretative writing, happens within a decentered temporality, the interpretative text is generated at the time of encounter, as well as after, once the seminar is over.

This however diffuses the hermeneutic *modus operandi* in Schleiermacherian terms as a search for singular intent and meaning that will transcend historical distance and an external and arbitrary assignment of meaning. Szondi's new interest in rhetoric, and the way that it diffuses stable meaning that is unaltered by a mode of performance or address in a specific context, indeed runs counter to his recuperation of Schleiermacherian hermeneutics and the quest for Erkenntnis and meaning. As Russell A. Berman observes in Szondi's hermeneutics and in the narrative tracing Chladenius's pre-modern to Schleiermacher's modern aesthetic and then to Szondi's own critical investigation of rhetorical formats of literary study: "Szondi's historical narrative moves from the plural arbitrariness of

simultaneous meanings, as in patristic hermeneutics, to a singular intent, a tendency that seems to curiously reverse his call to reject the lecture format and to turn instead to dialogue.”²⁹⁷

In his analysis, Berman works out the finer points where Szondi’s hermeneutics are in conflict with his investment in new theoretical formats for literary studies and its implications for modes of writing and interpretation. He argues that the posture of “*Versenkung*” is not one where a multiplicity of opinions are envisioned, but rather where the reader, more or less alone, and with their subjectivity enters into a relationship with the singularity of the work of art, and its very unique way of negotiating form and history. This negotiation in Szondi’s envisioning of hermeneutics therefore takes place first and foremost inside the work of art, within its status as singular and meaning-making. It does not materialize in the discussions of an interpreting community that assigns multiple possible meanings as an effect of its own historical situatedness. “*Versenkung*,” as the linchpin of Szondi’s literary studies, is a much more solitary, centered practice than a classroom discussion, which is however equally central to Szondi’s re-envisioning of literary studies. Szondi’s sustained and ambitious effort includes the founding of a new academic program. It must be considered that its aim—to adapt the practice and methods of literary studies to new ideas that emphasize the situatedness of literary studies and works after the rhetorical turn—is that which

²⁹⁷ Russell A. Berman, “Conspiracy Theories: Szondi on Hölderlin’s Jacobinism,” *Telos*, no. 140, Fall 2007, p. 118.

makes his later hermeneutic work challenging and even at times not at peace with itself.

The *Celan-Studien*, which are written precisely in this context of the new institute, demonstrate an approach which breaks through artistic and genre conventions, and experiments with the rhetorical register of literary interpretation that nevertheless desires to function within the set-up of “Versenkung,” the concentration on the unique work of art and its inner dialectic.

The Celan-Studien: Representation and the Poem's Independent Existence

The three essays in the *Celan-Studien* are related in that the thrust and trajectory of their respective arguments are geared towards seeing the poem's own ability to make itself present, to make itself *be*, to be reality. The poem does not represent reality, but itself forms the site for a reality that is not committed to, or even necessarily set in relation with an external reality. Poetry is not liable for the linguistic verification and validation of the existence of a reality in an Aristotelean sense. Szondi writes in the essay “Durch die Enge geführt”: “Die Dichtung ist nicht mimesis, keine Repräsentation mehr: sie wird Realität. Poetische Realität, freilich, Text, der keiner Wirklichkeit mehr folgt, sondern sich selbst als Realität entwirft und begründet.”²⁹⁸ As many of Celan's contemporary critics overemphasized the influence of symbolism on Celan, Szondi wants to differentiate it especially from the projects of aestheticism and symbolism, which employ the poem as a space in which to erect an alternative, ideal reality, and which therefore turn the poem into

²⁹⁸ Szondi, *Schriften*, vol. 2, pp. 348–9.

a self-contained place, a place of completion and perfect self-reference. As Szondi argues in the first essay of the *Celan-Studien*, which is given both an English and German title, “Poetry of Constancy - Poetik der Beständigkeit”: “er hat an die Stelle des traditionellen symbolistischen Gedichts, das von sich selber handelt, das sich selbst zum Gegenstand hat, ein Gedicht gesetzt, dass von sich selbst nicht mehr handelt, sondern es ist.”²⁹⁹ Poetry’s ability to make itself exist on its own terms is not to be confused with an aestheticist self-referentiality. It is not preoccupied with itself, that is to say with its signs and images, but rather has a claim to being, to being in space and time.

Walking through the Poem: Engführung

Of the three essays, “Durch die Enge geführt” offers the most succinct and developed argument on how Celan’s poetry achieves this self-realization through poetic form. Szondi heeds the call of the poem to meet it in its self-actualized space and not treat it as separate from himself, as a form that can be looked at but that the reader is not part of. The essay begins by quoting the first lines of the poem:

Verbracht ins
Gelände
mit der untrüglichen Spur:³⁰⁰

The essay’s beginning is the poem’s beginning, the poem and essay converge in one place. The first lines of “Engführung” therefore also become imperative to Szondi. He as reader is the one who is “verbracht,” or displaced. His essay is

²⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 344.

³⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 345.

brought into the poem when it commences to read it, and does not remain exterior to it. The poem is the terrain (“Gelände”) into which the ‘reader,’ that is to say the essay, is taken. Szondi observes that this terrain is not specified and has no name, yet is presented as a familiar one—which the use of the preposition combined with a definite article (“ins”) suggests. The first stanza of the poem also does not specify who or what is displaced (“verbracht”). Szondi argues that in a construction that does not specify its subject, the reader has the freedom to understand themselves as that missing subject. In fact it is the lack of a name for whom or what is displaced that makes the reader question who it might be, and therefore they cannot definitely rule out the possibility that it might be the reader themselves: “würden die Verse präzisieren, um was es geht, so wäre der Leser nicht in der Lage, sich zu fragen, ob er nicht selbst gemeint sei. . . . Dass eben dadurch, daß es ungesagt bleibt, der Leser annehmen kann, es ginge (auch) um ihn.”³⁰¹ The poem’s withholding of a name for the object of displacement must always also include the reader as being one possibility for the identity of this object. At the same time, Szondi notes that the poem nevertheless does not address the reader directly, and that they are not what the poem is about:

So lässt *Engführung* gleich zu Anfang den Leser verstehen, daß er vom Dichter nicht angesprochen wird (wie es oft tatsächlich der Fall ist), und dass er auch nicht Gegenstand des Gedichts ist; vielmehr wird er derart ins Innere des Textes versetzt, daß es unmöglich wird, zwischen dem der liest, und dem, was er liest, zu unterscheiden; das lesende Subjekt fällt zusammen mit dem Subjekt des gelesenen Gedichts.³⁰²

³⁰¹ Ibid., p. 346.

³⁰² Ibid.

This also means that the poem does not organize itself around a subject any longer; the position of the subject cannot be firmly located and owned by the poem. Instead the reader's continuous attempt to locate the subject lets its location oscillate, shift, and appear in more place than one. This in turn also destabilizes the outer boundaries of the poem, its form. The most central content of the poem, its subject, travels to an area beyond the poem. Szondi therefore seems to prefer a different term to describe the written entity of the poem: "Text."³⁰³ This text is not fixated upon a subject, or specific content, but its subject can travel about, exit and reenter, can separate from the reader's external perspective and then join with it again.

The poem then addresses the reader in the imperative: "Lies nicht mehr – schau! /Schau nicht mehr – geh!" Szondi alerts us to the modes of reception, reading and looking, and their implications for the poem's textuality: "Indem das Schauen das Lesen ablöst, scheint die erste Weisung die Textualität zu überwinden, die Landschaft also solche in Betracht zu ziehen. Doch der zweite Imperativ, der dem ersten widerspricht und ihn aufhebt, substituiert dem Blick die Bewegung."³⁰⁴ The poem at first steers the reader away from its textuality. Yet Szondi stresses not in order to return to representation and images. Instead the poem appears to ask the reader to enter into the physical reality of the poem even more, through the physical act of walking. Szondi asks:

Heißt das, der gelesene Text und das geschaute Bild sollen einer Realität weichen, die dem Leser-Zuschauer ermöglichte, zu *gehen*? Ja und nein.

³⁰³ Ibid., p. 348; Szondi also uses the term: "Text-Landschaft," p. 347.

³⁰⁴ Szondi, *Schriften*, vol. 2, p. 348.

Denn: keineswegs wird die Fiktion der Textualität, der Dichtung aufgegeben zugunsten der Wirklichkeit. Nicht die rezeptive Passivität des Leser-Zuschauers soll schwinden vor der angeblich realen Aktion, dem Engagement. Im Gegenteil: der Text als solcher weigert sich, weiter im Dienst der Wirklichkeit zu stehen. Die Dichtung ist nicht Mimesis, keine Repräsentation: sie wird Realität. Poetische Realität freilich, Text, der keiner Wirklichkeit mehr folgt, sondern sich selbst als Realität entwirft und begründet. Der Dichter verlangt von sich und vom Leser, im *Gelände*, das sein Text ist, voranzugehen.³⁰⁵

The entreaty “geh” assigns an active role to the reader. The appeal does not name or emphasize the path, landscape, or reality outside the poem that the reader must now engage with while walking. “Gehen” seems to presupposes a material reality, yet this material reality has no name or location outside the poem. The withdrawal of an external material reality, and a way of depicting it in the poem, means that the walking reader has to find this reality elsewhere: in the place where he or she actually is located, that is—the text of the poem.

Szondi argues that the poem “Engführung” can be a reality by its own making also because of its stanzaic form as well as deviations from that form. The poem’s stanzas are interpolated by enjambments, consisting of two to three lines printed with different measures of indentation on the right side of and underneath the stanzas. Each enjambment reiterates the final line or part of the final few lines of the preceding stanza, yet with small deviations in word order or with the repetition of some words more than once and, in some instances, includes an

³⁰⁵ Szondi, *Schriften*, vol. 2, p. 348.

inversion of the previous word order. The transition from the sixth to seventh stanzas for example looks like this:

Asche.
Asche, Asche.
Nacht.
Nacht-und-Nacht. – Zum
Aug geh, zum feuchten.
Zum
Aug geh,
zum feuchten -³⁰⁶

The last sentence of the stanza reads: “Zum / Aug geh, zum feuchten.” This makes up the last and second-to-last lines of the stanza, reiterated in the enjambment, and which is positioned on the right half of the page, therefore not counting towards the regular stanzas.

This creates a unique orthography of words on the page. The arrangement guides the reader’s eye toward a different part of the page. The enjambment interrupts the linear movement of the reader’s gaze additionally when it rearranges and splits the sentence along three lines with decreasing measures of indentation. The reader therefore becomes aware that the poem directs its movement across the page and from stanza to stanza as if walking through a space, a landscape, or a terrain.

The enjambments also function as transitions between the separate stanzas, and so connect them. The stanza break is not a full break and pause; the enjambment leads the reader’s eye away from the break and then back towards the new stanza, drawing a path from one stanza to the next. Szondi interprets this as having the

³⁰⁶ Paul Celan, *Gesammelte Werke*, pp. 114–5.

effect of keeping the reader on the choreographed trajectory the poem has laid out, and therefore preventing the reader from looking away from the poem or pausing between stanzas, which would otherwise allow them to ever so slightly withdraw from the space of the poem. This stanzaic structure pulls the reader along: The reader is pulled into its space without the option of interrupting this progression. Szondi informs us that the enjambments take their cue from the musical term *stretto* (in German: “Engführung”), which is the title of the poem:

Die Wiederaufnahmen zu Beginn jeder Partie sind also nicht reine Wiederholungen. Eher fallen diese rechts auf der Seite gedruckten Wörter mit dem Einsatz der nächsten Stimme zusammen . . . Ihre typographische Anordnung drückt die Fast-Gleichzeitigkeit aus, die wesentlich zur musikalischen Engführung gehört und deren gedrängten Charakter ausmacht.³⁰⁷

Szondi quotes from the Brockhaus entry on *stretto*: “‘Engführung’ heißt die zeitlich enge, d.h. möglichst gleichzeitige kontrapunktische Zusammenführung von Themen.”³⁰⁸ The individual yet harmonically-related phrases of the counterpoint are arranged in a fugue in the final, climactic ‘Engführung,’ each coming in at nearly the same time. The phrases, which are both variations and reiterations of the fugue’s main theme, overlap with only a small delay. This “Fast-Gleichzeitigkeit” has an effect on the way the composition reaches the finale, building tension and harmonic density towards the piece’s climax.³⁰⁹ The delayed reiterations both appear to restrain the forward thrust of the main theme by extending and therefore

³⁰⁷ Szondi, *Schriften*, vol. 2, p. 351.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

delaying this forward movement. At the same time this delayed reiteration pushes the piece forward, hurrying along after the main phrase.

Szondi reminds the reader of the musical reference of “Engführung” to disclose that the enjambments intervene into the temporal structure of the poem. They pace the progression of the reader through the poem. The reader’s position in their present moment vis-à-vis the poem is always disrupted and is constantly shifting as soon as the reader finds themselves within the poem’s space. The reading gaze is ushered and driven towards the next stanza, towards the next breath, towards the stanza lying ahead, in the future. At the same time, the enjambments stall this forward movement and discontinue the reader’s steady pacing towards the next stanza. As in a fugue stretto counterpoint composition, each narrowing between the stanzas both holds back and drives forwards, resulting in the achievement that the reader’s current position in the poem is always also a position in the past, and in the future of a line and stanza.

When the poem makes us read the past, when it pulls us towards and into the past, or lets the past be part of the present of the poem, it does not do so through representation or description of that past. Movement towards the past is achieved through the stanzaic structure. The poem engages the reader, as well as their gaze which travels across the page and through the poem. This movement of the gaze is driven by the temporality that the poem itself produces as the foundation of its own self-generated existence, its own presence, being present in time.

Peter Szondi’s essay “Eden”

“Eden,”³¹⁰ the final essay in the *Celan-Studien*, offers a more radical version of walking through and being displaced into the poem. The essay is an interpretation of the poem “Du liegst im großen Gelausche,” a poem that Szondi in effect witnessed being conceptualized and written when Celan visited Berlin in December 1967, when Szondi was one of his tour guides in the city.³¹¹ “Eden” is a biographical account (“biographischer Bericht”³¹²) of the poem’s genesis as much as it is a line-by-line interpretation of its meaning. Szondi is familiar with the various references to events and sights in the poem and recaps the different stations of Celan’s tour through Berlin, a tour in which he accompanied the poet for some of the way, and which Celan then brings together in the poem. When Szondi, taking his cue from “Engführung,” lets himself be displaced (“verbracht”) as a reader into the poem, he therefore simultaneously also gets displaced again into the material world—the city of Berlin—that the poem references. Szondi as reader is sent back, or sends himself back, from his place in and with the poem, in and with the text, to the place seemingly outside the poem, to the material world from whence the poem

³¹⁰ The essay was written between April and September 1971, and published posthumously first in *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*. See: Peter Szondi, “Zu einem Gedicht Paul Celans,” *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 15 October 1972; then under the title “Eden” in Szondi, *Celan-Studien*, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972).

³¹¹ Celan traveled to Berlin on 16 December 1967, for what would be his first and only visit to the city. The purpose of the visit was to give a reading in the Akademie der Künste; he also read from his new book *Atemwende* in Szondi’s seminar at the AVL institute at the Freie Universität. Celan met with different friends, among them Szondi, and visited various sites, such as the memorial site by Plötzensee and the Christmas Market at the Funkturm. Szondi also showed him the site of the former Hotel Eden in passing, where Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht had stayed, the night before their execution in 1919. Celan read the book *Der Mord an Rosa Luxemburg und Karl Liebknecht: Dokumentation eines politischen Verbrechens* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1967), which Szondi had gifted him during his visit. Celan wrote the poem on 22–23 December 1967. He sent clean copies to the friends he had visited in Berlin.

³¹² Szondi, *Schriften*, vol. 2, p. 395.

comes, and that the poem is seemingly ‘about.’ It is an unfamiliar and precarious place to be for a reader of literature, and at first appears to starkly contradict the premise of textuality in the essay “Durch die Enge geführt.” However, as I will discuss in this section, the premise of textuality manifests via a different route. Rather than alerting us to and responding to the textuality of the poem, as Szondi did in “Durch die Enge geführt,” the essay manifests its own textuality. While in a traditional reading the reader is thought to travel to the poem from their separate place in the manifest world and travel back again when decoding its references, translating them back again into empirical facts, here Szondi narrates this traveling. It is in this narration, which is a rhetorically and textually conscious effort, that he constantly passes and thereby softens and diffuses the borders of each territory: on the one hand the poem; and on the other, Berlin on 23 December 1967.

Szondi indeed had a fair degree of inside knowledge about the various references in the poem; a few of the references appear to even have been orchestrated by Szondi. He, as Derrida puts it, was not only “witness” to the events, but also an “accomplice.”³¹³ Central to this was Szondi gifting Celan a book about Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht during his visit, and also showing him the site of the former Hotel Eden on one of their shared car journeys through Berlin. The name of the hotel, and snippets of Luxemburg and Liebknecht’s history, particularly their execution as political prisoners—which Celan might have read about in the book Szondi gave him—become central images and references in the poem.

³¹³ Jacques Derrida, *Sovereignities in Question: The Poetics of Paul Celan* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), p. 17.

This exclusive knowledge of the poem's references, and the fact that Szondi discloses them in the essay and develops his interpretation of the poem with these in mind, caused some skepticism on the part of critics.

Hans Georg Gadamer interrogated the premise of the use of biographical information in Szondi's essay in a 1972 review in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*.³¹⁴ He expresses skepticism towards Szondi's method of decoding the poem's meaning with the help of the very private biographical information ("biographisches Spezialwissen"³¹⁵) that Szondi had at his disposal: "Man muss nichts Privates und Ephemeres wissen. Man muss sogar, wenn man es weiß, von ihm wegdenken und nur das denken, was das Gedicht weiß."³¹⁶ This reads as a dismissal of the entire premise of the essay "Eden," and as a call to heed a posture of interpretation that is narrowly focused on the poem. The poem must be that which knows more than the reader, and the reader must, at least during the reading act, deliberately place themselves as the passive part, who depends on the knowledge of the poem, and does not know more, or know differently. At the same time, Gadamer observes in the poem an imperative for the reader to gain additional knowledge, and to try to obtain the kind of information that will help them decode the specificity of the historical events that the poem references. The poem references a singular event ("einmaliges Ereignis"³¹⁷) and Gadamer says that the poem wants the reader to

³¹⁴ Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Was muss der Leser wissen? Aus Anlass von Peter Szondis 'Zu einem Gedicht Paul Celans'," *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 5 November 1972, p. 53.

³¹⁵ Ibid.

³¹⁶ Ibid.

³¹⁷ Ibid.

know of the specificity of this event, even when it does not provide enough detail for the reader to decipher which exact events are meant: “Aber das Gedicht will seinerseits, dass man alles weiß, erfährt, lernt, was es weiß.”³¹⁸ Gadamer reads the imperative “Geh” in the lines “Geh du zur Spree, geh zur Havel, / zu den Fleischerhaken, / zu den roten Äppelstaken” as an address to the reader.³¹⁹ The poem directs the reader to visit these sites themselves, and thereby to find out more about the specific event, which here is the execution of Luxemburg and Liebknecht, as well as the executions of Nazi-era German resistance fighters at Plötzensee lake.

Gadamer’s reading thus affirms a certain division between poem and reader. In his interpretation of “Geh” as an imperative to the reader, he literally sends the reader away from the textual plane of the poem. “Spree” and “Havel” are markedly places in the material world, outside of the poem. The reader must leave behind their knowledge of history and of these places when reading the poem; they must exit from this world in order to see and know only what the poem knows. Furthermore, the reader then must venture back into the real world, where they can be the active consumer and producer of knowledge, again independent from the poem. Gadamer situates the reading act within a temporal economy of before and after. The reader’s ‘before’ cannot enter into the reading act, and the reading act supposes a definite ‘after,’ a time after reading when the reader can learn more and visit these places.

³¹⁸ Ibid.

³¹⁹ These lines of Celan’s are quoted from the same Gadamer article, *ibid.*, p. 53.

This split between poem and reader is exactly what Szondi's reading of "Eden" dismantles, but also something he himself could not have, because Szondi had attained knowledge of the poem's subject, knew it before the poem was written, and comes to the poem not only privileged by having this special information, but also in a way afflicted with this knowledge. This affliction, his non-immunity, points us to the fact that his and Celan's experiences are shared experiences, possibly beyond those marked on 23 December 1967. Still, Szondi's surrender to the space and time of the poem that was prompted by "Durch die Enge geführt" remains the reading posture in "Eden" as well.

Not only does Szondi know firsthand about the various sites and experiences, he also traces the different layers of erasure of the poem and its publication history. Celan had sent copies of the poem to select friends following his visit, in these were included the poem entitled "Wintergedicht."³²⁰ The title would have been the first temporal marker of the poem, which Celan however later decided to omit. More significantly, the first true, yet separate publication of the poem, in the multi-author collection *Hommage für Peter Huchel: Zum 3. April 1968*, Celan includes precise markers of date and location: "Berlin, 22./23.12.1967." These get omitted again in the final publication of the poem in Celan's poetry collection *Schneepart*, prepared by Celan and published posthumously in 1971. Celan left markers for the exact date and often place in his personal finished drafts (*Reinschriften*) for his poems, but left them out of the publications. The date and place markers in *Hommage für Peter Huchel*, however,

³²⁰ A copy he sent to one other friend on 29 December 1967, a day after his departure from Berlin, included the title "Wintergedicht," which was however crossed out.

are unusual, and deserve attention—attention that Szondi gives this peculiarity, and uses to justify his own reconstruction of the poem’s site-specific and date-specific references. Celan’s own decision to mark time and date in one of the publications reveals that the specificities of the poem’s genesis are of import, and are not simply outside of the poem. The date remains inscribed into the poem, and Szondi’s narration of the events and experiences of this date are therefore also legitimate when discussing the poem.

Yet the question—whether it is legitimate, or even necessary to the work of interpretation—remains, and is tackled by Szondi himself in the essay. He in fact asks: “inwieweit ist das Verständnis des Gedichts abhängig von der Kenntnis des biographisch-historischen Materials?”³²¹ Szondi does not offer a conclusive answer in the essay, possibly owing to the fact that the essay remained unfinished. What the phrasing of the question does show is that he legitimizes consulting such special information, yet does not conclusively claim that this information is necessary. He does however leave open the possibility that such a necessity exists. In his further line of argumentation, he delineates the reconstruction of historical information from the full task of interpretation.

The interpretation is always more than listing such facts, yet it is not something altogether separate from it: “Indessen macht die Kenntnis der Realien, der realen Erfahrungen, die aus Celans Aufenthalt in Berlin um Weihnachten 1967 in das Gedicht Du liegst . . . eingegangen sind, noch keiner Interpretation des

³²¹ Szondi, *Schriften*, vol. 2, p. 395.

Gedichts aus.”³²² He admits to the insufficiency of this knowledge for a complete interpretation. He does however maintain that the poem depends on these empirical facts, or that at least this particular poem, which in fact references these facts, exists also because of this experience: “Dass Celan dieses Gedicht nicht geschrieben hätte oder dass es ein anderes geworden wäre ohne die Erlebnissequenz seines Berlinaufenthalts steht fest.”³²³ At the same time, the poem cannot simply be treated as a representation of these empirical experiences and biographical events, as it has become something else and independent from these empirical facts: “es muss [die] empirische Prämisse hinter sich gelassen haben, wenn anders das Gedicht ein Gedicht sein soll.”³²⁴ The poem has developed away from and beyond the material world and experience that it is based on. Yet this material reality is still important and plays a role in the literary work and in the interpretation because the literary work indeed emerges from and has its basis in material lived experience. It is not detached from it as an aesthetic object that references only itself. Szondi, in a somewhat circuitous manner, affirms that the empirical premise and material-historical writing context is important for an interpretation of the literary work. His proposition appears to be that what distinguishes a mere historicist interpretation or simple biographism from a literary-critical interpretation of a literary work is not the presence or absence of such empirical biographical knowledge, but rather the mode of interpretation beyond the disclosure and translation of such references: *beyond*, and not separate from. Reconstructing the poem’s empirical premises

³²² Ibid., p. 392.

³²³ Ibid., p. 395.

³²⁴ Ibid., p. 396.

should therefore not be understood as a simple act of disclosure or verification of what its metaphors and images connote. Rather, Szondi is interested in how they have become the poem, their “Verwandlung.” By “Verwandlung” Szondi does not mean their transfiguration into images or language that let the poem operate in an allegorical or symbolic register. The question is instead what is it that motivates the poem to select these references, words, images, and experiences from an array of contingent experiences and bring them into poetic form.

Rhetorical Registers of Interpretation within “Eden”

Szondi writes the essay “Eden” as more than a reader: The experiences he lists in the essay are also his own experiences, his own biography. When he remembers the date that is inscribed in the poem, he remembers it as his own date. It is Szondi’s date, and it is also the date of Szondi’s essay “Eden,” being inscribed with the date “22./23. Dezember 1967,” in the same way that the poem “Du liegst” is. The fact that Szondi here shares these dates as his own experiences, and writes his own biography just as much as he writes Celan’s when he writes about the genesis of the poem, deeply affects the rhetorical register as well as the structure of the essay. At its core, the essay exhibits narrative elements: in its descriptive content, its language, and its structure.

The essay’s structure is not unlike many of Szondi’s other seminars and interpretative essays. A linear reading of the poem provides the overarching structure of the essay. The essay builds its analysis around the individual lines and/or sections of the poems, and to that end quotes from the poem line by line, in

the same order as in the poem, without omissions. Each section of the essay is built around a set of lines of the poem, and moves through the poem in a linear fashion, from beginning to end, rather than picking lines from the poem that suit the essay's argument. The literary analysis is therefore entirely in the service of the poem, a close reading in its most literal sense, focusing closely on the lines, and all the lines, of the poem alone. This unique format of literary analysis can be found in many of Szondi's other writings, including the other essays of the *Celan-Studien* and also especially his lectures, as seen in the *Hölderlin-Studien*, which are transcriptions of his lectures. This format retains a certain quality of the reading act, a movement through the text line by line, stanza by stanza, paragraph by paragraph. It therefore also retains the somewhat perfunctory, improvised character of immediate reader response during the reading act. The literary scholar comes to the literary text equipped possibly with general knowledge about literary history or the author's other works, but the individual poem is new to them, and the literary scholar has not prepared their interpretation and arguments before meeting the poem, reading, and quoting it. The reader is present with the poem in the poem's immediacy, and moves close to the poem, somewhat unprepared and entirely open and available for the poem.

The essay "Eden" repeats this mechanism: It quotes from and reads through the poem twice. This occurs first in the first part of the essay, which Szondi labels "biographischer Bericht,"³²⁵ and which amounts to a glossary of the different references in the poem. The second round of quoting and reading is then an analysis

³²⁵ Ibid., p. 395.

of the poem's meaning, yet Szondi does not get to the last lines of the poem, as he does not finish the essay.

The biographical report and analysis differ in their structure in an important way. In the analysis, Szondi's interpretative commentary comes after the quotation, in the classic format of an inductive reading, developing a general argument from the specific element, i.e., the line of the poem. In the biographical report, Szondi's glossary and explanations are printed before the line quotations from the poem, and in a way introduce these lines. For example, Szondi introduces the first line of the poem with a description of Celan's visit:

Celan wohnte in der Akademie der Künste, er hatte in dem im Hansaviertel gelegenen modernen Bau ein Zimmer, dessen große Fenster, eine ganze Fensterwand, auf einen mit Büschen bepflanzten Teil des Tiergartens schauen. Hier schrieb er nachts die Verse:

*DU LIEGST im großen Gelausche,
umbuscht, umflockt.*³²⁶

This glossary of the poem's first lines reads like the staging of a scene, in which the lines of the poem then make their appearance.³²⁷ The fact that this glossary is printed before the poem's lines, and ends with a colon, reads like an introduction and constructs an opening for the scene it itself narrates. The glossary has a

³²⁶ Ibid., p. 393.

³²⁷ The description to me also evokes a scene that shares qualities with what Rüdiger Campe terms "Schreib-Szene": „ein nicht-stabiles Ensemble von Sprache, Instrumentalität und Geste“ See: Rüdiger Campe, "Die Schreibszene, Schreiben," *Paradoxien, Dissonanzen, Zusammenbrüche: Situationen offener Epistemologie*, ed. H. U. Gumbrecht and K. L. Pfeiffer (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991), pp. 759–72. Szondi's description seems to contain traces of Celan's physical body, that is moving through and sitting down at the place of writing, he also alludes to the material objects that furnish the area where writing takes place. My own reading, however, does not pursue the qualities of the writing media for which Campe's "Schreib-Szene" would be instructive.

noticeable narrative quality to it. For once it is the imperfect tense that belies the narrative motivation (“Wohnte,” “schrieb”). Szondi is also keen to share minute and intimate details of Celan’s private accommodation, the size and location of its windows, and the precise view from the window—not only of the Tiergarten park, but also of the bushes that are visible from this particular window. This precise information about Celan’s view of the bushes from his room of course allows Szondi to make sense of the word “umbuscht” in the poem. But it here also reads like entering into the intimate, private space, indeed Celan’s private chamber, the place where he writes the poem, where the writing is enacted. The narrative qualities of this intensify in the phrasing: “Hier schrieb er nachts die Verse.”³²⁸ Numerical or other neutral labels for the time and date of the conception of the poem here get replaced with the more opaque and evocative “nachts.” We are not in any empirical terrain any longer. “Nachts” is a poetic measure of time, and it creates a temporal expanse and depth in the essay. The night is not a neatly circumscribed length of time. It marks the time of day in which one retreats from the world, to the place of sleep-induced unconsciousness and dreams, to a darkness outside of clock-measured time, an intimate and solitary place. Szondi tells us that Celan writes from this place outside of clock time, from the place of his intense privacy, and Szondi seeks to approach this private place in his description and be with Celan when he is writing the poem. The essay’s own narrative time is “nachts” as well, a temporal expanse without the precise boundaries and labels that a typical glossary would have. This section of Szondi’s essay locates itself in the time of the

³²⁸ Szondi, *Schriften*, vol. 2, p. 393.

poem, when it began, when it was created, its moment of becoming. The essay's own temporality joins with the temporality of the writing scene, with the time of the poem. Yet when the essay steps into the time of the poem's becoming, it here also steps into the 'before' of the poem. The time and place in which the poem had to come was about to happen and be written. The way that the quotation from the poem is introduced reads as if it intuits the lines of the poem. The colon here is the temporal mark. Szondi places the narration before the quotation and the narration becomes the opening, pointing towards the poem to come. This pointing is an intuition because the lines of the poem are a necessary outcome of the story. They are necessary because the poem already exists when Szondi writes the essay, when he writes this particular scene and introduces the quotation. The essay, and its narration, always knows this, because as much as it is a narration itself, and its own narrative time is the time preceding the poem, it remains also a reading, therefore coming after the poem comes into existence.

The colon opens up the narration towards the poem. But it also by its very function draws the lines of the poem into the sentence that Szondi wrote. Poem and essay share the same sentence space. This transports the essay onto the textual plane of the poem, and also does the inverse, drawing the poem into the text of the essay. The essay there discovers itself as text, like the poem.

The voice of the essay nevertheless remains bound to its readerly identity. The reader, however, is someone who reads the finished poem, who must always come after the poem in time.

It is rhetorical gestures and imprints in the essay, rhetorical gestures of narrative, that allow a superimposition of two temporalities and identities: the writer who experiences the genesis of the poem *before* the poem is written, and the reader who reads the poem *after* it has been written. It is in this moment of rhetorical instability, of a diffusing boundary between writer and reader, when the essay discovers itself to be a text, an event of writing.

Russell A. Berman brings France Lyotard's description of temporality and the postmodern to bear on his reading of Szondi's rhetorics of hermeneutics that emerge in the academic seminar:

The fact that work and text have the character of an *event* [unlike for Szondi, for whom it is a matter of meaning and, as will soon be seen, the explicit alternative to an event, even to an event that has not transpired RB] they always come too late for their author, or, what amounts to the same thing, their being put into work, their realization (*mise en oeuvre*) always begins too soon. *Postmodern* would have to be understood according to the paradox of the future (*post*) anterior (*modo*)³²⁹

Berman here still understands Szondi to continue in his tradition of meaning, yet I think that "Eden" breaks with Szondi's commitment to meaning and does something new. The rhetorical qualities of the essay, like the seminar discussion of literary texts (discussed earlier), render the poem instable in time. The essay remembers and reactivates the poem in its status of not existing yet. And at the same time the poem is always, already, even when it is remembered as not existing

³²⁹ I here quote Berman's quote from Jean-Francois Lyotard, to include also Berman's interpolations in brackets. The original text can be found in Lyotard's book *The Post-Modern Condition*: "The fact that work and text have the character of an *event* they always come too late for their author, or, what amounts to the same thing, their being put into work, their realization (*mise en oeuvre*) always begins too soon." Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Post-Modern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. 81.

yet, claimed as the object of interpretation, as already available in its finished form. Because the essay remains an interpretation, even when it writes its own story of the poem's before, it also always remains in the reader's time, the time after of the poem. One can therefore say that Szondi's essay begins too soon, because it writes from the time before the poem existed. The essay at the same time comes too late for its author: Szondi had to wait until the poem had been written and published to write his essay, even though the essay aspires to exist and to be written beginning on December 27, before the poem was written. The essay both depends on the poem to exist, and shifts to a place where it doesn't depend on the presence of the poem, to the place where Szondi is waiting for the poem to come into its form, which is a place where he has already been triggered to write, is already writing. What is more, the story of the poem's becoming, the story that Szondi wants to write in "Eden" is also his own story: for one because it is also his biography, and because it is the story he in fact writes with a rhetorical desire.

This makes the interpretation really participate in time, be an event in time, be in time, rather than distant, objectively removed from the time of the poem. This temporal new framework ultimately is a different way for literary scholarship to engage the historical in a literary work. Within a rhetorical space for writing about literature the literary work is not the (transcendental) anchor point in time any longer, around which the interpretation assembles and position itself always in relation to the literary work, within linear time. Within this rhetorical space, the artwork disperses in time, while the interpretation claims its own being in time, which, as text-event, still never settles in any now, but itself disperses in time it its

oath of loyalty to the literary text, whose claim to the present it continues to acknowledge.

Interpreting the Poem's Meaning

As mentioned in the previous section, the literary analysis of the poem's meaning is a separate section of the essay, after the biographical report. The interpretative analysis of the poem, just like the report, traces the poem line by line, according to the poem's original line and stanza order. This structural parallel, this building of text around a linear set of quotations from the poem, performs a reading that is open to, immediately affected by, or always moving towards or just beyond the lines of the poem.

Szondi's analysis fragment narrows in on the conflict at the center of the poem, the convergence of disparate, seemingly unresolvably conflicting experiences: "geh zu den Fleischerhaken, / zu den roten Äppelstaken / aus Schweden –." As Szondi explains, "Rote Äppelstaken aus Schweden" are wooden advent wreaths, painted red, which Celan saw at one of the stands at the Christmas Market by Berlin's Funkturm which he visited in December 1967. They connote the holiday spirit of the advent season. In stark contrast to this image is "Fleischerhaken," which reference the execution by the Nazis of members of the German resistance at Plötzensee. Celan had visited the Plötzensee memorial as well during his Berlin visit, and had learned about the method of displaying the dead bodies of the executed conspirators on meat hooks. The extreme contrast of these two images: the advent wreaths at the Christmas market and the meat hooks at

Plötzensee memorial are locked into relation through the rhyme form: “Äppelstaken” rhymes with the “Fleischerhaken.” The rhyme form in this poem and in Celan’s other poetry, as Szondi suspects in an unpublished paragraph of the essay draft, accentuates difference as much as it locks words into relation.³³⁰ Rhyme sits with this tension, at the threshold between difference and indifference. Szondi argues that the tension in this particular rhyming couplet displays that there is no difference where there should be one. This indifference in Szondi’s reading is the guiding dynamic for the poem, and preserved most acutely in the word “Eden” in the poem’s central image: “er biegt um ein Eden.” “Eden” is paradise (“Lustgarten” in Szondi’s words), and in the poem, as Szondi informs us, it also references the name of the hotel, whose former site he and Celan passed in Szondi’s car. Szondi had given Celan a book about Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, and had discussed the history of these two revolutionaries with Celan during his visit. Szondi was the one who pointed out the former site of the Hotel Eden to Celan in passing, and had informed Celan that this was the hotel where Luxemburg and Liebknecht stayed, the night before their execution. Szondi writes about the ambivalence that the word “Eden” harbors:

Die Einheit von Paradies und Vorhölle in dem Wort “Eden”, die Indifferenz der Geschichte und der Menschen, die zulässt, dass der letzte Aufenthaltsort von Rosa Luxemburg und Karl Liebknecht den Namen des paradiesischen Lustgartens führt und das Luxusapartmenthouse, das an dessen Stelle

³³⁰ In the essay Szondi writes: “In der phonologischen Übereinstimmung der Wortenden (-aken) hat diese Äquivalenz nur ihre äußerlichste Erscheinungsweise. (*Schriften*, vol. 2, p. 398).” In a previous draft Szondi had continued the sentences: “Der Reim ist für Celan nicht, wie für Karl Kraus, das Ufer wo sie landen / sind zwei Gedanken einverstanden [Karl Kraus, “Worte in Versen,” *Werke*, vol. 7, Munich: 1959, p. 80 (according to a note of Szondi’s)].” In Szondi, *Schriften*, vol. 2, p. 430.

errichtet wurde, den Namen jenes zur Vorhölle gewordenen Hotels – diese Gleichgültigkeit kann Celans Grunderfahrung, die einer In-Differenz, nur bestätigt haben.³³¹

“Eden” is the place of indifference in the poem. The poem does the work of holding these two connotations and references of the word together in one place: its traditional meaning of paradise, and the historical reference to the hotel, Luxemburg’s and Liebknecht’s death cell. Szondi, however, translates “Indifferenz” into the German word “Gleichgültigkeit,” and describes it in ethical terms. “Indifferenz” and “Gleichgültigkeit” here also describe a moral failing and lack of meaning: “die Indifferenz der Geschichte und der Menschen, die zulässt.” The fact that Eden here can mean both things, or that Äppelstaken and Fleischerhaken do have a relation, even though they should not have one, is because of those people who allow these two opposites to merge, who tolerate the corruption and betrayal of the positive connotation of the word with its polar opposite, which connotes murder. “Gleichgültigkeit” here is Szondi’s unusual and strong translation of “Indifferenz,” because it is seldom used as a neutral term to describe a formal feature of literature. It is often used to describe an ethical posture and character trait. The “Indifferenz” and “Gleichgültigkeit” that can be observed in the formal operations of the poem, the rhyme, and in the meaning of the word “Eden”, translates somewhat roughly into not caring, being cruelly disinterested in protecting paradise or “Äppelstaken” from death and murder. Szondi also relates the conversation he and Celan had about the name of the hotel, and cites Celan’s own assessment of the use of the name: “Der Hohn, den die Beibehaltung des

³³¹ Szondi, *Schriften*, vol. 2, p. 397.

Namens für das Luxusapartmenthouse auf das Gedenken der beiden Ermordeten darstellt, war Thema unseres Gesprächs im Auto.”³³² “Hohn,” (scorn) is an even stronger word than “Gleichgültigkeit.” The owners of the hotel had not cared to change the name of the hotel, in spite of the events that had taken place there, and which make the word “Eden” an eternally and completely unfitting name.

Szondi’s leap from “Indifferenz” to “Gleichgültigkeit” is a rhetorical maneuver that is worth pointing out. The word “Gleichgültigkeit” is an unorthodox term especially for discussing a formal feature of a literary work. Even though Szondi uses “Indifferenz” to specifically discuss the rhyming couplet “Äppelstaken” and “Fleicherhaken,” he translates “Indifferenz” into “Gleichgültigkeit” and, in the essay, these two words become interwoven to describe both form and content of the poem. Ultimately, this is a rhetorical gesture, one which uses a term not proper to the vocabulary of literary analysis (Gleichgültigkeit) to relate a formal feature of the poem (which is the disparate metaphors linked up in rhyming couplets) to the author’s lived experience. In this way, the hermeneutic center of the essay, the argument over what the meaning of the poem is, is already lodged in the description of Celan’s biographical experience and uses its own rhetorical strategies to formulate an interpretation. The rhetorical leap here is Celan’s wound that Szondi allows to penetrate into his analysis and language. “Gleichgültigkeit” is Celan’s pain, and Szondi here is willing to use that word, in the way that Celan feels and suffers it, for his own analytical terminology. Celan’s wound seeps into Szondi’s own language of literary analysis. At the same

³³² Szondi, *Schriften*, vol. 2, p. 394.

time, Indifferenz is the concept in the essay that connects it to textuality, that makes it a reading invested in the conceptual principles of textuality. Reading the poem with the tools, concepts, and posture of textuality therefore relates the historical, the pain of Celan's lived life, not through representation, but by opening up the word itself, the language itself of the essay, to reverberate with the pain of Celan's biography. It is the rhetorical momentum in the essay generated by the word family of "Indifferenz" and "Gleichgültigkeit," and not representation, by which the reading connects the poem to history.

Biegen, Fahren

Szondi pinpoints "ein Eden" as the very middle of Celan's poem: "Mitte seines Gedichts."³³³ He does not give the remainder of the sentence, "er biegt um ein Eden" much attention however, which is noteworthy because his biographical glossary on this sentence hints at the possible identity of this "er": Szondi himself, who was operating the vehicle that was passing by ("biegen um") the former site of the Hotel Eden. A faithful grammatical reading of the sentence "Es kommt der Tisch mit den Gaben, / er biegt um ein Eden –" connects "er" to the masculine subject of the first clause: "der Tisch." Yet the second clause is a main clause as well, therefore its subject does not necessarily have to be the same as the subject of the first clause. One need not have access to Szondi's biographical information about the car ride past the former hotel to relate "biegt um" to some type of vehicle, as 'biegen um' is a motion that moving vehicles perform. The fact that the motion

³³³ Szondi, *Schriften*, vol. 2, p. 397.

must be performed by a 'he' who is operating a vehicle also lets this part of the sentence be read as separate from the first clause, and the "er" to be a separate subject.

Szondi, however, knows that he and Celan were driving past the former hotel, and that "er," if read biographically, might mean he himself. If Szondi is the identity of this "er," he is someone who exercises a central movement in the poem. This movement is a curvature around the very middle of the poem, around "Eden," the sign for "Indifferenz." His driving orbits around the poem's center, not drawing a full circle, but only a curved line bending towards the center of the poem: Celan's wound, which is his scorn ("Hohn") for the choice of Eden as the name of the hotel.

Celan wrote another poem in which a car ride takes place, and which he also wrote shortly after an encounter with a great mind. This "Begegnung" and parallel conversation in a car took place just a few months before Celan's visit to Berlin: In the summer of the same year, 1967, he visited Freiburg and the Black Forest and made the acquaintance of Martin Heidegger. Celan wrote the poem "Todtnauberg" after this visit.³³⁴ Heidegger had organized a reading for Celan at Freiburg University, and had proposed driving to Heidegger's retreat in the small hamlet of Todtnauberg near Freiburg, hiking in a local moor, and visiting his "Hütte," his hermitage and writing retreat. The young *Germanistikassistent* Gerhard Neumann drove Heidegger and Celan from Freiburg to Todtnauberg, and later to the town of St. Blasien. The poet and philosopher sat in the backseats of a small VW Beetle.

³³⁴ Paul Celan, "Todtnauberg," *Gesammelte Werke II*, p. 255. Written on 1 August 1967 in Frankfurt am Main, after his reading at the University of Heidelberg on 24 July 1967 and his trip to Todtnauberg with Martin Heidegger on the following day.

Neumann remembers a good hour of tense, somewhat awkward silence during the car ride, before Celan confronted Heidegger regarding his past as a member of the NSDAP and his many public statements in support of the Nazi regime and ideology while at Heidelberg University during the Third Reich. On 2 August 1967 Celan writes to his wife Gisèle Lestrange: “Dann kam es im Auto zu einem ernsten Gespräch, bei dem ich klare Worte gebraucht habe. Herr Neumann, der Zeuge war, hat mir später gesagt, daß dieses Gespräch eine epochale Bedeutung hatte.”³³⁵ Yet Celan did not receive the apology or explanation that he had hoped for and expected. Heidegger admits in a private response to the poem: “Seitdem haben wir Vieles einander zugeschwiegen. Ich denke, daß einiges noch eines Tages im Gespräch aus dem Ungesprochenen gelöst wird.”³³⁶ The precise content of Celan and Heidegger’s conversation, or even a summary, has not been made public by either Celan or Heidegger.

Neumann then drove Celan and Heidegger down to a small town in the valley, St. Blasien, where they had arranged for a meeting with Gerhart Baumann.³³⁷ Jean Bollack terms this drive “Hadesfahrt,” a ride to hell, downwards

³³⁵ Paul Celan and Gisele Celan-Léstrange, *Briefwechsel* (Frankfurt a. Main: Suhrkamp, 2001), p. 536.

³³⁶ Letter from Heidegger to Celan, dated 30 January 1968, published posthumously in *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 3 January 1998, p. 49.

³³⁷ Gerhart Baumann, a professor of Germanistik at Freiburg University and a former student and then friend of Heidegger’s, entertained a life-long friendship with Celan. His memories of Celan’s visits to Freiburg are chronicled in: Gerhart Baumann, *Erinnerungen an Paul Celan* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1992). His chronicles acknowledge the complexity but also ambivalence of Celan’s impressions of Heidegger and the visit. They are marked both by reverence, by instances of “Mißbehagen” (p. 68) and hesitation, and also by open and congenial conversation.

into the shadowy valleys of the Black Forest: “Abstieg” and “Fahrt ins Schattenreich” are the images of Bollack’s narrative.

In his interpretation of the poem “Todtnauberg,” Bollack sees the roles of guest and host as being reversed. The poem is Celan’s way of showing Heidegger the landscape of the Black Forest, and not the other way around with Heidegger as the host. Celan’s poem takes Heidegger and the reader along a different route through the hills, on a journey through a landscape that remembers the dead of Auschwitz. Celan knows this landscape differently than Heidegger does.³³⁸

Bollack’s bleak narrative of the encounter between the poet and the philosopher is juxtaposed with Gadamer’s coinage of Celan’s visit as a “Wallfahrt,” or ‘pilgrimage.’ As Celan had read, studied, and revered Heidegger’s works since his years in Paris, and as Heidegger’s language had both taught him and provoked him to write against it, the term ‘pilgrimage’ cannot be entirely dismissed. Yet at the same time, Heidegger’s lack of an answer and apology had tainted this respect and admiration, for Celan as well as for every other reader of Heidegger.

Driving is a motion that both “Eden” and “Todtnauberg” record, and in both poems there is an encounter and conversation which take place during these drives. Active verbs are often the agents of movement in a poem. “Fahren,” (driving) is a rather dynamic and potent forward motion. It is therefore noteworthy that active verbs, which provide the grammatical basis for movement, are absent in

³³⁸ As for example in Bollack’s musings on the poem’s title, “Todtnauberg”: “die Analyse von Todtnauberg kann zum einem ‘Toten-au’ ergeben, . . . Diese Lektüre schließt nicht aus, das Todt, die erste Silbe, mit der gleichnamigen NS-Organisation in Verbindung steht, der Celans Eltern zum Opfer vielen, noch, dass die Silbe -au das Vernichtungslager Auschwitz in die Gegenwart des Gedichts einbezieht.” See: Jean Bollack, “Vor Dem Gericht Der Toten: Paul Celans Begegnung mit Martin Heidegger und Ihre Bedeutung,” *Neue Rundschau*, no. 1, 1998, pp. 127–56.

“Todtnauberg.” In fact, the entire poem constructs its sentences without active verbs that attach to a subject as agents of an action or movement. The poem instead is composed of many nominalized verbs, which detach the verb from the active subject of the sentence. These nominalizations also function to arrest each verb’s intrinsic dynamic force of movement. They become nouns, objects, things to be observed. “Fahren” is the fact of movement, therefore an object, rather than the actual playing out of, or ‘happening’ of movement. The only proper verb-subject structure in the poem occurs in a subordinate clause: “der uns fährt, der Mensch der’s mit anhört.”³³⁹ The singular agent of an action in the poem has two qualities: First, he is “Mensch,” which elevates him from being a mere bystander, in a subordinate clause of the poem, to occupying the place in the poem where the human remains a presence in this otherwise disappointing encounter; he also is a witness in that he overhears the words spoken, the actual conversation and narrative. A witness by their very nature does not drive the plot forward or instigate action, but is rather the passive observer. Yet it is precisely this passive observer who acts as subject of the only active verb in the poem, and therefore becomes the only active agent in the poem. Placing them as subject, and the attached active verb within a subordinate clause, nevertheless shifts and postpones this agency somewhat.

The poem “Du liegst” also includes a driving scene, and in a parallel manner one can observe a certain postponement and shifting. When in “Todtnauberg” this shifting is towards the subordinate clause and the passive figure of the witness, in

³³⁹ Celan, *Gesammelte Werke*, p. 282.

“Du liegst” it is the directionality of the driving action that is shifting and postpones. The driver passes by the site of the former Hotel Eden (“biegt um”). The driver again is the agent of a forward movement, but he circumvents “Eden,” the poem’s center, and therefore does not instigate action directly.

Witnesses

The drivers in both “Todtnauberg” and “Du liegst” are also witnesses. In “Todtnauberg” the driver of the car, Neumann, can be identified as a witness from a line in the poem: “der uns fährt, der’s mit anhört.”³⁴⁰ He drives and overhears what is spoken in the car between Celan and Heidegger. Celan also confirms the identity of this witness in his letter to Lestrang: “Herr Neumann, der Zeuge war.”³⁴¹

In “Du Liegst” it is Szondi’s reception of the poem in his essay “Eden” that helps us identify him as being the driver in the line “du biegst um Eden.” Derrida seals Szondi’s identity as witness in his essay “Shibolleth,” when he pronounces him to be “witness and accomplice” for the poem’s coming into being. The poems of course do not definitively name Szondi or Baumann to be witnesses or drivers. The conclusive identification of Szondi and Baumann happens outside the poem, in the moment in which they read the relevant poem and recognize themselves in them. Szondi and Baumann discover themselves as an actual part and parcel of the poem: They discover themselves to be the poem. This moment occurs when they

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

³⁴¹ Ibid., p. 806.

discover themselves to each be the witness of their respective poem. As the poem is itself the moment in which the poem reveals itself to also be *them*, it reveals that it, with them, also performs the role of witness.

In the poem “Todtnauberg” the witness is the one who listens to the conversation, which is referred to only as “s,” in “der’s mit anhört.”³⁴² This “der’s” is the apostrophe contraction of ‘der es.’ The poem does not give away the content of the conversation. It neither gives it the name of ‘conversation’ nor even the complete word “es.” The letter “s” is the only trace left of it. The apostrophized “s” gets attached to “der,” and in a phonetic reading “der” and “es” become one sound, one word. The “s,” that is to say the conversation between Celan and Heidegger, is in the smallest radius of “der,” in his care, or vice versa: “der” orbits closely around “s,” leaning towards “s” without ever touching it, separated by the apostrophe. Baumann, who is the witness, the “der,” heard the conversation between Celan and Heidegger from within the close confines of the car, where one could hear and feel breath from bodies. What “der” holds with its apostrophe as if on a thread, but safely stowed within the close yet near reaches of its monosyllabic sound and phoneme length is a secret: the untold, unrecorded conversation between Heidegger and Celan. A powerful secret, as this conversation could not have had more urgency and significance.

The witness holds and carries this secret conversation, and drives it and its speakers up and down the hills of the Black Forest. He is also the only proper subject commanding a verb in the poem. These agencies make him share in the

³⁴² Ibid., p. 282.

agency that the poem itself has: of knowing, holding, and moving. Yet at the same time he remains the outside observer of the conversation and the poem's plot, not its speaker. His agency is more that of testimony than creation. His acts are that of listening, of knowing and holding on to Celan and Heidegger, and of transporting them somewhere. Because the actual events, the exact content of the conversation, are unavailable, the witness testimony is what establishes their factual basis, and is what makes them remain readable, and therefore accessible in the future. The testimony of the witness is thereby the only authorship that remains, the only putting into words, telling, or writing of what happened, and of the words spoken between Heidegger and Celan.

The witness is the listener, reader, and—at the time—writer of the words spoken. The apostrophe contraction in the end realizes these two identities of the witness, he shares one word and word sound-space with the words spoken, the words invented and originally “written” in the conversation. At the same time he remains separated from the conversation by the apostrophe mark, and his separate form is what is in fact needed to allow him to give evidence, to retell it and thereby affirm that it took place.

Mechanisms of Reiteration

The witness carries the potential of retelling. The witness can testify to the singularity of the event through the act of observing it, remembering it, potentially retelling it. As Jacques Derrida writes about the use of the date in Celan's writing in his essay “Shibboleth: For Paul Celan,” it requires reiteration to affirm the

singularity, and therefore paradoxically non-reiterability of the event.³⁴³ The act of marking a date, reiterating what happened one time, “only once” again and again, serves to affirm that the dated event is indeed an event, singled out from the array and mass of contingent phenomena and experiences.

The witness can both participate and play a central role in the mechanisms of reiteration which make the singular event observable, datable, or into a date.

Szondi’s “Eden” is a central reference text in “Shibboleth: For Paul Celan,” and Derrida treats the date of “Eden,” 22–23 December 1967, as exemplary for his notion of the “date” in Celan’s poetics. In “Shibboleth: For Paul Celan,” Derrida’s retelling of the events surrounding the writing of “Du liegst” and “Eden” builds a connection between the singularity of the date and the singularity of the witness of the date, the one who experienced it and retells it. When the first exemplary date that the essay mentions is that of the ritual of circumcision, which happens “ein einziges Mal,” Szondi being present with Celan on their meeting in December 1967 singles him out as “the only one”:

as the intimate and lucid witness of all the random contingencies and all the necessities that intersected in Celan’s passing through Berlin *at this date*, Szondi was the only one to bequeath to us the irreplaceable passwords of access to the poem, a priceless *shibboleth*, a luminous and humming swarm of notes, so many signs of gratitude for deciphering and translating the enigma.³⁴⁴

³⁴³ Derrida, “Shibboleth: For Paul Celan,” *Sovereignties in Question: The Poetics of Paul Celan*, p. 2. Derrida is curious about Celan’s “Datum” rather than a general investigation into the topic: “My main concern will not be to speak about the date in general. Rather, I will listen to what Celan says about it; Better, I will watch him give himself over to the inscription of invisible, perhaps unreadable, dates: anniversaries, rings, constellations, and repetitions of singular, unique, *unrepeatable* events – *unwiederholbar* is his word.”

³⁴⁴ Derrida, “Shibboleth: For Paul Celan,” p. 17; See also *Ibid.*, p. 5: “the only” one in relation to the date also appears in Derrida’s explanation of another central date in Celan’s poetry, the 20th of

Szondi was present with Celan “at this date” and by that becomes the “only one” who can trace references in the poem to this date, and unlock it as a date. This kind of transfer, which is a form of reiteration, is described by Derrida in terms of gift giving, “bequeathing,” and “signs of gratitude.” They are bound up in the economy of gift giving because the passwords themselves are “priceless” and cannot be bought or sold, only gifted and given. The mechanisms and processes of reiteration, which make the event observable and also a memorable date, here lie in Szondi’s mortal hands, whose retelling has no calculations, no numerical measures of time to write history, but rather is a form of gifting, a gesture of placing something into someone else’s hands with one’s own hands. Szondi’s “I” seldom appears in the essay; he does not want to overemphasize the fact of having been there with Celan. But one of these somewhat timid “I”s in the essay “Eden” engages in an act of giving: “An einem der ersten Abende seines Berlinsaufenthaltes bat mich Celan um ein Buch, er habe nichts zum Lesen bei sich. Ich gab ihm den kurz zuvor erschienene Band *Der Mord an Rosa Luxemburg und Karl Liebknecht. Dokumentation eines politischen Verbrechens.*”³⁴⁵ He gifts Celan the book that will become the priceless key to the name of the hotel: “Eden.” Szondi unlocks the reference of “Eden” in his essay, and in this retelling again goes back to the source and origin of “Eden,” to the ‘before’ of the poem. This source is ultimately also Szondi himself: He bequeathed the source of the poem to Celan. The essay’s

January, which on one count is the date of the Wannsee Conference for the “final solution to the Jewish question” in 1942, and is also a quotation from Georg Büchner’s Lenz. “Am 20. Januar ging Lenz durch’s Gebirg.” Derrida asks about this date: “*Who* walked through the mountains, *on this date?*” And describes Büchner, who is “He as an I” (the author not the artist) as “the only one,” “singular,” and in that singularity is attached to the singularity of the “date.”

³⁴⁵ Szondi, *Schriften*, vol. 2, p. 393.

unlocking of the reference, the careful untangling and interpreting of the secret codes and signs that the poem contains, is not secondary to the poem anymore. It is rather where the essay reveals itself to be the source: that Szondi's authorship predates the essay, and also the poem.

Szondi's retelling, the process of reiteration, reveals itself to be the source of the poem. Szondi is also "the only one" "at this date." Reiteration thereby makes Szondi's singularity apparent, "he as an I" figures now in this process that was set in motion. This self-discovery of Szondi as being singular as and with the date, and singular through the process of reiteration, means that he can rediscover himself as a writer. Derrida calls his writing therefore a "luminous, humming swarm of notes," a writing that is imbued with its own life, that is pulsating. This is the kind of writing that moves beyond Szondi's critical hermeneutics. It does retain the strong impulse to write history, to remember, yet not through representation but through processes of marking the "date," through reiteration, which involve Szondi as author and not only reader.

Reiteration and Driving

The position of the witness within the poem's middle as being where the mechanism of reiteration is set in motion has to be brought into relation with the other dynamic force in the poem: driving, especially the bending, turning of this driving, the curve it draws. The driver is right within the 'force field' of the poem, operating within this force field, at a speed that is beyond the human scale of speed and movement: It is faster than a human walking or running. This is where time is

happening in the poem, where the poem generates time, and is within time. The witness, the “only one” who is also always the second, the doubling, is himself the place where reiteration is set into motion; maybe he sets it into motion himself. This setting into motion is the center of the poem, and is where the poem begins to exist in time and writes history.

This driving is a bending, turning movement, “umbiegen.” The reiteration performed by the witness is therefore not a linear process; its creation of doubles, and doubles of the singular, is not a process of ‘adding on,’ i.e., it is not a mathematical process of addition on a linear temporal axis. The energy of the witness is drawn into the interior of the poem; it is asked to participate in the poem’s own force field, its own emanating movements and lines that are bending around itself, writing history in its contained poem-space. Further, it is bound in an act of reciprocity, one which is more circular. Szondi gifts Celan the book, the source of the poem. Celan dedicates, and so gifts the poem to Szondi, and in turn Szondi “bequeaths” to us, the reader, its “passwords,” as “signs of gratitude.”³⁴⁶

To conclude

Szondi’s essay “Eden” has its very own “Datum” of 22–23 December 1967, and shares this “Datum” with Celan’s poem “Du liegst.” Because Szondi writes of his meeting with Celan, just as much as he writes about the date of the poem, the essay begins to narrate and write biography and thereby opens itself up rhetorically to gain the status of text, of a text that is an event of writing. Yet at the same time the

³⁴⁶ Derrida, “Shibboleth: For Paul Celan,” p. 17.

essay remains an interpretation, one which will always occur after the text event of the poem. “Eden” therefore becomes a textual enterprise where the writing event, the text’s (tentative) claim to presence, coincides with the posterior position of the interpretive act.

Both in “Eden” and in “Durch die Enge geführt,” Szondi is invested in reading as an activity that, while not empirically or transcendently pre-determined, is able to give an account of how the language of the poem emerges from a historical moment. Szondi in his essays seeks to become an advocate who provides evidence for the historicity of the poem, yet in the empiricist sense of providing accurate facts of the poem’s genesis and of Celan’s experience. The challenge for Szondi is to remain true to Celan’s entreaty to become displaced (“verbracht”), into the landscape of the poem, and in his reading treat the poem-text as a space and event in time, yet still somehow avow that the poem necessarily emerges from Celan’s particular experience of a date in history. He is obliged to this avowal because he discovers himself to be in the poem: The poem calls him be a witness and has written him into itself as the witness. He must do so from the poem, from its space, from its date, and as someone who himself was present on that date, on that occasion. His writing about the poem therefore always reveals itself to be writing from the poem, where he is located and from which his writing, telling, and reiterating is curving and moving through time. This again designs him to write as author, from the date, and makes the essay into a text event; these new examples of rhetoric are Szondi’s hermeneutic “Versuch.”

The non-predetermined activity of reading is able to account for what is historical, through reading himself also as the author, to be driving the poem's "rings, constellations, repetitions" of the singular, non-repeatable event of 22–23 December 1967.

CONCLUSION: Paul Celan's Other Legacy: Literary Interpretation and History

Paul Celan challenges Peter Szondi, and challenges literary scholars that came after, to let their writing show itself as writing, and participate in how the poem remembers history within its own textual space. The literary work becomes not an object anymore, separate from oneself as the critic who can describe, analyze and interpret it. The reader is entangled into this supposed object. In the case of Peter Szondi, Celan has specifically called him to surrender his writing, to write from his poem, as a witness not only of the events that the poem relates but as a witness who is relating to the events like the poem does. As a witness who Celan's has written into the poem, to be part of the poem. A witness who is in fact no one other than the poem.

Peter Szondi, coming towards Celan's poems from the supposed 'other side', the side, and time, of interpretation, desires that literary scholarship remains also a historical science, but must find a form to engage with history in the same way that the literary text prompts us to engage with history, which is how the literary text is itself writing history. When the literary text is being read, it makes the reader think about history in the same way it itself does. In the end, Szondi, in the aftermath of the Goll plagiarism affair, has been designated by Celan to avow that his poems speak truthfully about history, and finally to avow that this history has happened. Yet this avowal cannot be done in any previous mimetic languages of proof. Remembering, in the manner that Celan's poems do and also how they want us to do, undoes temporal separateness and distance. This works for Celan

because the poem is what constitutes its own present. Everything inside the poem joins in this present, becomes the present moment, while still being allowed to speak as itself, as something or someone from the past. When the poem thinks this way, the reader thinks this way also, and Szondi, I argue, is trying to write with an awareness of that.

What happens is that Szondi's writing that is aligned to Celan's poems allows itself to come into its own and establishes its own present. This writing is rhetorically activated, it is conscious of the fact that it how relates to the past rhetorically, from the present that it itself erects, as text.

I think what Celan's poems and poetics do is that they call upon Szondi to become a writer, to make a text that constitutes 'Gegenwart' and draws into its orbit of the present things and events from the past so that they can be encountered and remembered as they are. The overcoming of this hermeneutic position in favor of a textuality of interpretation proves here to be a necessity of writing in response to history. As an extension, for literary scholarship, this means that they can consider to become be acts of writing. "Eden" desires to be an act of writing, it is an act of writing, yet I think is still afraid to take on that form. It remains a fragment, an attempt which maybe Szondi in the end decided was a failed attempt. In the end, this only makes its text status all the more tangible and fully realized, its presence on the page marked by a certain self-consciousness, a blushing over this assumed identity.

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